

Insults, Injuries, and Resistance: Challenging Environmental Classism and Embracing Working-Class Environmentalism

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Abstract : It is vital to integrate a working-class perspective into the just transition to an inclusive and sustainable society because of the particular expertise and interests that working-class people bring to the debates and actions. In class societies, those who are not well represented in the current structures of power can find it easier to see when the system is not working. They are also more likely to be impacted by the environmental crises because wealthier people can change their dwelling places, jobs and other aspects of their lives in the face of risks. Therefore, challenging the 'post-material values thesis', this paper argues that, if enabled to do so, working-class people are more likely to identify what needs to be addressed and changed in transition and can be more motivated to make the changes necessary than other social groups. However, they are often excluded from environmental decision-making and environmental social movements. The paper is based on a mixed methodology; drawing on secondary data, interview material, participant observation and documentary analysis. It is based on years of research and activism on environmental issues in working-class communities. The analysis and conclusion discusses the seven kinds of change required to address this problem: 1) organizational change - participatory practice (2) legislative change - make class an equalities and human rights issue (3) policy change - reduce inequality (4) social movement change - radicalize the environmental movement and support the environmental working-class (5) political change - create an eco-social state based on sharing (6) cultural change - integrate social and environmental justice, and (7) revolutionary change - dismantle capitalism.

Keywords : environmentalism, just transition, sustainability, working class

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