International Conference on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, Decommissioning, Environmental Protection and Remediation: Ensuring Safety and Enabling Sustainability

Contribution ID: **348** Type: **ORAL**

Radiation, Remediation, and Radio(activism): Tracing Uranium Legacies and Futures in Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan

To fuel the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons program, over 10,000 tons of uranium ore was extracted and processed in Mailuu-Suu, Kyrgyzstan–leaving thousands of metric tons of radioactive waste across 23 distinct tailings sites and waste rock dumps. Today, uranium legacy sites (ULS) pose environmental and public health risks. Internationally led cleanup efforts have increased since 2015 with the establishment of the Coordination Group for Uranium Legacy Sites (CGULS) by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)'s Environmental Remediation Account (ERA). This project uses archival and observational methodology to analyze the online archives of the IAEA and participatory action research methodology to collaborate with the Bishkek-based nonprofit Bir Duino. Drawing on the sensibilities of STS, discard studies, and environmental justice scholars, I find that patterns of nuclear colonialism persist to the present day, but have evolved from an overt Soviet control of resources into a more subtle technopolitical control of resources and information by international–primarily Western–intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). Diagnostically, I propose an intervention and restructuring of present remediation strategies to prioritize community expertise on the front-end, rather than as an afterthought.

Primary author: Ms STEWART, Rachel (NTI)

Presenter: Ms STEWART, Rachel (NTI)

Track Classification: Track 5 - Practical experiences in integrating safety and sustainable development