

EXTRACTIVES AND CATHOLIC PEACEBUILDING – INTEREST GROUP

Topic: Extractives and Catholic Peacebuilding
 Convener: Caesar A. Montevecchio, University of Notre Dame
 Moderator: Daniel Castillo, Loyola University Maryland
 Presenters: Caesar A. Montevecchio, University of Notre Dame
 Daniel P. Scheid, Duquesne University
 Anna Floerke Scheid, Duquesne University

This was the second session of this interest group, and it is connected to a broader initiative on extractives and peacebuilding by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, at the University of Notre Dame’s Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. The initiative includes a forthcoming book, *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining: Integral Peace, Development, and Ecology*.

Caesar Montevecchio’s paper was titled “Hardrock Mining, Climate Change, and Conflict: Reflections Through the Lens of Catholic Social Thought.” The paper’s lead idea was that analyses of climate change and extractives usually focus on fossil fuels and neglect hardrock mining for metals and minerals. Montevecchio presented two interfaces between hardrock mining and climate change: mining and climate vulnerability, and the necessity of metals mining for clean energy. On climate vulnerability, he described how climate change will introduce problems like unpredictable rain levels, stronger storms, worsened droughts, and more frequent wildfires that threaten measures meant to mitigate environmental damage from mining, such as tailings dams to prevent acid mine drainage. On clean energy, he pointed out how companies can use the clean energy transition to greenwash their operations. And another issue related to clean energy is increased demand for uranium for nuclear energy, which introduces unique risks of radioactivity. Montevecchio then noted four ways in which these interfaces impact conflict and peace. First, climate injustice whereby communities and nations in the global South suffer the worst of the ecological impacts of mining without receiving commensurate benefits. He suggested that the church support those peoples by helping them gain more control over their resources and lands, and by leveraging its global network to pressure international economic networks that sustain North–South inequalities. Second, the “extractivist” mentality that is connected to neoliberal models of development and that perpetuates inequity, environmental damage, and socio-environmental conflict. Integral human development offers an alternative that puts the integral well-being of peoples ahead of economic growth. Third, violence against environmental and human rights defenders, for whom mining is one of the deadliest sectors, and for whom Catholic groups are active advocates. And fourth, the unavoidable risk that uranium mining presents for nuclear proliferation. Montevecchio argued that Catholic groups engaging uranium mining should do more to connect their work to the church’s well-established teaching on disarmament.

The second paper, “Integral Ecology, Just Peace, and Mining,” was delivered jointly by Daniel Scheid and Anna Floerke Scheid. Their presentation began with a summary of the main principles of Pope Francis’s idea of integral ecology: a holistic moral framework, an understanding of reality as pervasively interconnected, and

incorporating ecology into other dimensions of human activity. Scheid and Floerke Scheid claimed that these aspects of integral ecology give a foundation to address the interconnected problems of ecology, poverty, and violence that coalesce around mining. They next explained how the tenets of “just peace”—prevention, principles, and practices—dovetail with Francis’s understanding of integral ecology to yield a model of ecological just peace that can effectively address violence and injustice related to mining. For prevention, they highlighted the just peacemaking theory’s call for locally-controlled sustainable development. They questioned the degree to which mining can truly be sustainable, but suggested that an ecological just peace would support efforts toward that goal. For principles, they focused on respect and restoration. Respect must be structurally expressed, horizontally within communities but also vertically to the levels of governance and international business. That would allow respect to affect larger cultural change and would reject piecemeal, short-term solutions for integrated, sustainable ones. Restoration includes rebuilding broken harmony between peoples and creation and ensuring that damages from mining and related violence are acknowledged and remediated and that responsible parties are held accountable. For practices, Scheid and Floerke Scheid offered four things pertinent to the specific problems of mining conflict: nonviolent direct action, trust-building, imaginative thinking, and indigenous peacebuilding. The paper closed with the example El Salvador and the Catholic community’s efforts to bring about a national ban on metallic mining, explaining how those efforts exemplify an ecological just peace.

Discussion after the presentations addressed the need for more attention to women’s roles in issues of extractives, the need to discriminate between mining companies that are good actors and ones that are not, and the importance of Catholic groups engaging with the scientific community to offer more feasible and technically informed solutions.

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