

Conceptions of justice in socio-environmental conflicts. A framework proposal and application to Madagascar.

Proposal for the special session on " Mapping Ecological Distribution Conflicts: From activists' knowledge to Science"

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Abstract:

The analysis of socio-environmental conflicts (also called environmental conflicts or ecological distribution conflicts) is widespread and it crosses disciplinary boundaries. The ecological economics approach provides an account of the material reasons for increasing conflicts, through the study of societies' metabolism (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010). Local conflicts are thus related to global lifestyles and consumption patterns. Particular attention is also paid by ecological economists to valuation languages (Avci et al., 2010). Other approaches, like political ecology, critical geography or anthropology among others, bring a wealth of complementary insights by delving into the political, symbolic and geographical dimensions of socio-environmental conflicts (Peet and Watts, 2004; Robbins, 2014; Swyngedouw, 2009).

It is manifest that such conflicts often imply environmental (in)justice(s), whether because they are characterised as such by stakeholders, or because the researcher interprets them with environmental justice lenses (Martínez-Alier, 2002). Environmental justice has been a rallying banner for numerous grassroots movements for several decades, as well as an analytic tool and an expanding field of studies (Schlosberg 2009). Still, relatively little systematic exploration of the "justice" in "environmental justice" has been performed to date.

That is why, based on research activities carried out within the EJOLT project, **we propose a bi-directional endeavour**. We use insights from grassroots movements to devise a framework for analysing justice dimensions in environmental conflicts, and we propose a framework which is usable by actors involved in such conflicts.

As argued by Martin et al. (2014), supposing that environmental justice dimensions necessarily underpin each other is unsafe and probably not correct empirically. That is why

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we propose a framework (called the KerBabel™ Representation Rack) which preserves the multidimensionality of environmental justice. In a first step, we define six environmental inequality criteria (Recognition, Participation, Economic Distribution, Ecological Distribution, Creation and, Subsistence). They refer to typologies developed by Sen (2005) and Nussbaum (2011) on capabilities, Maslow (1964/2004) and Max Neef (1991) on needs, Honneth (2000) on recognition, Arnstein (1969) on participation, Martínez-Alier & O'Connor (1996) on economic and ecological distribution, O'Connor (2006) on sustainability.

In the second step, we propose to use a tool, called the KerBabel™ Deliberation Matrix, in order to express, for different case studies, from the point of view of stakeholders, the various principles of (in)justice (related to Rawls, Dworkin, Mill, Nozick, Jonas... works), the diversity of valuation languages, by scientists, experts, activists, actors... If the framework and the tool are scientifically defined, (in)justice is socially expressed.

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