Politics and Society Episode One User Guide: Sustainable Development

IN THIS EPISODE!

• Sean McDonagh interview
• Sustainable Development
• Climate Change

EDUCATION IS AN ACT OF LOVE, AND THUS AN ACT OF COURAGE.

Paulo Freire
WHO ARE WE?

Trócaire was established in 1973 as the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Trócaire envisages a just and peaceful world where:

- People’s dignity is ensured and rights are respected
- Basic needs are met and resources are shared equitably
- People have control over their own lives
- Those in power act for the common good

Trócaire works with people who share this vision both here in Ireland and internationally, regardless of religion or ethnicity. We play a key role in educating for justice, fostering dialogue, sharing resources and mobilising people. Check out our website trocaire.org for more information on our work.

INTRODUCING TRÓCAIRE’S GLOBAL VOICES PODCAST

Global Voices Our Choices is a series of podcasts designed for students and teachers of ‘Politics and Society’ to use to support their exploration of the topics in the new curriculum specification. Over the course of the coming academic year 17/18, Trócaire will produce four podcasts based on different areas of the specification, and linking them in with Trócaire’s work as an overseas development agency. As these podcasts are completed over the academic year, they will become available to download here: https://www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/education/resources/global-voices

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

Trócaire will be developing more podcasts to support Politics and Society as the subject develops. We want to make them even better and more useful to students and teachers. If you or your students have any feedback on this episode, please send it to stephen.farley@trocaire.org

Thank you!

CURRICULUM LINKS

This first episode of the Global Voices podcast focuses on sustainable development, in particular the impact that climate change is having on people around the world, and how we in Ireland are contributing to this situation. The podcast features excerpts from interviews with Sean McDonagh, exploring his life as a Columban Missionary, and his contribution to the debate on climate change and sustainable development. The concept of climate change as a global justice issue is also explored, with contributions from Trócaire staff working in different fields.

Specifically, the podcast focuses on the following section of the curriculum:

STRAND FOUR: Globalisation and Localisation

Topic 8 – Sustainable Development

- 8.1 – Actions that address sustainable development
- 8.2 – Arguments concerning sustainable development
- 8.3 – Participants in these debates (Sean McDonagh)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Thanks goes to the following people for generously giving up their time to be interviewed for this podcast:

- Fr Sean McDonagh – Columban Missionary
- Sorcha Fennell – Head of Region for Central, West and Southern Africa, Trócaire
- Colm Hogan – Church Officer, Trócaire
- Emmet Sheerin – Campaigns Officer, Trócaire
- Elisha Kelly – Development Education Officer, Trócaire
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

There are a number of ways in which this podcast can be used with your students:

- Class activity    - Homework    - Revision activity

Also included are suggested ways to follow up with your students on one of the main themes that emerges from the interviews - Climate Change and Fossil Fuel Divestment.

Climate change and fossil fuel divestment - Suggested activities

PART 1) Policy Document - Still Feeling The Heat

Give out copies of the Trócaire policy document ‘Still Feeling the Heat’. Ask students to read through the executive summary from the document found on pages 5-11. Facilitate a discussion amongst the students regarding what are the main points they have taken from the executive summary.

Follow up activity - Split the students into two teams and ask them to debate how effective they think the three main recommendations from the summary are. Are they achievable? Measurable? Realistic? Effective? Accountable? One group must argue for the three recommendations, and one group argues against them.

Note: Further examination of this document will provide students with case studies of how climate change is affecting people around the world, and how it is a justice issue.

PART 2) Show the two short videos below:
Trócaire Video 1 - Divestment and Climate Change Explained
https://vimeo.com/167737353

Trócaire Video 2 - Eithne Brennan reports from Kanyera Village, Dedza, Malawi
https://vimeo.com/167295019

Ask one half of the room to work in pairs and discuss the following questions about video 1:

- Approximately how many people are at risk of hunger by 2050?
- What does divestment mean?
- Why is divesting from fossil fuels a justice issue?

Ask the second half of the room to work in pairs and discuss the following questions about video 2:

- Why were the crops not successful?
- How many people were in need of food aid last year in Malawi and what is the outlook for the year ahead?
- How is this situation in Malawi connected to divesting from fossil fuels in Ireland?

Elicit responses from pairs on either side of the room, opening up a class discussion about the connection between divesting from fossil fuels in Ireland, and examples of the effects of climate change on communities in the Global South.

