



Climate Justice from Below

Local Struggles for Just Transition(s)



In this report



Elevating frontline communities' voices in a just transition



Just transition as a broad-based coalition of working people and environmental activists



Human rights principles for a transformative just transition



Just transition stories from
India
Nigeria
Philippines
Scotland
Tanzania
United States



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The Just Transition Research Collaborative (JTRC) was established in 2018 to bring together experts from academia and civil society to collectively map and analyse different understandings and narratives of just transition that underpin the concept's growing popularity and uptake.

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Introduction



CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION has become increasingly important with each IPCC report outlining more drastic environmental impacts and a shorter time frame to decarbonize and avert the most severe consequences of the looming climate crisis. While international climate policy and action has recently taken a wrong turn since losing the momentum that came with the adoption and early entry into force of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016, cities are taking centre stage in the attempt to tackle climate change and signal their continued commitment to the Paris Agreement. Cities are both major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and forerunners of sustainability. They account for around two thirds of the global energy demand and 75 percent of carbon emissions on the one hand (REN21 2019a). On the other, they are often drivers of the renewable energy transition and champions of sustainability innovation. Faced with rapid urbanization and mounting environmental and social pressures, cities have come up with a range of initiatives and ambitious plans to tackle climate change and transition to sustainability. Cities are often also hosts to progressive movements and alliances

in the struggle for sustainability and climate justice. So will cities drive the just transition to low-carbon development?

While climate change impacts already threaten some of the most marginalized populations who have contributed least to climate change, mitigation policies can further disadvantage them, leading to a triple injustice (UNRISD 2016). In order to prevent such injustice, equity and justice considerations need to be part and parcel of climate policy. The Just Transition Research Collaborative published a state-of-the-art report on varieties of just transition that highlighted how different worldviews lead to different approaches to just transition that imply different notions of justice. Just transitions can aim for change at the margins that largely preserves the neoliberal or developmentalist status quo; or they can entail managerial reforms that aim to deal with crises, whether they take the form of popular protests and discontent, as in the case of the French “yellow vests” for example, or declining coal communities. Structural reforms, in turn, envisage greater procedural and distributive justice and can be a

precondition for more profound transformations in the way societies organize their economies, environments and social interactions (JTRC 2018).

Many of the more transformative examples of just transition have been rooted in local movements and community organizations exerting pressure on their local, regional and sometimes national governments to adopt alternative development strategies. Urban and local level transitions are not automatically progressive and just, however; rather, they fall along the same continuum of approaches to just transition mentioned above and differ correspondingly in their visions of a low-carbon and sustainable future. The extent to which cities can contribute to a transformative shift to low-carbon development, and how their potential can be utilized to accelerate a progressive just transition, needs careful assessment.

This report will therefore discuss urban and local level approaches and case studies of just transition, exploring the role of cities in implementing progressive and transformative just transition strategies and plans. Building on the theoretical framework and assessment produced in 2018 by the Just Transition Research Collaborative and published in *Mapping Just Transition(s) to a Low-Carbon World*, the objective of this report is to discuss local level examples and transition stories from different parts of the world and to kick-start a debate on the potential of local just transition policies and frameworks to influence higher level policy change and climate justice.

The report sheds light on a number of distinct aspects of the just transition debate that need further attention and discussion in order to craft just mitigation policies and spur rapid and fair climate action. It starts with an overview of policies that support urban transitions to a low-carbon economy, demonstrating potential inequality outcomes and the importance of inclusive decision-making processes. It goes on to show how the fallacy of opposing justice with the urgency of tackling the climate crisis can be used to exclude communities due to time and financial constraints or to push through “quick-fix” measures rather than find a more democratic solution that may challenge the status quo. Frontline communities whose lives intersect with fossil fuel industries are powerful agents in the struggle for a just transition as they face both environmental injustice from pollution and local impacts of heavy industries, and risk losing their employment in low-carbon transitions. Looking at the potential of transformative just transition

then offers an avenue to restructure power relations for systemic change and a more equitable society. It requires an approach beyond minimal community consultation and should be rooted in a human rights framework to ensure a transformative just transition.

The different case studies presented demonstrate the potential for just transition to address our most global environmental problem and localized social inequalities simultaneously, and warn about the risks if we do not. The examples from both developed and developing countries showcase the need for contextualized just transition measures that suit the needs of the affected communities in order to achieve greater political support and ambition in climate policy.

Finally, in our outlook, we suggest that just transition done right may pave the way for greater climate justice. If we can safeguard its original objective of reorganizing the political economy to protect both the environment and workers, just transition holds the potential to mobilize broad-based support in both developed and developing countries that is needed to demand a transformative shift towards sustainability and climate justice.





