



Just Transition: The Need for an Interdisciplinary Approach

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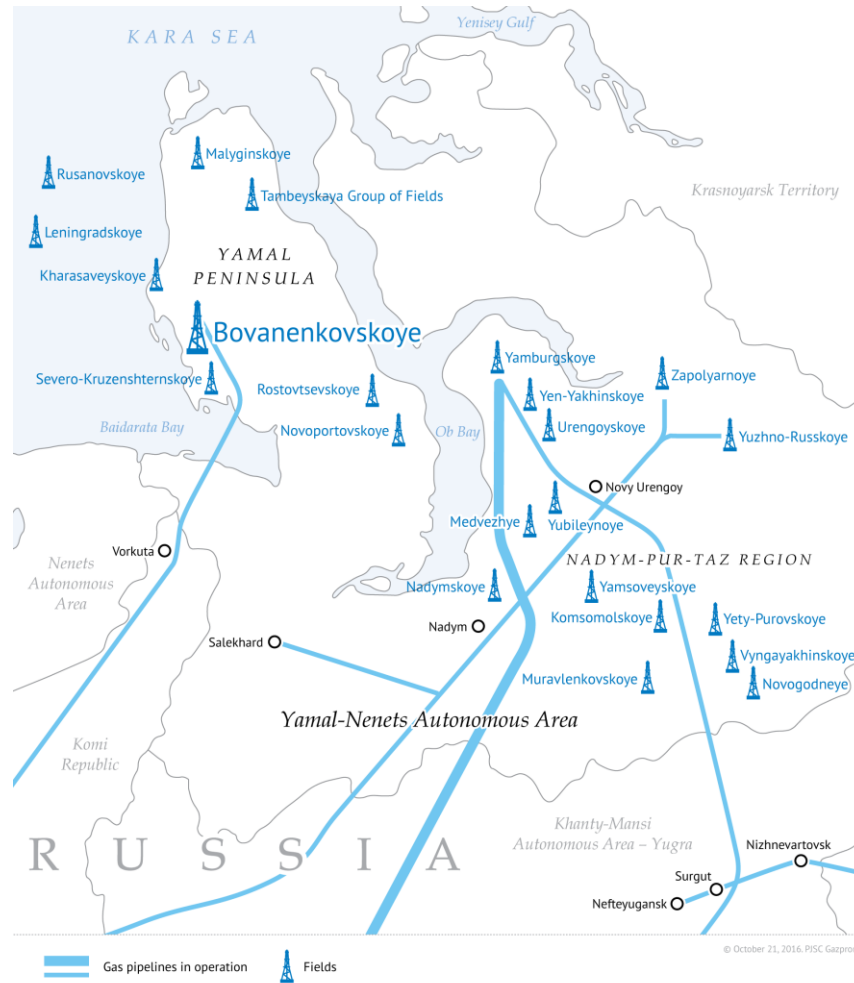
What is the Just Transition?

- Term proposed by global trade unions in 80s – green jobs
 - The move away from fossil fuels requires new solutions
- Therefore, it is the move towards low carbon economy in a fair and equitable manner (Heffron and McCauley 2018, McCauley and Heffron 2018)
- How to assess this transition?
 - Climate justice – vulnerabilities in cities and Global South (Shaw 2016)
 - Environmental justice – ‘green’ and ‘brown’ balance (Doorey 2017)
 - Energy justice – production consumption across systems (McCauley 2017)
- Need to unite analytical frameworks for interdisciplinary research

A 'Just Transition' interdisciplinary framework

- Distributional justice – where are the inequalities?
 - Environmental – proximity as key issue (Acey 2016)
 - Climate – distribution of risks and responsibilities (Bustos et al. 2013)
 - Energy (and climate) – vulnerabilities and fuel poverty (Martinez et al 2007)
- Procedural justice – how do we ensure inclusive solutions?
 - Environmental – location specific (Cotton et al 2014)
 - Climate – resilience building (Forbes et al 2009)
 - Energy – multi-site engagement (Heffron and McCauley 2014)
- Restorative justice
 - Environmental – focus on environmental damage (Dorsey 2009)
 - Climate – historical reparations (Posner and Sunstein (2008)
 - Energy – hold energy companies to account (Reames 2016)

Gazprom and Yamal Peninsula



Distributional justice

- Proximity claims of injustice
 - “Novy Port has led to the destruction of the Gulf of Ob” (interview #3)
- Unfair re-distribution of risks and responsibilities
 - “(activities there) inevitably result in the collapse of local ecosystem upon which communities depend, such as fisheries and reindeer husbandries. These are new direct risks to livelihoods (interview #16)
 - increase in “remote” or “less visible” risk for local communities (#7)
- Vulnerabilities and fuel poverty
 - “A number of settlements there (in Yamal) are off the electricity grid” and electricity has to be generated by diesel generators if they are lucky (interview #8).

