

Obviously ...

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Introduction to the Theme "Spatial Justice and Environment", **Sophie Moreau** and **Jean Gardin** (eds.), with the collaboration of **David Blanchon**, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre and **Dominic Lapointe**, Université de Rimouski, Canada.

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... Justice is in. In a context of global economic crisis and cuts in public spending, justice has become a major element in political debate. In academia, the literature on justice, and environmental justice in particular, is blooming. In 2009, *Antipode* Vol 41, No. 5, described this remarkable production: between 2004 and 2009, 425 social science articles on environmental justice and no fewer than seven special issues, and this is only limited to English publications. This literature increasingly comes from beyond the birthplace of environmental justice, the US, from emerging countries (McDonald, 2002, William et al, 2006) or Europe (Cornut et al, 2007). In France, under a variety of forms, the intersection of social and ecological inequalities has been the object of many recent publications, including in the last 3 years Villalba et al (ed) 2007; Deleage (ed), 2008 ; Deboudt et al (ed), 2008; Flipo (ed), 2009.

Recent work shows a number of convergences: the rise in countries of the global South of a combative environmentalism resembling the original environmental justice movement in North America (Martinez-Alier, 2002), the growing links between social and ecological struggles which, particularly in France, tended to ignore each other (Theys, 2007, Deleage, 2007) and the globalization of environmental issues in a context of global ecological crisis (Dahan, 2009). Analysts have also highlighted the blurring of the boundaries of the concept, redefined according to the contexts where it is used (Walker et al, 2006), and this even as it has been through a conceptual fine-tuning, incorporating contributions of major contemporary theories of justice (Schlosberg, 2003, 2007). This paradox invites reflection on the risk that environmental justice become diluted, or even led astray, in this editorial overflow.

The increase in publications on the subject seems indicative of a political shift of the concept. Environmental justice was originally a weapon to denounce the overlap of social inequalities and environmental inequality. It also rapidly became a field of academic analysis of these inequalities, that often supported the claims of grassroots movements (Cole and Foster, 2001). But while the texts collected here demonstrate that the process of exploitation of natural resources continues and generate social and spatial inequalities, they say little of the struggles to fight these injustices. They show how environmental justice has become a principle of management of these inequalities. Environmental justice has become institutionalized, and has developed theoretical and applied models that tend to render acceptable social inequality and environmental degradation. "Fair" policies or strategies, often normative and entangled in a web of contradictions, do not challenge the processes that create the inequalities they claim to address, and may even cause new ones.

Has environmental justice then become an instrument of modernization and expansion of capitalism (Harvey, 1996), a management tool for the degradation of our places, our living

conditions and our livelihoods, and does it therefore contribute to entrench or worsen social inequality? While environmental models spread worldwide, how can we think up understandings of environmental justice that do not aim to become models? Policies or strategies for environmental management need addressing, whether their aim be protection or exploitation of natural resources, control of environmental degradation or mitigation of social inequalities. This introduction cannot list and review them all, but aims to underline the original contributions of papers in this issue, in particular in terms of a critique of spatial models in environmental management.

1) Production of environmental injustice and justice

The texts in this issue deal with various production processes of environmental injustice or justice. A first lot presents diametrically opposed forms of social injustice related to the environment in countries of the South, in sub-saharan Africa.

P. Rey depicts a reasonable management of natural resources, which could appear idyllic if it weren't based on a social order, emphasizing lineage, as harsh as it is unjust. The relationship between the social system and the environment is interpreted in a functionalist perspective: the cautious management of farmland, forests, mangroves through a system of ritual prohibitions and unfair distribution among different social groups allows for the reproduction of the local social order, and maintains the power of the dominant groups as well as their economic supremacy. This counter-utopia only functions if that space is considered in isolation, by bracketing the regional, national and global dynamics of capitalism. In contrast, L. Gagnol and A. Afane describe how, for the extraction of uranium, the French nuclear firm AREVA strategically manages the devastation of nomadic trails in Niger, by enclosing pastoral land in the Sahara, leading to the disappearance of nomadism and the degradation of drylands.

