Disparities in Development: Global, Regional, and Local

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Paper Abstracts

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Disparity in Policy and Practice? Global and Local Perspectives on Socially just Development in Solomon Islands’ Emerging Mining Industry

Despite the existence of numerous social policies and ‘best practice’ standards, mining activity continue to engender socially unjust outcomes at the local scale, particularly in the developing country context. This raises questions on the efficacy of policy and planning frameworks in mitigating and minimising the potential social impacts for local communities affected by mining activity. In particular, what enables these socially unjust outcomes? Do policy and planning frameworks produce social injustice for local communities affected by mining activity? How can we better plan for and address the potential social impacts?

The presenter’s doctoral research sought to address these questions by critically analysing the emerging mining industry in Solomon Islands, a small island developing state in the Pacific region. Employing the conceptual frameworks of political ecology and social justice, and drawing on five months’ fieldwork in Solomon Islands, data was collected across geopolitical scales – local, provincial, national and international – to compare and analyse the perspectives of policies and stakeholders towards socially just development in the context of potential mining activity. While there is a plethora of literature analysing the social impacts of mining in the developing country context, this research differs by taking on the approach that the production of these socially unjust outcomes are best understood at the intersection of geopolitical scales.

Preliminary research findings uncovered that an unequal distribution of power across scales and within policy processes leads to a disparity in policy and practice, subsequently producing socially unjust outcomes at the local scale. This is driven by competing understandings of socially just development, particularly between the global scale and the local scale, and a lack of power available to the local scale to identify and determine the potential social impacts and benefits of mining activity on their communities.

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While conventional thinking with regards to population change has given pride of place to the three central demographic variables (Fertility, Mortality and Migration), family formation and dissolution patterns have been equally important in determining population dynamics. The present study examines the relationship between development and population dynamics by specifically examining the effect of selected socio-demographic factors on changes in the timing of marriage in Ghana using three waves of the Demographic and Health Survey data for that country. While socioeconomic factors such as level of urbanization, region of residence, ethnicity and religion had effect on age at first marriage, it was only education that had a consistent positive relationship with age at first marriage across the three waves of the survey. The development policy implications of this finding is discussed within the context of modernization theory.