13

A Catholic Peacebuilding Response to the Environmental Violence of Mining

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Engaging Environmental Violence

Mining is a prominent context for environmental violence, leading to ecological destruction and harm to communities impacted by that damage. The praxis and theory of Catholic peacebuilding have much to offer for dealing with these problems. Globally, the Catholic community is already deeply engaged on issues of mining and environmental violence. This chapter will describe this engagement and identify some of the key components that mark its potential for positive impact on the environmental violence of mining.

13.1 Introduction

Mining relates to violence in diverse ways, and frequently the relationship includes environmental violence. For example, in Colombia, mining is expected to help deliver a peace dividend for the government after it signed the 2016 Colombian Peace Accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). That means it is expected to be a source of revenue to incentivize the government's commitment; however, a major challenge is that criminal organizations are seizing mining territories previously controlled by the FARC and perpetuating violence and doing serious environmental harm [1, 2]. Or there is the Philippines, where extortion of mining companies by paramilitary groups has led to more militarized security around mining sites, which has led to violence and criminalization of even legitimate protests to protect the environment and human rights [3].

New technologies, including technologies central to a clean energy transition, mean that mining will remain a necessary industry. As a result, the human community will remain in need of ways to minimize and cope with the environmental violence of mining. This essay describes the connection between mining and environmental violence, that is, how mining does direct harm to the environment and in turn the ability of communities to thrive in those environments. This

includes consideration of the paradox by which anticipated long-term benefits of renewable energy technology are problematized in the short term by that ecological and human harm, as well as broader questions about the sufficiency and justice of renewable energy. After describing these connections between mining and environmental violence, I will turn to ways in which Catholic peacebuilding, both in teaching and practice, can offer distinct resources for dealing with these challenges. This includes the Catholic social teaching principles of subsidiarity, care for creation, and integral human development; the church's extensive grassroots presence; and the church's institutional structure that enables networking between impacted communities and between communities and higher social orders. The argument is not that these resources are unique to the Catholic community. Rather, the idea is that the Catholic community, particularly through its theory and praxis of peacebuilding, can array and marshal these resources in a distinctive way that gives it special potential for responding to mining and environmental violence. Throughout the world, Catholic actors are engaged on issues of mining, and this argument about the Catholic community's potential and capacity will draw on some of these examples of engagement. The Catholic community has shortcomings in this area, but there are some practical ways that they can be addressed to improve impact.

13.2 Mining and Environmental Violence

In January of 2019, the tailings dam at an iron ore mine in Brumadinho, Brazil collapsed. Two hundred seventy people died. Twelve million cubic meters of ore tailings were released into the nearby Paraopeba River, causing increased water turbidity and contamination that spread as far as 242 kilometers downstream [4]. Staff from the mining company that ran the site, Vale, have been charged with murder, and the company has been ordered to pay USD 7 billion in compensation in socio-economic and socio-environmental damages with the possibility of more as remediation efforts advance [5]. Sadly, this incident is not one that can be brushed aside as a fluke or outlier given the data about how many other at-risk tailings dams exist [6]. Since the Brumadinho disaster, at least 16 known tailings dam collapses have occurred in countries around the world including Brazil, India, Peru, China, South Africa, Turkey, Angola, Myanmar, and Mexico [7].

Dramatic cases like Brumadinho demonstrate the environmental risks of mining and the severe damage they can do. But the environmental violence of mining can come in myriad forms, including social, cultural, and economic ones. The land scarring, deforestation, water depletion, and harmful waste associated with mining can increase climate vulnerability, hasten displacement, worsen resource scarcity, threaten cultural heritages, disempower already marginalized peoples, and cause

illness and death. Severine Deneulin and Yvonne Orengo have detailed two powerful examples of mining areas, the Atacama region of Chile and the Anosy region of Madagascar, where predominantly marginalized peoples live and have had their ways of life almost completely undone [8]. With regard to illness and death, there is the noted case of the people of Cajamarca, Peru, who are still feeling effects more than two decades after a mercury spill at the Yanacocha gold mine [9]. There is also the near-genocidal generational violence against Native Americans as a result of uranium mining [10].

Mining also raises concerns about the environment's well-being for its own sake. In Colombia, mining is responsible for an increasing share of deforestation, posing a major threat to Colombia's massive biodiversity [11]. Birds in Colombia are not at high risk for extinction, but deforestation from mining and other activities, like agricultural expansion, are steadily raising the extinction risk level as the 2016 Peace Accord has opened new opportunities for land development as well as expansion of illegal mining and illicit crop activities [12]. A 2017 study by the Humboldt Institute in Bogotá identified 2700 plant and animal species as endangered due to forest and wetland loss, both of which are accelerating since the signing of the country's peace agreement [13].

