HAL
open science

# Editorial: 'Ecological crisis–anthropological crisis'

Jean Guichard

▶ **To cite this version:**

Jean Guichard. Editorial: 'Ecological crisis–anthropological crisis'. African Journal of Career Development, 2020, 2 (1), pp.a14. 10.4102/ajcd.v2i1.14 . hal-03247809

**HAL Id: hal-03247809**

**https://cnam.hal.science/hal-03247809v1**

Submitted on 3 Jun 2021

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

**African Journal of Career Development**
ISSN: (Online) 2617-7471



# Editorial: 'Ecological crisis–anthropological crisis'

**Author:**
Jean Guichard[1]

**Affiliation:**
[1]National Institute for the Study of Work and Career Counselling, National Conservatory for Applied Technologies, Paris, France

**Corresponding author:**
Jean Guichard,
jean.guichard@lecnam.net

**How to cite this article:**
Guichard, J. (2020). Editorial: 'Ecological crisis–anthropological crisis'. *African Journal of Career Development, 2*(1), a14. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v2i1.14

**Copyright:**
© 2020. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

**Read online:**
Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Chair of the University of Wroclaw (Poland) and the University Twinning and Networking Program (UNITWIN) project that it has developed (in which the University of Pretoria is involved) emphasise the theme of an orientation towards sustainable human development. The death of Lucien Sève a few days ago (from Covid-19) – author of *Marxism and the Theory of Human Personality* and of texts linking 'ecological crisis' and 'anthropological crisis' – made me come back to this issue.

In my view, the question of sustainable development could not be tackled independently without taking into consideration the possibility offered to all human beings to develop the talents that participate in their humanity. To put it in a less abstract way, the destruction of the environment (devastation of natural resources, accumulation of waste, massive pollution, global warming, etc.) and the development of forms of indecent work (sweat shops, precariat, etc.), of subhuman living conditions (e.g. children from poor countries surviving on the rubbish sent by rich countries, forced migration of people who can no longer live where they came into being, etc.), are two aspects of the same crisis.

Many economists explain that this crisis originated in the emergence of a new form of capitalism – that is, financial capitalism – whose objective is to produce the highest possible dividends as quickly as possible. This race for profit leads to an exploitation of natural resources without wondering about neither the conditions of their reproduction nor the workers' labor conditions, which are sometimes worse than slavery (because slaves constituted a capital whose value on the market depended notably on the care of their masters) in those of the poor countries that have become the world factories.

In Europe, this development of financial capitalism has resulted, as Alain Supiot (2012) has shown, in a rewriting of the European treaties establishing competition between member states, particularly in the area of labour law: maintaining a professional activity involves to gradually liquidate the regulations which were painfully instituted in each state during the 20th century, following the creation of the International Labour Organization by the Treaty of Versailles.

With the Covid-19 epidemic, this interstate competition became manifest. The various European countries engaged in a fierce competition – in which the United States also participated – for purchasing masks, gowns for caregivers and respirators (as described in an article on *the France-Info site* [Francetvinfo 2020]). As it is more and more likely that this pandemic will last for many months (or even years), I believe that we will soon observe a similar interstate competition in terms of getting back to work larger and larger parts of their populations.

In the time of this pandemic, the dividends paid to the great fortunes continue to peak. The weekly newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné* of 01 April 2020 (no. 5186) recalls (an example amongst others) that the board of directors (which was scheduled for April 21) of a major multinational in cosmetic industry has planned to pay €785.8 million to the family which holds 33.3% of the shares (a Swiss multinational in the food industry holding 23.3%). These staggering sums regularly paid to the wealthiest are behind the widening wealth gap between the wealthy and the excluded that the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM) report describes each year. At the same time, parts of the shares of these larger companies (a very small one in the case of this multinational in cosmetics) are held by pension funds. Indeed, the development of financial capitalism has, in particular, consisted – and consists – in a substitution of the pension fund system for previous systems based on intergenerational solidarity: a levy on the incomes of working people funding pensions for retirees. Therefore, modest retirees must now pray for the above-mentioned family earning large dividends so that their own pensions do not collapse. This has a consequence: the increase in the crisis of sustainable and human development that I have just outlined.

So this is a very serious systemic crisis. Systemic, I emphasise. I do not know if we will be able to cope with it either from above (a fundamental reform of our production and exchange systems based on industry resettlements and short circuits, as, with many others, I have advocated in recent years in various writings) or from below (decimation of a crowd of old people in the northern countries and young ones in those of the south, with the subsequent human regressions).

Lucien Sève's (2011) analyses of the link between 'ecological crisis' and 'anthropological crisis' are much more elaborate than what I have just sketched about the double aspect of our systemic crisis. An article he published in French, Spanish and German in Le Monde Diplomatique provides a more complete view of his analyses. I don't know if there is any English translation. It opens a path that, in my view, the UNESCO Chair and the UNITWIN network should explore.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge that a slightly different version of this editorial also appears on the website of 'Career Guidance for Social Justice' (https://careerguidancesocialjustice.wordpress.com/?s=guichard) as a letter entitled 'An open letter from Jean Guichard following the death of Lucien Sève'.

## References

Francetvinfo. (2020). In *Intermédiaires douteux, concurrence entre États : comment le coronavirus a transformé l'Europe en Far West de l'équipement médical* [*Questionable intermediaries, state competition: how the coronavirus turned Europe into the Wild West of medical equipment*]. Retrieved April 06, 2020 from https://www.francetvinfo.fr/sante/maladie/coronavirus/intermediaires-douteux-concurrence-entre-etats-le-coronavirus-a-transforme-leurope-en-far-west-de-lequipement-medical_3901029.html

Sève, L. (2011). *Sauver le genre humain, pas seulement la planète*. Le Monde diplomatique (pp. 22–23). Retrieved November 2011, from https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2011/11/SEVE/46912

Supiot, A. (2012). *The Spirit of Philadelphia: Social Justice vs. the Total Market*. London: Verso books.