

RETHINKING SOCIAL JUSTICE: ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE AND ORDINARY VIOLENCE TODAY

W i S E R

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1. On **social injustice**: income inequalities and value conflicts in organizations
2. From social injustice to **ecological injustice**: new issues, new challenges
3. Beside social injustice: **ordinary violence** and **practices of resistance** today

I. On social injustice: income inequalities and value conflicts in organizations

- The impressive innovative/creative power of capitalism goes along with a new regime of accumulation, based on:
 - redistributive inequalities (Atkinson & Piketty)
 - brutality and “brutalisation” (Sassen)
 - absolutism (Balibar)

“22% of Europeans live at the risk of poverty and exclusion, 38% feel discriminated against because of their minority status and hundreds of thousands of refugees subsist in temporary camps”

Trudie Knijn and Dorota Lepianka,
Justice and Vulnerability in Europe (EEP, 2020)

- I. On **social injustice**: income inequalities and value conflicts in organizations
 - Massive **inequalities** in the distribution of income **worldwide**, but also **within** ‘post-industrial’ and ‘industrializing’ countries. (eg. BRICS)
 - From capitalism to capitalisms: a **strong diversification process**, which should not be underestimated. (Hall & Soskice, Boyer)
 - Redistributive justice at the workplace as a **paradox....** that opens new routes for social critics:
 - a. Beyond ‘structural robbery’, **new conceptualisations of exploitation** (cultural, pragmatist and anthropological ones)
 - b. Beyond “imposed organizational values”, **values and value conflicts at the workplace.**

I. On social injustice: income inequalities and value conflicts in organizations

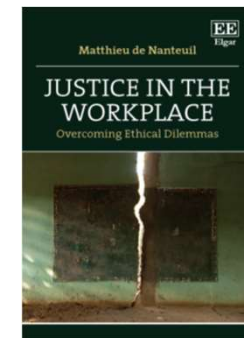
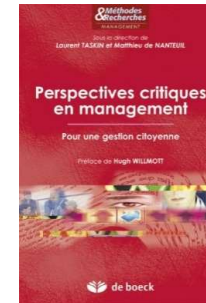
- Uber workers: together with algorithmic subjugation, a cultural pact?



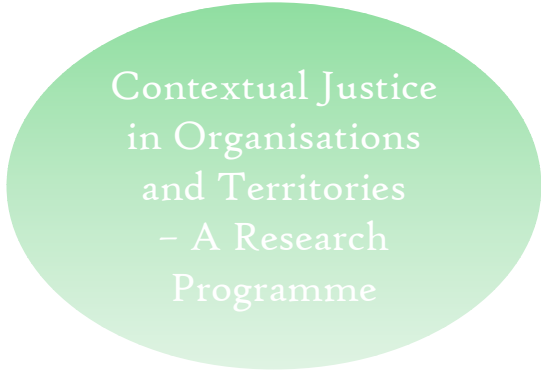
- Performing at GSK: the dilemma of the best?
- Among the textile sector: spying to avoid bankruptcy and massive dismissal?
- Leading a social service in Belgium: equity or vulnerability?

Nowadays, the workplace has become a scene of major cultural tensions and disputes, even though organizations may try to control/dissimulate this situation through different means.

“Value conflicts are not damaging in themselves. In open societies, they are largely inevitable and rather reassuring: they reflect the vibrancy of discussion and the strength of different opinions. The main question is, how can they be overcome? Here’s the rub: in many organisations, these conflicts are swept under the carpet and, because they are not addressed, they result in brutality (the strong have dominion over the weak) or cynicism (values are vaunted and then, in practice, ignored). Thus, what initially looked like cultural openness or moral pluralism turns out to make no sense at all. This profound contradiction causes frustration, resentment and pain. But this situation also highlights an essential point: it is not harmony or uniformity that is missing, but the opportunity to overcome these conflicts using *frames of justice*.”