The Philippines is another case that brings together many of these environmental violence problems. Deforestation in the Philippines has accelerated in recent decades, with 151 000 hectares of primary forest lost between 2002 and 2020 [14]. This includes mangrove forests which are an important natural defense against storms and shoreline erosion. Logging, agriculture, dams, and other forms of land development are to blame, but mining is one of the chief culprits [15]. This large-scale loss of tree cover is a violence to the environment itself, a violence to communities for whom forests provide livelihoods and resources as well as cultural anchors, and it is a violence that worsens the country's already precarious climate vulnerability. The Philippines is rated the third most at-risk country for climate change impacts, and economic development models that are overly reliant on environmentally violent activities like mining and logging are exacerbating that risk [16].

One of the biggest drivers today of increased mining is the push for renewable energy technologies, which require certain minerals to function. So, there is tension with this method of reducing the extraction and use of fossil fuels for energy, which comes at the cost of increased mineral mining: One kind of digging is replaced by another, and the adverse economic and ecological impacts on the communities where the mining occurs remain. Another dimension of the problem is that most clean energy technologies are being put to use in the global North, while the mining that enables them occurs in the global South. A report from the London Mining Network has detailed and critiqued this dynamic by which the

global North simply displaces its climate change footprint to the global South by relying on solutions that depend on continued extraction ([17], p. 5).

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a paradigmatic example. The DRC produces more than half of the world's cobalt, which is used in many different technologies, but batteries for renewable energy are expected to account for over 50% of its projected market growth by 2025 [18]. This means increased capacity for renewable energy in the global North will come at the cost of human rights violations, state violence, social instability, environmental damage, and compromised economic development in the DRC where, ironically, mining in remote areas is bringing attention to a severe lack in energy infrastructure [19, 20].

Despite these problems, renewable energy has merits. It is a better option than continued fossil fuel pollution accelerating climate change. It would be naive, and perhaps even counterproductive, to suggest that all mining stop. Although many of the resources needed for renewable energy technology are highly recyclable [21], recycling is not a panacea that would completely eliminate the need for virgin ores [22]. The challenge then becomes how to untangle renewable energy from models of development and lifestyles that assume problems related to extraction can be solved by more extraction, and economic growth outweighs the damage that extraction may cause. If mining is necessary for renewable energy, a major ethical question becomes how communities might be empowered, politically and economically, rather than become victims of environmental violence.

13.3 Catholic Resources

Catholic peacebuilders have been engaged for a long time on issues of mining. Their work demonstrates the distinct, if not necessarily unique, assets possessed by the Catholic Church to address these challenges of mining and environmental violence. This is not to say that the Catholic Church is the only institution that has these capacities nor to say that the Catholic community can solve these problems fully of its own accord without other partners and collaborators. There are community activists and policy advocates working tirelessly and effectively to curb the sorts of problems outlined above who are not within the Catholic fold. Even the most dedicated Catholic actors on issues of mining, environmental protection, and defense of human rights need to partner with secular and interreligious groups, for example, to improve their technical knowledge, form more effective coalitions, recognize blind spots, or attain the scale of response needed for the massive scope of the problems related to environmental violence and mining. What "distinct" does mean here is that the Catholic Church, and related organizations that are not formally part of the church's institutional hierarchy, has distinctly strong potential to address these problems and also offers a distinct ability to array and marshal the

different levels of response that are needed. This distinct capacity comes substantively from the body of ethical reflection known as Catholic social teaching, and procedurally from the church's grassroots presence and its institutional structure that enables vertical and horizontal integration.

The procedural aspects highlight ways in which the global network of the Catholic Church allows it to have local embeddedness and wide reach that are necessary for addressing problems of mining and environmental violence. Both of these problems are simultaneously radically local in that they have very specific contextual dynamics, and radically global in that they are driven by globalized economics and politics. They, therefore, need responses that have strong community roots and an ability to integrate levels and locations of response. The substantive capacity, Catholic social teaching, points at distinct content in the Catholic tradition that can support solutions to such multifaceted problems.

13.3.1 Catholic Social Teaching

The corpus of Catholic social teaching anchors and animates the efforts of peacebuilders and other actors and leaders in the Catholic community. This tradition encompasses formal magisterial teaching, praxis, reflection, and academic inquiry on matters of social ethics and justice. It is typically considered to have started in 1891 when Pope Leo XIII wrote his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which was the first document of its kind to address what we would now call social justice issues [23]. For *Rerum Novarum,* that largely meant workers' rights and matters of economic justice. But later developments of Catholic social teaching have addressed a wide range of subjects, such as nuclear weapons, the environment, human rights, and development. The most direct distillation of this material is in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, but it is very much a living tradition that exists in local praxis and lived reality as much as it does in formal institutional documents [24]. This dynamic has yielded a body of thought that offers a robust and honed set of principles that is nimble and adaptive to the changing "signs of the times," yet firmly rooted in a 2000-year-deep foundation of moral tradition. Three prominent themes of contemporary Catholic social teaching that are relevant to environmental violence and mining and help to give substance to the procedural capacities are subsidiarity, care for creation, and integral human development.