PART 3) Global Divestment Movements

One of the most well-known examples of a global divestment movement concerns South Africa and Apartheid. People around the world were encouraged not to engage with companies who continued to do business with South Africa during Apartheid.
Ask the students to research this campaign, and answer the following debrief questions:

- Why was the tactic of divestment used in this case?
- What was the aim of asking for divestment in this case?
- Who were these divestment campaigns trying to mobilise, and who were they targeting?
- What similarities are there between the two divestment movements?
- What differences are there between the two divestment movements?
- What are the drawbacks of adopting a divestment approach?

PART 4) Spending and Investing

The aim of this activity is to explore the difference between ‘spending’ and ‘investing’, in particular in relation to Government.

**Step 1:** Divide the group into smaller groups and give them the headings ‘Government Spending’ and ‘Government Investments’. Give each group the set of statements from student handout 1, cut into individual statements. Their task is to assign the statements to each heading. Ask one group to feedback, and see if other groups had similar answers, and if any groups need to move statements to a different heading. Read out the definitions of ‘government spending’ and ‘investment’ below.

**Step 2:** Debrief questions:

- In your own words, how would you explain government spending as different to government investments?
- Do investments always make a profit?
- What do you think are the risks associated with investing in the fossil fuel industry?
- What part of government is responsible for decisions about spending? What part of government is responsible for decisions relating to investments? *Each government department can make decisions about spending within a given budget, for example in health and education. Decisions about investments lie with the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in ROI.*

**Definition of ‘government spending’:**

“Money expended by a government to pay for defense, development projects, education, health, infrastructure, law and order maintenance, etc. Public spending is supported by taxation”.

**Definition of ‘investment’:**

“The investing of money or capital in order to gain profitable returns, as interest, income, or appreciation in value”. Investments can of course be made with public money, for example the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF).
PART 5) ‘To Divest or not Divest’ - Role Play Activity

Step 1: Divide the participants into 6 groups

Step 2: Give each group a role play card from student handout 2, paper and pens, and ask them to read the card and become familiar with their role.

Step 3: Explain that they have been invited to a meeting in government buildings to discuss the issue of divestment with the Department of Finance. Read out the scenario on page 5.

Step 4: Give each group a copy of the ‘Development Compass Rose’ from student handout 3 and ask them to fill in answers for each section in relation to divestment from fossil fuels. This will support them to think about the issue in terms of natural, economic and social implications, and to decide what their position is.

Step 5: Give each group a copy of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in student handout 4, and ask them to place relevant SDGs on the Development Compass Rose, connecting the issue of divestment to global goals for a sustainable future.

Step 6: Ask each group to assign a representative that will explain their arguments at the meeting.

You will act as the chairperson and call the meeting to order. Encourage everyone to share their views while also respecting that one person should talk at any one time, and that all voices are heard. At the end, everyone should vote on whether the government should divest from fossil fuels or not.

Try to bring the students to a consensus that prioritises the health and happiness of local, national and international communities, and the environment, not just their own interests.

The scenario: The Irish government is obligated to take action on climate change in order to implement the 2015 Climate Law in Ireland, because Ireland signed the Paris Agreement, and due to promises made in recent elections. The government is currently exploring the idea of divesting from fossil fuels, however they have concerns regarding the economic cost, and the reaction from different groups at national and international levels. They have called together an advisory group. At a meeting in government buildings the Minister of Finance wishes to get consensus on a number of issues from the members of this advisory group, which will inform the government’s decision on divestment from fossil fuels. The issues on the agenda for discussion are whether the government should:

- Divest the ‘Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF)’ from fossil fuels
- Increase investment in renewable energy
- Provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to the effects of climate change and develop more sustainable practices.
### Government Spending

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Spending</th>
<th>Government Investments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paying for flood defences</td>
<td>Buying stocks and shares in other companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building drainage systems</td>
<td>Buying bonds from banks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing free GP treatment for children</td>
<td>Allocating money to earn a profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing school lunches</td>
<td>Using the national pension fund to earn a profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a light-railway network</td>
<td>Placing money from the pension fund in fossil fuel companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building water systems</td>
<td>Working with financial institutions to allocate reserve funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing infrastructure for broadband</td>
<td>Taking financial risks in order to earn a profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Irish Government

The government is represented by the Minister of Finance and their department at this meeting. This department’s main concern is the economic recovery of the country, including the re-payment of massive loans after the economic recession. The department is also concerned about upsetting voters, potential investors and corporations who may create jobs in Ireland. However, the government is under pressure to address their lack of action on climate change; they have a responsibility to take action after signing the Paris Agreement in 2015, and to implement the new Climate Law (which requires the country to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a low carbon economy). Civil society groups and NGOs are also putting pressure on the government to take action on this issue.