In both cases, these stories of injustice resist a simplistic and manichean analysis. In Niger, the firm AREVA epitomizes the irruption of global capitalism in Africa, and the race between the industrial powers of the North, and China, for raw materials from the South. It would be an ideal villain if the State of Niger, part of the pastoral society, or the political elite of the Tuareg rebellion, were not actively supporting the enclosures, conducted in the name of administrative decentralization, autonomy policy and "development". By contrast, the article by P. Rey opposes the idealization of "tradition" as a model of balanced management of natural resources, recalling a debate which took place in India (Gadgil et al, 1992). As B. Bret says in his reply to the text of P. Rey (see "Public Space" in this issue), preserving the environment also means preserving a set of political and social relationships, and in coastal Guinea, that would mean preserving an unequal and unjust system. This contradiction is symptomatic of what Sachs (1999) called the twin crises of environment and justice: attempts to solve the environmental crisis has the potential to aggravate the crisis of justice and vice versa. The quest for environmental justice (Bullard, 2005) can only be an attempt to achieve the impossible. The protection of nature is likely to cause social and spatial exclusion. Other mechanisms involving North-South relations and the new green economy could have been addressed, and we regret the absence of proposals dealing with countries like Uganda where peasants are expropriated and their lands destroyed to be made available to large companies from Europe and North America for reforestation with eucalyptus in order to offset their carbon emissions (Jindal 2006). Neither in Niger nor in Guinea is any voice raised to denounce the ongoing process of exclusion associated with the environment, and call for the regulation of capitalistic exploitation of nature, or the mitigation of social inequalities. Instead, our authors stress the consensual nature of the social order in Guinea and the support that the enclosures of rangeland receive from within

Niger's nomadic society. No voice of protest speaks up, except in these very texts. In the "deep South" of Africa, environmental justice is at most an academic concern. In the case of Madagascar, where protected areas are being extended and large farms developed, it is in Europe that a network of environmental justice arose to denounce the eviction of peasants. The situation would probably be different in emerging countries, with a different balance between the demands for industrial development and the integration of environmental standards, and where local movements of peasant environmentalism are sometimes well-established and active, as in India (R. Shiva in Cornut 2007).

The other group of texts (Fol and G. S. Pflieger, J. Gobert, N. Lewis et al, G. Faburel,) is devoted to case studies in the global North (San Francisco, Detroit, rural or urban France). Unlike previous articles, these texts pay little attention to processes causing environmental degradation and social inequality. For example, in Detroit, significantly, the authorities build bridges for truck traffic because there are goods to be transported, even as local actors question the value of these large facilities to solve local economic difficulties.

On the other hand, these texts show that the distribution of property and social and environmental ills is regulated by forms of environmental justice either strongly institutionalized (as in the United States) or in the process of institutionalization (as in France). In the United States, environmental justice has been and is still the locus of struggles (Bullard et al, 2000, Faber et al, 2001). But according to S. Fol and S. G. Pflieger, in San Francisco it operates mainly as a forum for the expression of standard social demands to reduce inequality. J. Gobert, working on Detroit, gives a critical assessment of the distributive action made by public policies, even when these comply with what is known as procedural justice, that is, when the compensations for a new nuisance are negotiated with the residents. But in San Francisco as in Detroit, the authors show that environmental justice is a concern for the authorities who seek, by taking the lead in these initiatives, to clear the field, through participation agreements or compensation. G. Faburel's paper considers the relative lack of interest for environmental inequalities on the part of French authorities, and attributes this to the fact that they are instrumentalized by public policy (MEDD, 2007) and conceived of as prescriptive and technical. Finally, the article by N. Lewis et al. shows how environmental justice can be used to re-interpret the whole logic of environmental aid received by farmers in the Dordogne in the name of social and environmental sustainability.