13.3.1.1 Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity refers to the principle in Catholic social teaching that higher order social structures should not interfere with lower order ones when it is not necessary to do so ([24], §185–86). But when it is necessary, such as when smaller

social orders lack the ability to safeguard their own integral well-being, or when higher-level policies for the common good necessitate coordination at the local level, higher orders have an obligation to step in. Put simply, it says problems should be handled at the lowest level possible but at the highest level necessary. This is because Catholic social teaching always has concern for the dignity of the person as its starting point and adheres to the idea that the family is the fundamental unit of society. As a result, it believes that structures of society ought to serve the good of the person and the integrity of the family and not vice versa. Therefore, governance structures need to respect as much as possible the self-determination and freedom of the person, so as to center his or her dignity, but also protect that dignity when forces threaten it.

Environmental violence, including forms resulting from mining, is very much related to issues of governance and regulation [25, 26]. Subsidiarity is a principle that aims to optimize governance. It recognizes that the closer things are to the local level, the sharper the ability to do what is best for the human dignity of individuals within their particular contexts. And so, the governance of the environment – including regulation of natural resources, pollution standards, ecological management for economic development plans, or environmental preservation – should be responsive to input from those closest to the environment itself. This does not only mean governments listening to grassroots leaders. It also means international regulations ensuring that international economic interests do not overwhelm national leaders and prevent them from prudentially protecting their ecologies and communities. This is precisely an argument that Pope Francis made about defending the Amazon from being "internationalized" in a way that would do violence to the freedom and dignity of communities in the region ([27], §50–52).

With regard to mining in particular, the principle of subsidiarity arrives at support for a key industry practice: acquiring free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). FPIC is when a mining company gets the consent of impacted communities before beginning operations. Frequently, it amounts to a pro forma exercise in which a company needs to do only a bare minimum to meet the legal requirements in a given area. Or companies maneuver around laws to minimize their obligations. For example, in Peru, companies can skirt consultation legislation to protect indigenous communities by instead fulfilling less demanding laws for projects with significant environmental impacts. The latter only requires prospective concession holders to run ads in two newspapers, which are in Spanish and circulate predominantly in cities and do not reach rural indigenous communities who speak Quechua and are often the ones most impacted by a proposed mine ([28], p. 74). Additionally, indigenous communities that have tried to appeal to the stricter consultation requirements have had courts decide that they lack sufficient proof that they are in fact indigenous and, therefore, ineligible to claim those protections ([28],

pp. 73–74). This is one area addressed in the legal advocacy work of Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente-Puno (DHUMA).[1] And collectively, Catholic organizations around the world have seized on "the right to say no" as a foundational tenet of mining justice, arguing that communities must be given a legitimate right of refusal during the consultation process about a mine [29]. This strident focus on the rights of communities to speak for themselves with regard to the governance of natural resources is grounded in the subsidiarity principle.

This scale-down dimension of subsidiarity is not the whole story, however. There is, as noted, also a scale-up dimension premised on the idea that lower levels of social order often lack the capacity or resources to defend human dignity effectively. This might be because of corruption at different levels of society, power imbalances that exist between communities and multinational corporations, societal breakdowns due to armed conflict or environmental problems such as drought, competing priorities that need coordination at a higher level, or the problems at stake being too large or complex to be dealt with locally. Whatever the reason, it is often appropriate for higher levels of social order with greater capacity, resources, and reach to step in to address problems lower levels cannot. The Brumadinho tailings dam collapse is an example. It was a case of direct environmental violence caused by failures of governance, as Catholic leaders in Brazil have argued [30]. But the local community would not have been in a position to force oversight or regulation that could have required the mining company to fix the problem that led to the collapse. The experiences of local communities like Brumadinho are vital for motivating that kind of governance change, but is not sufficient to do so, which is why the Catholic bishops of Brazil have continued to advocate at the policy level [31].

Colombia similarly serves as a demonstration of upscaling subsidiarity. Without the higher order coordination led by the National Episcopal Conference, territorial parishes and the communities of which they are a part would be much more vulnerable to the seduction of mining development and blind to the slow violence that mining can cause despite seemingly shiny benefits from corporate social responsibility projects [32]. The broader perspective from the national level helps mitigate these situations by providing fuller information, offering moral reasoning to help shift priorities, and, at least to some small degree, addressing the skewed power dynamics between mining companies and communities. By lobbying and advocating at the national level for better protections, the conference prevents communities from having to make judgments in isolation with a limited perspective. In Colombia, this may also mean finding the most just way to allow mining to proceed so that it can support the national peace agreement. Similarly, in some

[1] See www.derechoshumanospuno.org.pe/

countries, higher order coordination may mean finding the most prudent way for mining to occur and not just be halted by local opposition. For example, materials for renewable energy or medical technologies are worthwhile to mine but minimizing local harms at mining sites will require complex measures that supersede the capacities of local communities.