I. On social injustice: income inequalities and value conflicts in organizations



Contextual Justice
in Organisations
and Territories
– A Research
Programme

- Frames of justice are plural: there is no one best way!
 - Their legitimacy and efficiency depend on the ‘organizational context’ in a wide sense
- They question the structure of power in organizations: substantial changes are required to make frames justice effectively accessible to those who need them
 - esp. low qualified/vulnerable workers

A research programme that ties together researchers focusing on workplace transformations (in organisations) and others focusing on social movements (on territories)
(Scola, Ocampo, Carlier, Castaneda, Finzi, Hidalgo)

2. From social injustice to **ecological injustice**: new issues, new challenges

- Transition, condition or disaster (Dupuy)? Thinking and acting when it's already 'too late'.
- Transition or transformation (Stirling)?
 - the first one leads dominant actors to view public deliberation and citizen participation as a luxury that society can no longer afford;
 - whereas the second one implies a much more open-ended approach to the problems at hand, capable of questioning established power relationships and privileges.

“The alteration of our biological and planetary environment reached a point of no return at the end of the 20th century but remains partly undetermined in its social and civilizational consequences.”

Etienne Balibar,
Histoire interminable. D'un siècle à l'autre. Ecrits I (La découverte, 2020)

2. From social injustice to **ecological injustice**: new issues, new challenges

- The *first hypothesis* that drives our reflection is that a “transformative transition” not based on principles or norms of justice risks generating - or is already generating - increasingly exacerbated opposition, handicapping our collective capacity to transform our societies. Opposition:
 - from the **richest**, ready to secede,
 - from the **Western middle classes**, caught in a path of dependence on growth,
 - from a **large proportion of vulnerable people** already living in a state of subjugated sobriety and suffering from persistent inequalities...

(Coolsaet, Hallin, Hecquet, Stassart)

In a word, the ecological transition must be just
if a maximum number of people are to adhere to it.

2. From social injustice to **ecological injustice**: new issues, new challenges

- But the *second hypothesis* is that ecological justice cannot simply be an extension of social justice ‘as it were’: a mix of collective rights, social struggles and public policies, against a backdrop of productivism and consumerism . It refers to 4 distinct dimensions :
 - **moving away from the anthropocentrism** inherited from past centuries;
 - **negotiating between social forces** in such a way that the most socially vulnerable (migrants, low qualified workers, etc.) do not pay the highest price for the transition;
 - **acting locally in such a way as to spread the exposure to environmental risks** and, to a larger extent, the burden of transition **as evenly as possible**;
 - **addressing socio-ecological injustices in transitional processes themselves, through a plural and contextual approach.**

(Coolsaet, Hallin, Hecquet, Stassart)

2. From social injustice to **ecological injustice**: new issues, new challenges

Ecological Justice
as a Condition for
Structural Change
– The Importance
of Transitional
Processes

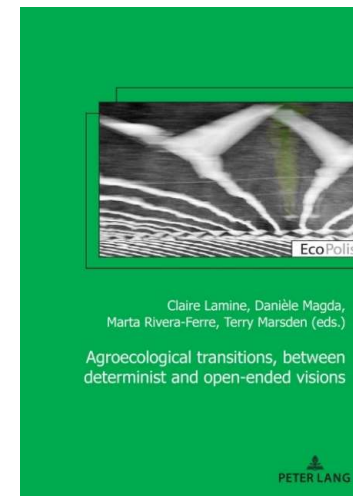
- A culture of compromise?
Dilemmas in agro-ecological transitions in Belgium

- A just and solidarity-based transition?
Two case-studies in the European agricultural sector

- The ‘territory’ as a place of affective participation and political struggle to access to “environmental commons”?
A comparison between Congo and Colombia

Facing the ecological catastrophe, the major issue is not only to use technical levers and change existential options: it's also to act concretely for a “just transition”. Otherwise structural change may never happen.