2) Environmental Justice at governmental level

These papers reflect both the progress of ecological devastation and social exclusion processes, and the simultaneous rise of environmental justice, as an instrument to manage these crises. ¶Thus they illustrate a managerial form of environmentalism, although this form of environmentalism is plural and heterogeneous, and falls within what D. Harvey called the ecological modernization of power (Harvey, 1996, Mol et al, 2009) or J. Martinez-Alier the "gospel of eco-efficiency" (Martinez-Alier, 2002). This environmentalism incorporates social justice concerns, attempts to bridge the divide between radical environmentalists and managers of the industrial environment. Environmental Justice at governmental level, developed in managerial terms, sooner or later poses the question of environmental justice in economic and monetary terms. The monetization of environmental issues, especially in the framework of ecological economics, departs significantly from the approach to the environment brought by the environmental justice movement in the United States, which refused to frame the question of the distribution of environmental ills in monetary terms (Harvey, 1996). The calculation of costs and benefits of environmental practices and environmental degradation brings about a

market logic that takes no account of the experience of environmental degradation as lived by marginal populations. It is a shift for ecology from critical science to a science of government. This transition illustrates the dialectical relation of just and unjust; justice begins as a challenge to the social order, as a universal, utopian value aiming to establish a good society, but also inspires theoretical and applied models to build, maintain and reproduce another social order. It is this dynamic that the case studies presented here illustrate, echoing what is observed on a global scale, through the management of climate issues. These initially represented a stretch of the idea of environmental justice because for once it was used to fight against causes (the production of greenhouse gases) to avoid environmental and social consequences. But we agree with A. Dahan (Dahan, 2009) who argues that countries in the global South (including emerging markets) have learned to play with global environmental models they long objected to, and that they have contributed to transform these models. At the Copenhagen summit on global change, what were discussed were practical targets, as if everyone had already agreed on the basic issues and as if there was a way to manage change. But how does one manage unmanageable industrial development, how does one even keep up the pretence of doing so? One possible answer is to take a step closer to world government, which enables one to picture the planet as a clock to crank up and maintain (Riesel, Semprun 2008). Interestingly, sceptics of climate change, among whom Claude Allègre, in France, criticize the level of abstraction of a global mean temperature and more generally the idea of a "global" climate (Rittaud 2010). One could extend this critique to other models and other quantifications, which would call for wide-ranging changes in political premises. But this remains unlikely, because if climate change sceptics criticize climate modeling, it is in order to save another globalization, that of positivistic science, progress, industry and technology. The so-called "climate-gate" therefore implies no real challenge to "green growth", or "green capitalism" (Riesel et al. 2008. Flipo et al. 2009). Environmental Justice at governmental level therefore does little to fight environmental degradation or the resulting social inequalities, and tends to perpetuate the political, economic and social status quo by making negative impacts or inequalities more acceptable while obscuring the political, economic and technical choices that produced them (Harvey, 1996; Swyngedouw et al 2003). It has come to represent a way of extending authority over the environment, thereby allowing for greater control over social relations.

The papers by S. Fol and G. Plieger, J. Gobert, N. Lewis et al in this issue point to the inefficiencies and contradictions of action for environmental justice. While environmental justice struggles allowed to impose the recognition of the social and ethical dimensions of environmental management (Agyeman, 2003), environmental justice management, much as sustainable development, seems to be built on contradictions that can't be solved (Theys, 2002). Only three of the papers position environmental justice in the framework of sustainable development: P. Rey and B. Bret, denouncing the disconnect between the character of a just or unjust social system, and the sustainability of an ecological system, and N. Lewis to demonstrate the contradictions of agri-environment, which reinforces existing inequalities both in social and in environmental terms.

So we are moving slowly towards a global society supposedly just, or fair, but indecent. Just because it pretends to distribute environmental goods and evils fairly. Indecent in that the degradation is not stopped, but allowed by the standardization of industrial environmental norms (Gardin, 2010), and that social exclusion continues.

Based on a few examples of policies or strategies for environmental management based on notions of justice, the papers in this issue underline three major problems that help explain why the theoretical models and practical management of the environment may sow the seeds of injustice.

3) Discordant justices

A recurring feature in these papers is the critique of a standard and universal theory of justice. A call for a universal form of justice can only accompany the universalization of a certain type of exploitation, only one type of destruction of relationships with the world, only one type against multiple ones. The papers presented in this issue stress all the contradictions of the values of justice: between empirical and theoretical, between the local and universal. They exemplify N. Fraser's idea of "ab-normal justice" (Fraser, 2008) to discuss the difficulties in resolving some conflicts at the global level, between North and South in particular (see the review of this book in this issue).