More broadly and plainly, environmental violence is a global issue. Especially in the case of mining, violence occurs in particular places to particular persons, but many of the variables in the equation are inescapably global – globalized supply chains, emissions, the energy economy, and of course climate change. All these issues can cause or relate to diverse forms of violence at the grassroots level but cannot be managed from the grassroots level. Subsidiarity is a reminder that while there is value in staying rooted to the community level to ensure vulnerable voices and communities are represented, their dignity and lives are protected, and their empowerment is promoted, those goals are done a disservice without attending meaningfully to the higher-order levels of social organization that can effectively confront complex global problems.

13.3.1.2 Care for Creation

This is an area that is being critically rethought in Catholic social teaching. As pointed out by theologian Laurie Johnston, much of Catholic social teaching has presented environmental ethics as a corollary to human goods ([33], p. 266). For instance, a prominent idea in Catholic social teaching is the universal destination of goods, which states that the resources of the Earth should be equitably distributed for the good of all peoples. But as Johnston notes, it treats the environment as something merely instrumental to human flourishing. Arguments rooted in this sort of instrumental understanding of the environment are difficult to use to motivate people to action or change based on consequences that are far distant from them. They also make it harder to motivate action or change based on damage to the environment itself when an immediate human impact cannot be clearly recognized, even if those consequences might simply be harder to see, such as with biodiversity loss.

But care for creation for its own sake has been a growing idea in Catholic social teaching. Theologically, an important foundation for this is when St. Paul, in his Letter to the Romans (8:19–23), describes a salvation destiny for all of creation, not only humankind. Thinking of the entirety of the natural world as having a place in the divine order, not only instrumentally, but for its own sake, is the germ of what Pope Francis has called the Gospel of Creation ([34], ch. 2). The Gospel of Creation is a way of understanding the Bible and Christian revelation in a key that holds up the environment as something loved by God, or as a good in itself to which humans have moral obligations. Seeing the environment as "creation"

is at the crux of this thinking ([35], p. 117). The well-worn critique of Lyn White about the culpability of Christianity for the current climate crisis is predicated on a Christian understanding of the environment as "nature," as just the context in which the human drama of salvation history plays out. Nature is separate, the mere setting for humans to try to achieve their ultimate destiny. But the move to frame the environment as "creation" attempts to undo that separation. It is a statement that the natural world is imbued with a divine destiny that has moral standing. Being created by God is the source of the claim that all humans have dignity that must be respected and treated morally. Saying the environment is created gives it its own dignity that must also be respected and treated morally.

A strong demonstration of this way of thinking came in June of 2022. The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, a continental council of African bishops' conferences, published a statement in which they took a public position regarding biodiversity protection. The statement does maintain the language of humans needing to "exercise responsible stewardship *over* [emphasis added] creation," but it also clearly highlights the good of creation for its own sake in parallel with concern for consequences on human well-being [36]. It begins with an assertion that the Earth itself is suffering, and that the cause is irresponsible human action. The starting point is not human suffering caused by climatological factors. The Earth itself is framed as an entity that is due moral responsibility. The statement goes on: "[A]n extractive, unsustainable economy is causing the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, which is destroying God's creation and harming the most vulnerable among us, those who have done little to cause the crisis, the poor and the Earth" [36]. Human suffering does matter, particularly the unjust suffering of vulnerable peoples in the global South who are impacted by environmental violence caused by activity by those in the global North, but that human cost is kept in clear balance with the suffering of the environment itself.

Such an ethical paradigm is crucial for advancing solutions to environmental violence. It grants importance to cases of environmental violence that primarily deal with harm to nature and might otherwise be brushed aside because human impact is harder to see or, as is often the case with mining, human benefit can cloud other negative impacts. This paradigm also grants greater weight and urgency to the complex realities of environmental violence wherein human consequences and environmental consequences are inextricably linked.

13.3.1.3 Integral Human Development

Pope Francis has been a champion of the idea of integral human development (IHD). Structurally, he made IHD central in 2016 when he merged several Vatican departments and created the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Conceptually, though, the idea has been prominent since Pope St.

Paul VI introduced it in his 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. At the time, Paul VI was dissatisfied with purely economic definitions of development and instead advocated for a model of development that accounts for the whole person and giving opportunities to each person ([37], §14). The idea has grown significantly since, with Pope Francis, for example, helping to emphasize the importance of a "culture of encounter" for authentic IHD, which means accompanying people at the margins to understand their situations and needs [38]. In sum, the idea is an affirmation that variables that may not easily be quantified in economic measures are central to human flourishing, and that development is not legitimate when those variables are not included.

One such variable is the environment: "An economy respectful of the environment will not have the maximization of profits as its only objective, because environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces" ([24], §470). Pope Francis's teaching has placed great emphasis on integral ecology, which is conceptually inseparable from IHD. Both ideas claim that human flourishing and ecological flourishing go hand in hand: "Frequently, in fact, people's quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth" ([34], §194). Given current understandings of climate change and the global scale of its causes and effects, the environmental well-being to which each person's human well-being is tied is truly global in scope.