Procedural justice

- Location specific and practices
 - “Companies need to realize that local communities offer more than opposition...(we) offer a wealth of local knowledge” (interview #2)
- Resilience building
 - “greater cooperation is needed between indigenous and *non-indigenous* communities to prepare for events, like an oil spill, never mind the developer...industrial activities there have resulted in new communities, not just activities” (#14)
- Multi-site engagement
 - “Gazprom need to think beyond one development and engage better with the Yamalo-Nents Council in particular...often overlooked” (#9)

Restorative justice

- Focus on environmental damage
 - “I’ve seen it (impact statement)...(it) inadequate to say the least” (interview #11)
- Historical reparations
 - “radioactive material (is) there, from previous military operations” (interview #6)
- Hold energy companies to account
 - “you need to understand, the developers are the key here...solutions are only possible if they are involved...but yes (in response to next question) who holds them account?” (interview #13)

Towards a united justice scholarship

- The transition towards a post-carbon world needs unity
- Multiple foci of scholarships should be embraced
- Restorative justice too often overlooked
 - Environmental restoration increasingly important
 - But also social and economic
 - How do we hold perpetrators to account?
 - Do revised SLOs hold some hope?



Critical review

What is the ‘Just Transition’?

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ABSTRACT

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The ‘just transition’ is a concept receiving more attention in the literature to-date. This critical review discusses this and how there are overlaps with literature on energy, environmental and climate justice. Within the separate energy, environment and climate change scholar communities, there is too much distortion of what the ‘transition’ means and what ‘justice’ means, and they all should be understood within the just transition concept. To increase public understanding and public acceptance of a just transition, these research communities need to unite rather than continue alone.

1. Introduction – What is the *Just Transition*?

Within climate, energy, and environmental (CEE) scholar communities, transition means different things because each conceptualize ‘justice’ in distinct ways. Therefore, in ensuring a ‘just transition’ to a low-carbon economy, how can society support such a process when there are mixed visions of its meaning? These three research areas all have their own version of ‘justice scholarship’ – i.e. energy justice (McCauley et al., 2013), environmental justice (Capek, 1993; Walker and Buckelew, 2006), and climate justice (Caney, 2014). At their simplest these three forms of justice can be defined as: (1) climate justice concerns sharing the benefits and burdens of climate change from a human rights perspective; (2) energy justice refers to the application of human rights across the energy life-cycle (from cradle to grave); and (3) environmental justice aims to treat all citizens equally and to involve them in the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. To-date there has been very limited research in uniting these perspectives, and we advance a conceptualization, the ‘just transition’, which encapsulates all three perspectives.

In critically reviewing the transition literature, we show how scholars in the CEE are distorting attempts at achieving a just transition within societies. In considering space and time, there needs to be a realization of when justice concepts within the CEE research scholarship apply. We advance that the emerging area of legal geography, allows for interdisciplinary scholarship on the concept of justice, as it applies across space and time, and in particular in relation to CEE (see for example: Blacksell et al., 1986; Delaney, 2003; Blomley, 1994). Finally, forms of justice, i.e., whether, energy, environmental or

climate, need to relate to society more clearly, with the concept of the just transition offering a path forward as we hope to trace and show.

2. Why the need for a united *Just Transition* concept?

There are many reasons why there needs to be a united *Just Transition* concept and a number of the most important are detailed below. In researching in the CEE area there needs to be a realization of realities of the world, i.e. that research needs a global perspective and actions even at a local level have national and international effects. In CEE research this issue has been identified recently with Agyeman (2014) acknowledging that environmental justice scholars need to ensure their research scope is global and human right focused rather than just civil rights and locally focused; and this is similar to energy justice scholars (Heffron and McCauley, 2017). Forsyth (2014) has in a similar way called for climate justice scholars to have a more global perspective.