Two articles refer specifically to John Rawls's theory of justice. They downplay or reject the practical implications of this theory and show how susceptible it is to ideological instrumentalization. The text by N. Lewis et al. is exemplary in this respect since it demonstrates the inherent contradictions between, on the one hand, the empirical definitions of justice (justice associated with merit, justice as equality), and some aspects of justice as fairness according to the Rawlsian theory, on the other. The fundamental contradiction in wanting to pay farmers according to their environmental merit, while asserting a principle of equality, as the only way to curb rural depopulation, leads to ineffective assistance, which ultimately reinforces the inequalities between farmers.

For P. Rey, Rawls's theory inspires policies which claim to be fair, but which are supposed to operate via the market and therefore have uneven and unfair effects greater than the "traditional" modes of access to natural resources. In the first issue of *Justice spatiale – Spatial Justice*, B. Bret pleaded for a universal theory of justice that would qualify morally social facts (Bret, 2009), and asserted that Rawls's was likely to play this role. Yet for P. Rey, if Rawls's theory allows us to understand the unfairness of a social and political organization, that of Maritime Guinea, it is not sufficient to condemn it morally. He argues this in various ways: first by stating that that this society is consensual (a point to which Bret B. responded that it is not because a social order is not contested that it is good), and secondly by showing that this society has "sound" environmental practices. This is particularly meaningful in an African context, where an assumption prevails that local systems are unfit to manage natural resources. In defending the environmental management of a Guinean community, P. Rey also takes sides with the local society, because it is a dominated society, which resists a system of historic colonial and post-colonial domination.

This paper evinces a fondness for the underdog, as does that by L. Gagnol and A. Afane, which contrasts with the lack of a sense of injustice in the societies studied. In the absence of a universal theory of justice, and if local societies are acceptant of exclusion and inequality, where is the injustice? This willingness to take sides may have its origin in a culturalist and traditionalist romanticism, in the affection of the geographer for his or her object of study or in a virtuous mind, it appears theoretically ill-grounded. Should we then consider this position as a form of bias, invalidating the scientific discourse carried by the author? Or accept it as likely to reveal social realities that might otherwise have remained hidden? We favor the latter alternative, especially if one considers the interest of the conclusions drawn from the position of L. Gagnol and A. Afane, authors committed to justice.

4) The environment as political matter

The articles in this issue illustrate the wide range of the notion of environmental justice. Beyond classical themes such as urban, social and environmental inequality in the United States and France, agricultural policies, the preservation and exploitation of natural resources, land and administrative reforms, Tuareg political autonomy are all examined critically from this perspective. The environment may be defined as a place to live or as a resource, sometimes both at the same time, as in the study on the Dordogne by N. Lewis et al., but it is always most fruitfully analyzed as a social construction.

For P. Rey, or L. Gagnol and A. Afane, the environment is a set of natural resources, but seen through their social and political values. G. Faburel proposes to understand environmental injustice by considering the emotional value of the environment, lived or perceived spaces, the ways in which one inhabits places. This converges with A. Berque's thought, who sees this relationship as the foundation of a new environmental ethic (Berque, 1996). According to him it is on this condition that the environmental theme can really become a political object. It is actually impossible to seriously address the principles that guide the distribution of social and environmental goods without taking into account the social context associated with injustice. According to Young (1990), it is a mistake to reduce social justice to the single issue of redistribution, because there are social processes and power relations that determine who gets what and who is left behind. The principles that guide the redistribution are the product of social, cultural, symbolic and institutional dimensions of society. Uses of the environment have to do with issues of culture and identity, with some forms of environmentalism gaining over those of groups marginalized on grounds of class or race (Pulido, 1996). Decisions on environmental and land uses echo the power structures of society, structures that disadvantage low-income communities and communities of color. Thus, struggles for environmental justice issues also fall within the scope of recognition and cultural identity (Pulido, 1996) that are expressed in specific relationships with land and the environment (Pena, 2005). However, we should be alert to the risk involved in justifying, as in the case of Guinea, unfair situations in the name of recognition of a cultural relationship to the environment, or in letting social issues obscure environmental ones.