From this base, IHD can help assess one of the thornier issues of environmental violence connected to mining – mining in the global South that is necessary for renewable energy technologies that are predominantly used in the global North. As outlined above, renewable energy technologies come with environmental consequences of their own because of the need for numerous resources that must be acquired through mining, which leaves environmental, social, and economic wounds in the places where it occurs. In this way, these technologies frequently amount to global North countries trading the environmental violence of fossil fuels for the environmental violence of mining. This situation is problematic from the perspective of subsidiarity in that the rush for metals and minerals for renewable energy technology can overwhelm countries and communities trying to chart more effective development paths for themselves. It is problematic from the perspective of care for creation in that direct environmental violence with grave consequences is occurring. But the framework of IHD can help point to the beginnings of a solution.

If economic growth to benefit some is coming at the cost of a diminished quality of life for others, as Francis described, then IHD would criticize that economic

growth. Francis, in fact, does argue that "the time has come to accept decreased growth in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth" ([34], §193). Francis does not explicitly use the term, but his insights hew closely to the degrowth movement [39]. That is one of the strongest contributions IHD can make with regard to environmental violence. It can, surely, also offer ideas that critique specific instances of people and communities suffering from environmental violence or consequences of mining. If a community is having its standard of living diminished by a mine, whether through environmental problems, economic stagnation, or increased militarization, then that activity would not meet the standards of IHD. But it is a more powerful contribution to give a critique of the deeper source of that diminishment, which is resource and energy demand in places generally distant from those mining sites. And to repeat, this is the case even when that demand is met by renewable energy technology. The problem cannot be fixed without a change in the very economic and social paradigm that drives that demand.

Douglass Cassel, an expert in international human rights law, affirms that Catholic social teaching offers an expansion of the necessarily minimalistic standards set forth in international regulations concerning mining specifically and human rights and economic development more broadly. Cassel claims of international norms: "They accept cultures, however misguided, and development models, however short-sighted" ([40], p. 134). By contrast, Catholic social teaching, with principles like IHD, calls for a more revolutionary change in the underlying economic and political models that international norms accept as their parameters. As argued by Clemens Sedmak, a theological underpinning for the principles of IHD gives them greater depth and potential for motivating actual change and speaks to the reality that a majority of people on the planet do uphold religious values of some kind ([41], pp. 157–159). An argument for IHD from a theological perspective has a better chance to resonate even with non-Catholic religious communities.

The Catholic Church indeed has begun to take leadership in this way. In May of 2021, the Vatican launched its *Laudato Si'* Action Platform, a campaign to educate and guide action for implementing the principles of integral ecology and IHD into the life of the worldwide church.[2] It includes goals like carbon neutrality and increased renewable energy use but also advocates for deeper and more radical change like reduced consumption, simpler lifestyles, and ecologically informed styles of spirituality. The platform has also encouraged fossil fuel divestment, with 36 Catholic organizations joining a divestment pledge in October of 2021 that included a total of 72 religious institutions [42]. The platform embraces the value of clean energy and looks for ways to conduct activity in the current economic

[2] See https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/

system in the most ecologically responsible ways possible, but it also recognizes that continued dependence on present levels of extractive activity is untenable because of the impact extraction has on vulnerable peoples. Unfettered economic growth, even with an increase in clean energy, does not allow for real solutions to the climate crisis and the instances of environmental violence that it creates.

13.3.2 Grassroots Presence

In describing the peacebuilding strengths of the Catholic Church, John Paul Lederach has noted the church's "ubiquitous presence" ([43], p. 50). In a similar vein, at a recent research colloquium, Raymond Offenheiser, former president of Oxfam America and a member of an ethics board for a major mining company, relayed a conversation that he once had with a group of mining executives. He told them that one of their biggest potential threats is the Catholic Church because of the presence it has in all of the places where mining occurs, even remote places that have little to no international presence.[3] Whether through outreach to territorial dioceses in the Amazon by the Episcopal Conference of Colombia, diocesan observatories run by the Jesuits in the DRC, research by the Central American University in El Salvador, activism by watchdog groups like Alyansa Tigil Mina in the Philippines,[4] or legal advocacy for indigenous peoples by DHUMA in Peru, the presence of Catholic actors on the ground at mining sites around the world is indeed pervasive and diverse. Just about anywhere that environmental violence from mining occurs, the Catholic community is present. An important characteristic of this Catholic presence is that it is locally rooted. In peacebuilding generally, church actors and other religious leaders add value by being more invested and committed than international organizations would be. While international groups remain engaged only for limited terms, often the term of a grant program or funding cycle, religious leaders working in their home countries and communities remain committed to the long, drawn-out process that durable peace requires.

The Catholic Church in the Philippines is a good example. The Catholic community in the Philippines developed a focus on ecology during the 1980s, largely due to logging activity that eliminated 29 million of the country's 30 million hectares of primary forests ([44], p. 59). Catholic missionaries were present within peasant villages supporting base ecclesial communities. Base ecclesial communities proliferated during the liberation theology movement of the 1970s and 1980s and were community-level groups of Catholics who would regularly meet to pray

[3] This story was relayed during a colloquium hosted by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, September 6, 2019.

