

From energy justice frameworks to claims of injustice: about normative uncertainties

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About EJ frameworks

Two categories:

- **Tenet-based framework**
 - Distributive
 - Procedural
 - Recognition
 - Restorative
 - ...
- **Principle-based framework**



About EJ frameworks

Two purposes:

- **Descriptive**
 - Understanding controversies
- **Normative**
 - Evaluate laws or policy processes
 - “conceptual, analytical and decision-making tool” (Sovacool & Dworkin, 2015)



But... it's not that simple

What if stakeholders articulate divergent, competing, conflicting, incompatible claims of (in)justice?

Wicked problems!

Stakeholders have different

- Interests
- Knowledge
- Values
- Principles
- ...



Limits of current EJ frameworks

- Descriptive function
 - **Explaining diverging/competing claims of (in)justice**
- Normative function
 - **Warranted vs. unwarranted claims of injustice?**
 - *Public acceptance move*: jump from “X says that Y is unjust” to “Y is unjust”
 - Adopt a “silent” principle of justice as premise



Solution: normative uncertainties

- Important to look at the **normative assumptions** that underlie claims of (in)justice

Obscuring normative assumptions is problematic:

- Competing/conflicting claims of injustice cannot be explained
 - Impedes with reflection and deliberation on these assumptions
 - “justice according to whom?”
- Proposal: looking at **normative uncertainties (NU’s)** surrounding claims of (in)justice
 - Normative uncertainties are “situations where there are different partially morally defensible -- but incompatible -- options or courses of action, or ones in which there is no fully morally defensible option” (Taebi et al., 2020)
 - What NU’s underlie claims of injustice?

How to reconceptualise energy justice such that we could better identify normative uncertainties?

Method

1. Three case studies: storylines

- Solar panel controversy in Belgium (2020-2021)
- TBC
- TBC

2. Detect claims of (in)justice

3. Assess claims of (in)justice: comparing insights from

EJ frameworks

Justice literature in philosophy

4. Discussion: an EJ framework that can identify normative uncertainties



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Zonnepanelen



Vlaanderen blijft worstelen met zonnepanelen. Om de Europese doelstellingen voor hernieuwbare energie te halen, moeten er nog veel geïnstalleerd worden. Maar de groenestroomscertificaten en de terugdraaiende teller zijn hoofdpijndossiers geworden.

Claims of injustice

Pierre @Dinant
'It is unjust that the Flemish don't pay their taxes on energy'

Lien @Gent
'It is unjust that I lose money because the Flemish government broke a promise'

Jos @Leuven
'It is unjust that the government was not transparent'

Jeanne @Brussels
'It is unjust that the government manipulated us'

Anna @Lier
'It is unjust that the rich households are compensated'

Tinne @Bruges
'It is unjust that this controversy exists'



Normative assumptions behind claims of injustice

Some observations

- Changing the **time dimension** can change what is (un)just
 - Cf. Interests of future generations: justifying the procedures?
- Changing the **unit of analysis** can change what is (un)just
 - Households with solar panels vs. households in Flanders vs. global perspective: justifying compensation?
- Changing the **moral theory** can change what is (un)just
 - Consequentialism vs. deontology: justifying compensation?

EJ framework that can identify NU's

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Distributive justice | Knowledge | Humans vs. also non-humans | Time | Unit <i>Geographical or relational</i> | Principle of justice |
| Procedural justice | | | | | |
| Recognition justice | | | | | |
| Restorative justice | | | | | |

Advantages of the framework

Descriptive use:

- More insight in why claims of (in)justice might diverge

Normative use:

- Against the quick inference from “what people find an (in)justice” to “it is an (in)justice”
- Asking the question: “Which claim of (in)justice is warranted?”
- Unpacking the question: “Which actors/timeframe/unit/knowledge/principle to choose?”

Away from a mere focus on *public acceptance*... → including *ethical acceptability*

→ Make “the normative” object of energy discussions again!

Bedankt voor uw aandacht

Naam Spreker