An Oil and Gas company working in Ireland

This multinational company is represented at the meeting by their Public Relations officer for Ireland. This company has been exploring the potential of extracting oil and gas off the West Coast of Ireland for 15 years, and has begun extracting natural gas through a gas pipe in County Mayo in the last year. The company is also trying to get permission to begin fracking in the North West of Ireland. Fracking is a way to extract natural gas that is trapped in shale rock by pumping water, sand and chemicals into the rock in order to allow oil and gas to flow up. People in Ireland, and other places where fracking occurs, are protesting against the process due to environmental concerns (including ground and water pollution, and greenhouse-gas emission concerns). However the process can be lucrative for the companies extracting the oil and gas. Your company is eager to continue working in Ireland due to low tax rates and government fees. The company is also providing jobs in areas of the country badly affected by the economic recession, and is investing in local communities by donating to schools and community organisations.

Trócaire

Trócaire is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and is represented at this meeting by their campaigns officer. Along with other groups in Ireland, Trócaire have been campaigning for a Climate Law to be passed for the past eight years. Thanks to the support of people all around the country who contacted politicians demanding climate action, the law was finally passed in December 2015. The next crucial step for Trócaire and other organisations and activists working for climate justice is to ensure that the law is fully implemented as soon as possible, that the government fulfils the commitments made by signing the Paris agreement, and that the government divests funds from fossil fuels. It is therefore essential that the issue of climate change is on the political agenda and that a decision to divest from fossil fuels is made at this meeting. Trócaire believes that fossil fuel divestment not only makes moral and ethical sense, it also makes financial sense – this is why it is the fastest growing divestment movement in history.
A National Youth Organisation

This national youth organisation is represented by a member of the youth advisory board, who is 17 years old and living in Cork city. The organisation and their representative at this meeting is pushing for action that promotes the rights of young people, and ensures a future where young people will be able to enjoy a safe and healthy environment, and education and job opportunities in Ireland. The young members of the organisation understand issues relating to climate change and the need to take urgent action, however the idea of ‘divestment’ is new to them, and they would like to learn more about how this issue connects with their lives in Ireland. The organisation believes that every citizen and group of people (including people who are too young to vote) have a right to make their voice heard and to demand that elected politicians listen and take action accordingly.

A Community Group from Rural Ireland

This community group from rural Ireland has a long history of campaigning about issues that affect their community. The group is represented by their current chairperson at this meeting. The local community has recently experienced the effects of climate change due to floods that damaged homes, farmland and the local economy. Floods and storms have become more frequent and intense in recent years and local people are concerned about how they will be able to continue living and working in the area unless action is taken. The group is interested in learning more about the issue of divestment, but are concerned about what the alternatives to fossil fuels are. In the past local residents have campaigned against the introduction of wind turbines by big energy companies in the area due to worries about noise, and because they believed that the turbines would destroy the natural beauty of the area. However they are open to energy-initiatives that are led by the community.

A Farming Cooperative from Dedza, Malawi

Malawi is a small, densely populated country in southern Africa where 81% of the population live in rural areas. Due to the effects of climate change, the rains are no longer reliable and harvests have been low, which many fear will lead to dangerous food shortages for millions of people. A representative of a farming cooperative (a partner of Trócaire) in southern Malawi has been invited to this meeting to give their perspective from the Global South on the issue of climate change. The cooperative provides information and skills on diversifying crops, improving access to, use and management of water supplies, and promoting environmentally-friendly farming techniques. The cooperative sees climate change as a global issue; the farmers they represent have seen how the actions of rich countries in the Global North have impacted on their lives in Malawi due to rising global temperatures, resulting in changes to the climate. The cooperative believes the Irish government has a responsibility to take action on climate change and reduce the Irish ‘carbon footprint’, in solidarity with those most affected by climate change around the world.
Who decides? - These are questions about power, who makes choices and decides what is to happen, who benefits and loses as a result of these decisions and at what cost.

Natural - These are questions about the environment - energy, air, water, soil, living things and their relationships to each other. These questions are also about the built as well as the ‘natural’ environment.

Social - These are questions about people, their relationships, their traditions, culture and the way they live. They include questions about how, for example, gender, race, disability, class and age affect social relationships.

Economic - These are questions about money, trading, aid, ownership, buying and selling.

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Who decides?

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Social

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Natural

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Economic

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What are your questions?

Credit: www.tidegloballearning.net
Our Website

Visit our website trocaire.org/education for additional education resources and information about Trócaire’s development education work.

Irish Aid gratefully acknowledges support received from Irish Aid to conduct Development Education and Public Engagement activities in Ireland.

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