[4] See www.alyansatigilmina.net/

and study scripture while also organizing around justice issues. This engagement within the Catholic community filtered to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, which published a pastoral letter in 1988 admonishing reckless environmental policies and practices that it deemed sinful violations against nature and the peasant communities that depended on nature for their well-being [45]. In 1995, the Philippines passed its new Mining Act that ushered a major liberalization of the country's mining industry. The church's concern with ecological issues evolved into concern with mining, and through the 1990s to the present, it has remained a consistent voice advocating for the rights of rural and indigenous communities impacted by mining development, as well as for the environment itself ([44], pp. 59–63). Recently, the Philippine Church started an initiative called Eco-Convergence that established regional hubs in areas heavily impacted by mining that are meant to lead sustained environmental campaigns, monitor and gather data on mining operations, and conscientize local communities about mining advocacy [46]. The Eco-Convergence initiative is the most recent effort in a sustained, three-and-a-half-decade engagement by the Philippine Church on issues of environmental violence, which is rooted in and continues to be guided by its presence in remote communities where acts of environmental violence might otherwise stay couched in obscurity.

13.3.3 Horizontal and Vertical Integration

The preceding Philippines example points to another asset in the Catholic community for addressing mining and environmental harms – the capacity for both vertical and horizontal integration. That is, the capacity to network and amplify the work of grassroots and community-level actors across countries and continents (horizontal), and the capacity to connect grassroots and community-level actors through the church's organizational reach to higher levels where policy, governance, and regulation issues live (vertical).

Lederach refers to this horizontal and vertical capacity as part of how the church can deal with the challenge that can be created by its ubiquity – the challenge of being in "inevitable relationship" with parties on both sides of a conflict ([43], pp. 50–51). The context in which Lederach makes this observation is internal armed conflict and the way church leaders and pastors can end up being in places of sympathy for multiple competing stakeholders in the conflict. This dilemma can be easily transposed to a context of mining. A local pastor in one place might have a very different view of mining than one in a different place, or than a bishop working at the national level. The reasons may include a different experience with mining officials, a different political disposition, or a different judgment about the weighing of benefits and harms. In the context of mining, this sort of disunity can

leave communities insulated and at the mercy of the enormous financial, legal, and political power of mining companies. But the church's institutional network has the ability to prevent that insulation and create a coherent approach, even if it is not always fully actualized. This ability can be an effective tool to empower resistance to mining and various forms of environmental violence.

To expand on the horizontal dimension, the Philippines is again relevant, but in relation to El Salvador. In 2017, El Salvador became the first country to pass legislation for a total ban on metal mining. The ban was motivated largely by the harm gold mining could cause to the country's primary watershed, threatening agriculture as well as the already precarious supply of drinking water. The ban itself was achieved with support from the leadership of the Catholic Church, which helped consolidate national support, and academics from the Jesuit-run Central American University, who drafted proposed legislation and provided data and research to make the potential harms of mining in the country known. This national effort itself shows the church's horizontal reach with the way the church was central to creating a unified national front to support the legislation. One early key event extends the scope of that horizontal reach even further. To counter claims from a gold mining company that was downplaying the environmental impacts of its proposed operations, Salvadoran Catholic leaders were able to use their church networks to identify a mayor of a small city in the Philippines where the same mining company had operated. An audience with that mayor and his testimony about the environmental damage and negative social impacts brought about by the mining project helped galvanize El Salvador's national movement ([47], p. 89).

In South America, this kind of transnational networking to lend better support to communities impacted by mining and other sources of environmental violence has been institutionalized. The Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM)[5] was founded in 2014 and is comprised now of hundreds of Catholic institutional bodies, missionary groups, religious orders, and others across South America's Amazon region. It is a platform for sharing experience, services, and resources to articulate coherent advocacy on behalf of the environment and human rights, especially for the most vulnerable communities in the Amazon region, including the poor and indigenous peoples. Its success has spawned two similar groups in Central America and the Congo Basin. For mining in particular, the group Iglesias y Minería (IM)[6] was first articulated in 2013 and became a structured entity in 2014. It is an ecumenical group that includes Catholics and non-Catholic Christians, as well as some non-faith-based organizations. IM is very much rooted

[5] See www.repam.net
[6] See https://iglesiasymineria.org/

in communities that have been directly impacted by human and environmental violations related to mining, and their mission is overtly faith-based. Values of the gospel that offer defense for human rights, justice, and peace drive the network's activity, which includes producing educational materials, policy advocacy, reporting, and direct activism.