In considering notions of time and space, the world is witnessing an acceleration of events in different locations of the world that demonstrate that too many damaging events are occurring – such as, the seven climate records broken in 2016. The just transition captures the ‘just’ process when societies move towards an economy free of CO₂ emissions. Justice is an important element to the transition, because often the rhetoric of governments, companies, institutions and researchers discuss ‘a transition to low carbon economy’ and then there is no mention of ‘just’.

Transitioning away from fossil fuels in society, however, is proving to be very difficult and slow. For example, in 2016, fossil fuels accounted for 81.5% of the UK’s primary energy needs, down only half a



Just transition: Integrating climate, energy and environmental justice

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Just transition is a new framework of analysis that brings together climate, energy and environmental justice scholarships. It was originally coined as a term that was designed to link the promotion of clean technology with the assurance of green jobs. The Paris climate change agreement marks a global acceptance that a more rapid transition is needed to avert disastrous consequences. In response, climate, energy and environmental justice scholarships must unite in assessing where injustices will emerge and how they should be tackled. Just transition offers a new space for developing an interdisciplinary transition sensitive approach to exploring and promoting (1) distributional, (2) procedural and (3) restorative justice, termed here as a new triumvirate of tenets.

1. Introduction

The term “just transition!” was originally proposed by global trade unions in the 1980s. It became a mobilising term for promoting green jobs as a necessary component of the transition away from fossil fuels (Abraham, 2017). From this perspective, the move away from fossil fuels entailed the wholesale shutdown of multiple associated industries. The development of new energy industries offered the potential for green jobs. The jobs argument was placed at the center of the just transitions concept. Criticisms have emerged against this term as it can lead to a ‘jobs versus environment or climate’ frame, which can be used detrimentally against communities and the transition. We agree with Healy and Barry (2017) that the concept of just transition has the possibility to transcend its original strategic purpose. It could result in greater state intervention to ensure green jobs or present a labour-based incentive for speeding up decarbonisation policies (Altintzis and Busser, 2014). We argue, instead, that it could have the potential for uniting climate, energy and environmental (CEE) justice to provide a more comprehensive framework for analysing and ultimately promoting fairness and equity throughout the transition away from fossil fuels.

The urgent need to accelerate the transition could, and should, unite CEE justice scholarship (Heffron and McCauley, 2018). In this way, we build upon just sustainabilities (Agyeman et al., 2002; Evans et al., 2003) as a previous attempt to unite scholarships (in that case sustainability, environmental justice and equity). The trade union origins of the just transition concept were explicitly positioned within the environmental justice movement (Doorey, 2017; Stevis and Felli, 2015;

Bullard, 1996; Abraham, 2017; Patterson and Smith, 2016). Environmental justice literature is grappling with how to balance the social and environmental dimensions involved in this transition (Evans and Phelan, 2016; Sharma-Wallace, 2016; Rodriguez-Labajos and Özkaynak, 2017; Homey et al., 2018; Kubanza et al., 2017). Climate justice is most focused upon effective global justice transitions that can deal with the implications of the inevitable consequences of rapid climate change for vulnerable groups in the (not exclusively) Global South (Kortetmäki, 2016; Shaw, 2016; Skillington, 2017; Mihr, 2017; Meyer and Sanklecha, 2017; Baptiste and Rhiney, 2016; Fuller, 2017). Energy justice scholars incorporate the idea of transition both from the production viewpoint of moving towards low carbon sources (Heffron et al., 2015; McCauley et al., 2016; Lappe-Osthege and Andreas, 2017; Healy and Barry, 2017) as well as the consumption-based concerns of achieving energy efficiency in the long term without compromising individual well-being or community cohesion (Bouzarovski and Simcock, 2017; Damgaard et al., in press; Rasch and Köhne, 2017; McCauley, 2018b; Welton, 2018). And yet, each justice scholarship suffers through the lack of a joint conceptual space for reflection. The transition involves an inherently intersectional dimension involving all three prominent justice scholarships. The urgency of the transition must be met with a similar thrust for justice scholars in developing new consolidated frameworks of analysis to provide sustainable long-term solutions.

We identify the two dominant frames of analysis used by all three justice scholarships to be (1) *distributional* and (2) *procedural justice*. The coverage of inequalities associated with the transition are frequently