

Meaningfulness and organising for sustainable futures

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ABSTRACT

To maintain complex civilisation within planetary boundaries, we must secure a whole ‘system of systems’ transformation of our activities. In this article, based on the lecture notes for my keynote speech at the International Conference on Critical and Radical Humanist Work and Organizational Psychology, I explore the ethical dimensions of making organisations that can help us improve our collective decision-making and at the same time become persons whose acting and being is consistent with the sustainability imperative. I outline a human capability for ethical organising which is directed towards making organisations that generate life-value, or those resources by which we cultivate the relational and material conditions for stewarding and sustaining all living beings and things. The „value of meaningfulness“ and „mutuality as an organising principle“ afford conversion factors for translating our general „will to form“ into a human capability for ethically desirable organising. Meaningful work provides action contexts for people to discover, protect and develop values that matter to them. The moral value of meaningfulness is also productive for breaking into vicious cycles of corporate alienation that prevent the emergence of organisations as collective moral agents, characterised by integrity and empathy. I conclude that we need a fresh democratic dispensation – one that covers our associational life across all fields of endeavour.

Keywords

Meaningful work – sustainability – alienation – organisational psychology