In the vertical dimension, there are many instances of Catholic groups channeling grassroots interests up to higher social levels to open dialogue or effect legal and policy change, and of higher-level coordination assisting better or stronger responses at the community level. One major example of the former dynamic is when the Holy See convened a series of meetings between executives from some of the world's biggest mining companies, global church actors representing communities affected by mining, and leaders from the Methodist and Anglican Churches. The most recent of these convenings took place in 2019 [48]. It included Fr. Rodrigo Péret, OFM, the director of IM, along with a representative from the town of Brumadinho, Brazil, just months after the deadly tailings dam collapse occurred there. The impact of these meetings is very much in question, with Péret offering a strong critique of what he saw as too much capitulation to the mining companies in terms of setting the agenda for the dialogues [49], but the capacity to get a brutally victimized villager and top-level executives, whose industry caused the environmental violence, into the same room is in itself noteworthy. It demonstrates the church's ability to bring the lowest grassroots levels together with the highest levels of corporate or political power. On smaller scales, it is seen elsewhere. In Peru, DHUMA has successfully tried several court cases at the national level to secure protections for indigenous communities struggling against mining companies [28]. In the DRC, Centre d'Etudes Pour l'Action Sociale[7] helped to represent the experiences of local communities and to lead a study of mining contracts signed during the country's civil war period that were deemed exploitative ([50], pp. 48–49). Few organizations have the ability to carry the voice of local victims of environmental violence to board rooms, courtrooms, and meeting rooms for government ministers as effectively as the church.

The church's capacity for vertical integration does not only flow bottom-up. In some situations, a top-down vector for integration can be just as valuable, following the principle of subsidiarity. The El Salvador example above is a good demonstration. Pro-mining interests in the country engaged in a campaign to disparage mining resistance, and in 2009 five anti-mining activists were assassinated ([47], p. 85). In a context where ordinary people largely did not understand the environmental consequences of mining, specifically on the water supply, the population was susceptible to the pro-mining messages downplaying environmental issues and promoting economic benefits. Fernando Sáenz Lacalle, the Archbishop

[7] See www.cepas.online/

of San Salvador from 1995 to 2008, was educated as a chemist, and the dangers of cyanide runoff from gold mining made him a staunch ally of the anti-mining movement. While the anti-mining campaign in El Salvador began as a grassroots movement, the centralized leadership of the Catholic Church, under Lacalle and his successor as well as their brother bishops in the country, was key to creating a unified movement that could counter the pro-mining demonstrations and propaganda ([51], pp. 16–21). The bishops approved and promoted legislation drafted by Central American University academics, helped to focus the public advocacy campaign, and consolidated support around it. The legislation ultimately moved forward and became a major policy victory.

Colombia was noted above as an example of upscaling subsidiarity, and similarly demonstrates the value of vertical integration from the top down. After the country's 2016 peace agreement was signed, territories previously controlled by the FARC could be opened up to mining development, which the government has aggressively pursued as an economic development strategy. However, many of these areas are in the highly biodiverse Colombian Amazon. On the ground, local church leaders and local communities have had and continue to have differing views about mining. The Episcopal Conference of Colombia, which was centrally involved in bringing about the 2016 Peace Accord and remains heavily involved in its implementation, has established a platform focused on ecological preservation. National church leadership has been advocating for pastors in the country's territories to promote an "eco-theology of peace" [52], which is teaching and preaching focused on emphasizing the interconnections between peace, development, and the environment and their centrality to Christian discipleship. The goal is to unify the church's voice and to ensure that environmental protection is held up as a major priority as the country's peace implementation continues. An example of this platform being concretized is the way Colombia's national arm of the Catholic Church's Cáritas network has supported green job training for ex-combatants in territorial regions, such as hydroelectric and aquaculture initiatives [53]. If development and peace implementation can be woven together with environmental protection, then the need to develop environmentally violent industries like mining to implement peace can be avoided or, at the very least, greatly minimized.

13.3.4 Limitations and Areas for Improvement

Despite these capacities and their actualization in some of the cases outlined above, the Catholic community remains limited in what it can accomplish and to what degree it effectively fulfills its potentials. Catholic actors can improve in three particular areas to be more effective agents of change with regard to mining and environmental violence.

13.3.4.1 Improved Technical Capacity

According to Scott Appleby: "It is not enough … for Catholics to expect secular experts to understand the theology of Catholic peacebuilding. Catholics must provide translation services" ([54], p. 19). The Catholic Church has the capacity to interface with those in the political and business worlds, but if it is to translate its teachings and ideas on mining into the language of those worlds, it must become better versed in the financial and technical aspects of the mining industry. Catholic actors need to also be up to date with industry standards in environmental protection, FPIC, and other areas of ethical concern. If they are not, even if those industry standards leave much to be desired, then those trying to engage with the industry will lose credibility as dialogue partners and lose out on opportunities to push for improvement ([55], pp. 232–234).

Catholic peacebuilders are often toeing a line between being prophetic critics of worldly powers and compromisers and collaborators with those powers when they show goodwill and provide an opening for transformation. Improved technical knowledge, whether through increasing the capacity of Catholic actors or through partnerships with non-Catholics with similar values and goals but better technical knowledge, helps both directions of the prophetic-collaborative tension ([33], p. 264). A better knowledge base will allow Catholic actors seeking to minimize environmental violence or other harms from mining to elevate their critiques to the levels of policy and finance, where more lasting and effective change is possible. At the same time, when that prophetic posture does find willing audiences within the industry, increased technical knowledge will allow for more effective collaboration. However faithful efforts are to Catholic social teaching and however poignant the ethical critiques, they will be severely limited if they cannot be translated into the language that orients and drives the financial, business, and technical dimensions of the mining industry.

