

First steps in a dialogue

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Our intention when we created *Justice Spatiale/Spatial Justice (JSS)* was to establish a connexion between different cultural and linguistic areas (mainly Francophone and Anglophone) and between different disciplinary traditions, around the issue of the relation between justice and space.

You, our readers, have brought this connexion into existence: over 59,000 of you connected to *JSS*, more than 80% of you from outside France. Many of you live in Anglophone countries (mainly the US), but also in the rest of the world (no less than 121 different countries). Thousands of you live in Russia and Sweden, hundreds in Japan, Colombia, Syria, or Africa.

Thank you all for visiting us, and confirming that our choice of making academic research freely available online, with no charge, was a wise one. And welcome to you all in this second issue!

The aim of this issue, which deals with the theme of spatial justice and environment, is to present some explorations into an area relatively new to French academia, and to set up a dialogue with other approaches of the question, many of which hail from Anglophone countries. Operating in a bilingual journal makes us acutely aware of the gap between both academic traditions, both in terms of ways of writing up research, and in objects.

Working on this second issue showed us how necessary and also how difficult it is to establish the connexion. This issue includes mostly contributions from Francophone authors, among which many young researchers for whom it is a first brush with the idea of spatial justice, and who attempt to apply it to their concern for the environment. One result of linguistic barriers was that papers written in French were read and refereed by French-speakers. This sparked interesting debates, as exemplified by the exchanges between Bernard Bret and Pascal Rey in this issue and the previous one, but these debates remained within the Francophone academic world. We would now like our Anglophone readers to open up the debate.

This issue strays far from the usual areas or problematics dealt with by Anglophone environmental justice: French rural societies, African rural societies, so-called "traditional" social organizations, public agricultural policies, or the exploitation of natural resources. Some contributions offer a Francophone take on fields more traditional for environmental justice research, in North-American cities. Most emphasize local case studies, rather than continent-wide or global issues and don't systematically engage with the existing literature in English on environmental justice. This reflects different expectations in French geography where the emphasis is on fieldwork and empirical material, quite unlike Anglophone geography where the theoretical framework would be given priority over the empirical aspects. These differences, in our view, need to be overcome to produce a fruitful dialogue over a barrier that is not merely linguistic.

We now call on you, our readers from many parts of the world, to take part in the dialogue, especially at a time when academics, in many countries, are undergoing pressure to produce formatted work. In France, the establishment of new, "quantified" procedures of evaluation, measuring "impact" in terms of citations, creating a new journal appears foolhardy. Our strategy to resist pressure consists in taking time: time to think over issues, time to translate, over and above the time to read and referee papers, our choice is to take time, or make time, when it is ever scarcer, and tends to be consumed (wasted?) in the construction of research proposals in response to calls not designed for our disciplines, and in attempts to make them fit into

inappropriate templates. We may deal mostly with space, but we also plead for time: now is probably the moment to answer Pierre Sansot's call to "take sides", and "side with slowness".

This is precisely why we can confront issues that make the headlines.

Many of these, in recent months, were of a nature to make scholars of spatial justice pause and reflect. By evicting Roma people from camps and from the country, by passing a law forbidding Muslim women to wear the so-called "burqa" in public, the French government pursued a time-honoured tradition of scapegoating and designating Others under the pseudo-geographic pretext that they are "out of place".

We see our journal's role as providing elements of context and analysis to fully understand such events. The paper by Laurent Gagnol et al. in this issue, which discusses the French multinational Areva's actions in Niger, gives some understanding of the kidnapping of several of its employees, which took place in September 2010. Stavros Stavrides's paper on riots which took place in Athens in 2008 provides similar insights into prominent issues for Greek society. Don Mitchell, interviewed for this issue, talks of the tasks facing a "community geographer" who both analyzes and participates in public debates.

This issue includes many more images (maps and photos), as well as sound, since Don Mitchell's interview by Stéphane Tonnelat was recorded and transcribed in English and French. We hope you enjoy it. And, because we need new perspectives on justice and space, we invite you to contribute to the dialogue we're working to establish, between different academic cultures, and between academia and burning social issues. Further reading on the contribution we're trying to make is to be found in the first volume to be published in the "Espace et Justice" series, *Justice et injustices spatiales*¹.

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To quote this article : Frédéric DUFAUX | Philippe GERVAIS-LAMBONY | Claire HANCOCK | Sonia LEHMAN-FRISCH | Sophie MOREAU, « Premiers pas d'un dialogue » ["First steps in a dialogue"]

justice spatiale | spatial justice, n° 02 octobre | october 2010, <http://www.jssj.org>

¹ Bret B., Gervais-Lambony P., Hancock C., Landy, F. (eds.), *Justice et injustices spatiales*, (in English and in French), Presses universitaires de Paris Ouest, Nanterre, 2010.

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