


Economic and Financial Law & Policy – Shifting Insights & Values

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This book series focuses on presenting critical legal and interdisciplinary research regarding the tools and instruments of free-market-driven societies and their economies.

For the last few decades, the world markets have been in turmoil, to a large extent is a result of value and policy choices which have been made since the late middle ages. As a result, on a global scale, economies and the legal systems giving form to them, have mainly if not exclusively become based on selfishness and greed, a reality which is moreover explicitly propagated by the theories of economic neo-liberalism.

It has nevertheless become clear in the recent past that said free market tools and mechanisms – such as private money creation by banks, next to the way huge corporations in general function and determine the outcome of economic processes – result in disastrous consequences, especially when remaining uncorrected by law and when not being submitted to clear public policy intervention measures.

Despite the evidence and growing understanding of the causes and consequences of neoliberal policy, few alternatives for the capitalist model as currently implemented, have so far been proposed.

In order to meet these concerns, this book series aims at offering an outlet for various forms of scientific research output, both monographs and edited collections.

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Koen Bytтеbier

Covid-19 and Capitalism

Success and Failure of the Legal Methods for
Dealing with a Pandemic

 Springer

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Preface

In late February 2020, my personal period of lockdown due to Covid-19 began.

At the same time disturbed and fascinated by the events that, on a socio-economic level and at lightning speed, unfolded from that moment on, I gradually reached the insight to which large extent these events lent themselves to a deduction from my previous work.¹

On a global scale, Covid-19 proved to be an optimal stress test to test the resilience of countries and their governments, whereby it also quickly became apparent that countries that had in the past surrendered the most to the dictates of economic neoliberalism, were among those the least resilient to cope with Covid-19.

And so, 2020–2021 became a period that simultaneously brought great horror and a thorough exercise of deep research and reflection.

The result can be found in this book, which has been given the simple title “Covid-19 & capitalism.”

Other than to say that the material in the book has been tracked until 15 May 2021, I am happy to let the work speak for itself.

Hopefully, wise lessons can be drawn from it to do, preferably, better if, or when, a next pandemic will occur.

I also want to thank all those who have assisted me, through word and deed, in this strange past year during which this book saw the light of day, and who have all been indispensable in helping to bring it about.

First and above all, I want to express my immense gratitude to Armondo Linus Acosta for having inspired the creation of this book, and for everything else.

Next, I want to thank Anne Claeys, ever on my side in all my endeavours, and Michaël Vanslebrouck, always my haven of culture and friendship.

Similarly, I want to thank my parents to whom I own everything, besides my sister, Jenny for making the year of Covid-19 endurable, and for all her help.

¹Cf. Byttebier (2015a, b, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2021).

I also want to thank my colleagues Julie Borgerhoff, Serge Gutwirth, Eduard Snijders, Johny Vanstraelen, Tom Wera, and Kim Van der Borcht, for their both mental and practical support.

I also thank the peer reviewers for the courage they have shown in wanting to assess this book, especially given its magnitude. I furthermore thank the publisher Springer, and especially Mrs Brigitte Reschke for the outstanding professional cooperation.

A special word of thanks goes to my doctor, Dr Jan Reniers, for all his care, and for some interesting discussions about viruses and vaccines, as well as to Mukti-Amma Van der Eecken for the moral support.

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May 15, 2021

Koen Byttebier

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