13.3.4.2 Women's Leadership

The Catholic community's record of holding up women's specific roles in defending human rights and the environment is wanting. As Laurie Johnston observed: "The leadership of the mining industry and the leadership of the institutional church are both male-dominated. Yet the greatest negative impacts of mining accrue to women" ([33], p. 262). Case research bears this out [56, 57]. Data also indicate that women environmental defenders are more likely to encounter violence, particularly in connection to mining, and more frequently to have those perpetrators receive legal impunity [58].

Embracing the courageous leadership of women would enhance Catholic efforts for peacebuilding generally [59] and for addressing environmental violence and mining specifically [60]. The disproportionate harms experienced by women also

make centering women's experiences a matter of justice. The Catholic community includes lay women and women religious engaged deeply on issues of mining. Putting a greater emphasis on the work these women do could significantly improve impact. This should mean having women in prominent roles when Catholic leaders engage with policy and business leaders, fostering grassroots programming aimed at strengthening women's community leadership, and highlighting the gendered consequences of environmental violence and other forms of violence related to the mining industry.

13.3.4.3 Making Good on Network Potentials

Although the Catholic Church's capacity for both horizontal and vertical integration has had instances of success, there is still room for improvement. Theologian Vincent Miller has argued that the institutional network of the Catholic Church is a potentially powerful counterbalance to the inexorable market networks that set the terms of much of the contemporary world's interactions, especially on an international scale [61]. For Miller, the church can imbue our globalized interconnections with a sense of solidarity to combat the way that economic markets obscure and entrench various forms of harm, especially at resource origin points like mining sites. Miller's argument is based on the idea that for change to happen in a globalized industry like mining, people in the global North need to be included in the integration that the church makes possible. Consumer-end pressure is important for influencing legal changes in the home countries of mining firms and can exert investor pressure on companies. But for that to happen, those consumers need to be brought into solidaric empathy with the people in the global South who are bearing the brunt of the consequences for their modern lifestyles. Miller cites the example of the Central American Solidarity movement in the 1980s that was able to mobilize North American Catholics to support and influence policy change regarding Cold War–era proxy wars in Central America ([61], p. 213).

To achieve this, Miller argues, the church needs to better activate its ecclesial networks along vectors that connect global North and global South. The examples noted above of horizontal integration are limited to connections between communities in the global South. As powerful as those connections are, ones between the global North and global South are needed. Concrete relationships between persons and communities, as in the Central American Solidarity movement, could help, but an even easier starting point would be more attention on environmental issues from Catholic leaders in countries like the United States. As much as Pope Francis's *Laudato Si''* has given the twenty-first century Catholic Church an ecological agenda, bishops in the United States have largely ignored it [62]. Stronger pastoral focus on ecology is needed, especially environmental impacts on vulnerable peoples thousands of miles away from North American churchgoers whose

lifestyles often increase the suffering of those vulnerable peoples. The full power of the Catholic Church's network capacity will not be realized until the church in the global North is solidarically incorporated.

13.4 Conclusion

Mining and environmental violence are closely related. Mining is a major cause of environmental violence, and it also muddies one high-priority means of addressing environmental violence, that being renewable energy technologies. Mining and environmental violence are phenomena that are intimately local in how they impact specific communities and specific ecologies, while being expansively global in how they are part of complex global structures of economics, consumption, and political and corporate power, all of which are beset by vexing patterns of injustice and inequity.

The Catholic Church is an entity that is distinctively situated to respond to these issues, and its peacebuilding theory and praxis offer promising resources to support such a response. The Catholic Church has its tradition of Catholic social teaching, which gives a robust system of moral reflection to help critique problems stemming from mining and leading to environmental violence, while showing pathways to solutions. Subsidiarity demands that the dignity of persons and communities be kept at the center, which sometimes means acceding authority to higher social orders with more capacity and resources to protect community well-being and the global common good. Care for creation situates creation itself as an entity with moral standing apart from its utility to human flourishing. IHD asserts that models of economic development that do environmental violence and reduce the quality of life for some, while improving it for others, are inauthentic and need to be transformed with revolutionary changes to the patterns of consumption that drive narrowly growth-focused models of development. The Catholic Church also has a pervasive presence in local communities impacted by mining and related forms of environmental violence. Its institutional structure and network nature make it able to integrate communities horizontally so that marginalized voices can be amplified and community experience more effectively shared. It is also able to integrate communities with higher orders of authority vertically so that responses can be coordinated, and grassroots concerns can be represented at the levels of policy and regulation.

The Catholic Church is not the only institution that possesses these capacities. It could exercise them much more effectively, and it is not capable of fixing problems of mining and environmental violence without a wide coalition of partners. However, the Catholic community is capable of offering distinct value to the effort of addressing such problems because of the distinct way in which it can array and marshal these resources.

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