“In our chapter, we carry out our reflection in three steps. First, we return to the relationship between "transition" and "transformation" and, more broadly, to the meaning of an open-ended and non-relativist agroecological transition process. To this end, we will go through three "normative stages" for agroecology: the first corresponds to a statement of general principles; the second refers to the need to make compromises based on these principles; and the third demonstrates the importance of the *plurality of normative supports*. [...] Secondly, we will plunge into the reality of the agroecological transition by looking at three concrete cases: practices of purchase-resale in the agroecological production of vegetables in Wallonia, a research-action project with an organisations of sheep farmers and veterinarians in the Millavois area of France and the management of the global plant health within a network of artisanal vegetable seed producers. Thirdly, we will close our text with a short conclusion on agroecological justice.”



3. Beside social injustice: **ordinary violence** and **practices of resistance** today

- Lessons from the **Colombian armed conflict and peace process** (2012-2016):
 - a militarized expression of recurrent social conflicts
 - the opposition between capital and labor
 - the central role of division of labor
- In Colombia, violence has less to do with chaos than with ‘**orders of violence**’ (Munera)
- From **mass violence** to **dirty violence**, and from violence in the **periphery** to violence in the **center** of the “world-system” (Wallerstein)
(Múnera, Mora, Jimenez, Ocampo)

In his major work, Fals Borda shows how violence can be understood as the result of both a *reversal* (of one social role into another, e.g. a policeman being also a murderer) and a *structural co-existence* (of these reversed roles)

Orlando Fals Borda and al. *La violencia en Colombia*, Vol. I & II, Bogotá, Taurus [1962]

3. Beside social injustice: **ordinary violence** and **practices of resistance** today

- Despite current metaphors/experiences of 'injury' or 'trauma', violence does not only manifest itself in homicide, torture or aggression: it subjects people to an unbounded precariousness and uncertainty, which Giorgio Agamben calls 'naked life', i.e. **a life constantly exposed to the possibility of death**, physical or social.

3. Beside social injustice: **ordinary violence** and **practices of resistance** today

- Although the theme of violence has been widely explored by European sociology, two features have undoubtedly escaped this careful examination: its ordinary, banal, everyday character, on the one hand; and the fact that it escapes the most mediatized categories - war or homicide, for example - and never appears in a clear-cut form, easily delimited empirically or conceptually. It is this **double character, both ordinary and impure**, that I refer to as 'dirty violence'.

3. Beside injustice: ordinary violence and practices of resistance today



Beside Social
Justice – Dirty
Violence in
Contemporary
Societies

- A differential approach to violence, instead of a substantive one: dirty violence *as distinct from* social injustice to designate collective sufferings or structural deficits in contemporary societies

- Dirty violence often *intrudes into* the polite language of law and social progress: demonstrators beaten up in the name of preserving public order, ordinary racism in a supposedly egalitarian society, people brutally dismissed despite salary compensation, massive ecological waste behind public call for transition, etc.

“If Colombia is indeed in a 'post-agreement' situation, in the sense that the Havana talks, and the resulting Agreement, constitute the most successful attempt to date to end an armed conflict that has lasted for more than half a century - with its trail of victims and human rights violations, making it the worst humanitarian tragedy on the South American continent in the last century. However, Colombia is less than ever in a 'post-conflict' situation: while the forms of the conflict have largely changed, the assassination of social and human rights organizations' leaders never stopped during the talks; forced displacement continued to increase; the political and economic interests of those who do not want peace were strong enough to vote 'no' to the Agreement in the consultative referendum of October 2016 and to limit its implementation as much as possible during the parliamentary debates.”



La Colombie dans la globalisation

Processus de paix, accord de commerce et régulations de l'économie globale



3. Beside injustice: **ordinary violence** and **practices of resistance** today

Can Non Violence
Address these
Evolutions?

- A invaluable legacy
- Three limitations:
 - a sacrificial subjectivity?
 - reaction or anticipation?
 - stop massive discriminations or dismantle insidious brutalities?
- How to go further?