In Detroit, the starting point for negotiations by inhabitants of deprived neighborhoods lies in the negative impact of large urban facilities, but their brief is much broader because it covers various social and economic aspects of urban crisis. S. Fol and G. Pflieger discuss the access of poor people in the San Francisco area to urban transportation, but as the field is subject to environmental justice screening in the California, access to urban transport is treated as an environmental problem, even if its environmental impact is barely mentioned. In these two contributions, the ethical question is limited to the right to the city for the citizens most deprived of "capabilities" to use Amartya Sen's phrase. The environmental argument appears either as cosmetic or as a pretext to skirt a broader social issue.

Some might argue that this socialization of environmental issues is in fact a dilution of the concept, the environment being no longer considered as composed of objects of nature but as the great catch-all of social representations. It may be so, but from another point of view, we can also see this as a fairly clear example of moving the boundary between nature and culture, the scientific and the political. To acknowledge the cultural and contingent nature of the nature / culture divide may seem confusing, but seems necessary. Maybe the most interesting question regarding environmental justice is this gray area that happens to be the place of politics. In the era of nano and biotechnology, it is the place where questions essential to humanity are posed. In a time of increased surveillance, when flows, be they of energy, goods or people, are subject

to scientific control, it is the place where the human is redefined and may resist objectification. If there is a struggle for justice, it is at this point, in the Indian campaigns against GMOs (Shiva in Cornut 2007), and in schools resisting biometric identification (Pièces et Main d'œuvre 2008). Hence the importance of asking the question: what justice? And justice for whom? And not to assume what is legal is necessarily also fair.

Fighting for justice requires to fight against ideologies of justice, questioning the validity and application of principles of universal justice. We impose GMOs in the name of food security or the right for farmers to compete, including in arid zones. It requires biometrics in school canteens under the pretext of justice: after all, there are many 14 years old free-riders.

Every time modern technology tends to blur the divide between the subject and the object, the voice of the Left is heard calling for this technology to be harnessed to serve everyone, in a way guaranteed by specific control measures. Every time, this contributes to the objectification of human beings, in the name of the justice made possible by the objectivity of the measure. The ideologies of justice posit that to be effective, it requires an ever more transparent social body. Now all that is really won or lost by people when the relationship to nature and freedom is changed, is completely invisible from the perspective of accountancy. The indignant child shouting "it's not fair" is not Rawlsian unknowingly. Her or his indignation does not fall into any accounts. Her opinion can hardly be taken into account.

5) Environmental justice and spatial justice: closing vs. fluidity

Environmental justice was always spatial since environmental inequalities were first described, perceived and experienced in space, through uneven distributions of impacts and the spatial overlap of discriminations (Holifield, 2009; Soja 2009). We seek here to read the spatial forms of environmental justice or injustice, relying on the assumption that space and its forms of organization are a matrix in which social inequalities are produced, not just the result of these inequalities (Gervais-Lambony, 2009; Gervais-Lambony et al 2009).

The environment, defined as a physical given, forces us to think new forms of spatiality, such as relations established by the flow of raw materials or particles, spaces that are not necessarily contiguous, the combined and contradictory phenomena occurring at or analyzed at different scales (Walker, 2009). But the authors of the papers presented here insist on dimensions of the environment that are not easy to map or to delineate.

G. Faburel shows how "environmental segregation", ie, the overlap of environmental and social discrimination, can't be easily identified and mapped. In Ile-de-France, the rich are not necessarily in the most favored environments. If we look for measurable environmental indicators (air pollution, distance to parks ...), they are often actually likely to be considered as victims (Beucher et al, 2008). The texts also question the right focal to address environmental inequalities. The issue of interlocking scales of the environment, and possible contradictions between these scales (Zuindeau, 2008, Agyeman, 2009) is treated here at the level of urban areas. While the local level is vital to collect urban environmental inequality data, the authors show that we must move beyond them, and work at the scales of the urban area or urban region to grasp it fully. G. Faburel sees the notion of "milieu" as suitable to understand the physical and subjective dimensions of the environment. Beyond the issue of scale, there is that of the temporalities of the environment. J. Gobert uses the idea of a palimpsest environment, containing forms of spatial heritage, about Detroit. Planning new transportation facilities for local residents in Detroit implies thinking of the city and the urban crisis in a historical perspective. A long-term perspective proves invaluable in such studies.

While the environment is increasingly described as a "profound" matter, best understood at different scales and in different time-frames, actual policies seem to result in a closure of space. Indeed, a recurring theme of these papers is the metaphor of the enclosure of space, through fencing or zoning, combined with fragmentation and shrinkage. It is interpreted as both a consequence and an indicator of socio-environmental crises, and as one of the causalities of these crises.

In the U.S., this spatial paradigm is illustrated by J. Gobert, who uses the metaphors of the city as "shrunk" or "perforated" to describe the urban crisis in Detroit. The papers by S. Fol and G. Pflieger, or J. Gobert, also bemoan the fragmentation of power and decision-making in San Francisco and Detroit, which do not allow to take the full measure of environmental inequalities, determine their causes, and possible solutions. The territorial and political fragmentation, in both cases, results in the absence of an authority likely to guarantee the agreements. In terms of environmental justice, case studies show that what is lacking is the judicial authority, which guarantees the validity on the merits and the form of negotiated agreements.

In Africa, the papers by P. Rey, and L. Gagnol and A. Afane, identify policies of enclosure in Africa, coupled with the sharing or redistribution of natural resources and the development of intensive farming systems, as a factor of social exclusion. The process of enclosure narrows down farmland or nomadic areas, and the disappearance of mechanisms that offered leeway and control over agricultural practices and social inequalities (André et al). Because it allows for intensive exploitation of natural resources by prohibiting practices based on extensive mobility, it is also a step toward the degradation of natural resources, which it seeks to compensate by creating preserved areas. Dividing up space creates a mosaic of differentiated areas, where degraded areas can be close to protected areas, areas of wealth alongside pockets of poverty.

The enclosure of space also provides an accounting approach for environmental goods and burdens. It is involved in the degradation or the protection of environments, but always contributes to a sense of space as a rarefying resource. While they are presented as remedies for environmental or social crises, these enclosure policies are also a tool that validates and maintains the ideal constructs of the crisis.

¶In the previous issue of *Justice Space-Spatial Justice* L. Brawley suggested to try to identify the spatial forms of neo-liberalism, particularly in urban areas in North America (Brawley, 2009). You can actually see this process of territorial demarcation as a feature of globalized liberalism: delimitation, closure and fragmentation of space to use it better, distribute it among social agents and exchange it more efficiently. We agree with Brawley when she shows how the economic crisis (ecological in our case) reinforces actions tending to close spaces. But these spatial patterns we observed do not seem to be merely neo-liberal, or even capitalistic, and reflect the historical progression of the industrial economy more generally. In Africa, the emergence of a geometric understanding of territories, focusing on well-defined areas, easy to map using GIS, has its roots in the colonial era and seems to have been reactivated by the reorganization of power and increased participation in economic globalization (Antheaume). What do models of environmental justice have to say on this point? Unfortunately, they often advocate living with enclosures, or even justify them, as if the "democracy of landowners" (Property-owning Democracy) that John Rawls called for (Rawls 2003 p. 188) could represent a desirable horizon for the planet.

Conclusion

If justice is trendy, criticism of the models of environmental justice is equally in. What emerges perhaps from the Copenhagen summit is a challenge to a certain mode of environmental

management and an aspiration to different models. This is a reason to rejoice, because the criticism is probably helpful to develop new understandings of the complexity of justice, the environment and spatial policies. From this point of view, the Copenhagen summit cannot be considered an outright failure, because the terms of the debate were modified. But there are also reasons to worry because if the models of environmental management and justice are wrong, we have no alternative models as yet. Criticizing a managerial view of justice may well just contribute to a more chaotic and unequal world.

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