Which Policies Support Urban Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy and Reduce Inequalities¹

THE RIOTING IN PARIS by the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) in 2018-2019 has drawn the world's attention to one of the potential pitfalls of climate policy—namely, what happens when policies that are designed and implemented to protect our planet are perceived to be “unfair”. The Paris riots are by no means the first time this issue has been raised. In academic and policy discourse, the idea of “just transition” has been discussed for decades. In recent years, the concept of just transition has evolved, expanding from its rather narrow focus on industrial transition and workers' rights to include broader aspects of the low-carbon transition, including the various distributional impacts of climate policy. This shift in the understanding of what we mean by just transition has coincided with increasing interest in, and attention being paid to, the “equitability” of climate change and climate change mitigation policies in both developed and developing countries. As a result, an assumption that climate change mitigation policy, by default, benefits

those who are most vulnerable to climate change has been largely replaced by a more nuanced understanding that recognizes that those who are most vulnerable to climate change are also most vulnerable to bad policy (see, for example, Klinsky and Winkler 2018).

In the current context characterized by growing pressures on the global community and national governments to increase their ambition and actions on climate change, the need to better understand how, why and who may be negatively impacted by various types of climate change mitigation policies is more pressing than ever. Most climate change mitigation policies have the potential to generate positive as well as negative co-impacts, often referred to as co-benefits and adverse side-effects (Klinsky and Winkler 2018; Ürgen-Vorsatz et al. 2014; von Stechow et al. 2015). The extent and direction of these co-impacts depends on contextual factors, policy design and implementation, and action that is taken to mitigate the potentially negative outcomes.

Understanding how mitigation policies may increase or decrease inequality will be essential to facilitate progress towards the Paris Agreement's targets without losing the support of the general public. The importance of considering the effects of climate change and climate change mitigation strategies on vulnerable populations—and the necessity of providing adequate support to negatively affected people and communities—was recognized in the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC 2015) and in the Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration at the Katowice Climate Change Conference (COP24), in December 2018.

Positive outcomes for economic equality emerge when policies reduce essential expenditure or improve opportunities for economic participation among poorer households, regions or countries (see Markkanen and Anger-Kraavi 2019 for a more detailed discussion). Negative outcomes for economic inequality, on the other hand, are associated with policies that have regressive distributional impacts, increase the cost of basic consumer goods (Ekins et al. 2011; Marcu and Vangenechten 2018; Sovacool 2017), reduce or remove employment opportunities (see IRENA 2016; ILO 2015) or limit people's access to natural resources (see Smith et al. 2014; Marino and Ribot 2012; Work 2017).

The close relationship between economic inequality and other forms of inequality means that gender, ethnic and health inequality outcomes surface as a result of policies that impact on economic inequality. This is highlighted especially in contexts where female-headed households and minority ethnic populations are over-represented in low-income groups.

The pathway to positive equality outcomes involves carefully considering who might be impacted by a given policy and involving these groups or communities in the decision-making process and policy implementation through processes such as community consultation (for example Brugnach et al. 2017; Cotula et al. 2008; Gambhir et al. 2018; Jennings 2016). To avoid exacerbating existing inequalities, it is important for all consultation processes to be inclusive and comprehensive, involving people from across the community, including women, minority ethnic groups, poorer members of the community and people living on the edges of the affected areas (Khatun et al. 2015; Larson et al. 2015; ENERGIA 2010; Mazorra et al. 2017).

In policy and programme implementation, socio-economic benefits can be maximized by utilizing the local workforce where possible, while also seeking to

ensure equitable distribution of benefits at the local level via practices such as locating large-scale renewable energy projects in areas of high unemployment, training local unemployed people to fill the new jobs, and ensuring that the new employment opportunities do not exacerbate existing inequalities, such as gendered unemployment patterns.

A pro-poor approach involves explicit focus on how a policy could be used to benefit the poorest persons and taking active measures to address economic inequalities and mitigate regressive outcomes. For example, policy measures with potentially negative impacts on household income or livelihoods must be accompanied by sufficient mitigating measures, such as exemptions, subsidies, compensation for losses and concrete support to help affected individuals and communities to access alternative economic opportunities (Nhantumbo and Camargo 2015; Cernea 2008; Work 2017; Sills et al. 2014).

Case study: Urban transport policies

Policies that result in significant reductions in traffic volume, private car use and /or large-scale shift from internal combustion engine vehicles to electric ones improve air quality, especially in large cities that struggle with high levels of traffic-related air pollution (Wenwei et al. 2017; Parrish et al. 2011; WHO 2018; Buekers et al. 2014). The health benefits from improved air quality will accrue primarily to lower income households who are most likely to live in locations affected by poor air quality from road transport (Hajat et al. 2015; Pratt et al. 2015). As a result, such policies are likely to reduce health inequalities associated with economic inequality. In contexts where minority ethnic groups are over-represented among the residents in areas affected by high levels of traffic-related air pollution, policies that improve air quality in these areas will also reduce health inequalities between ethnic groups (for example Fecht et al. 2015; Jennings 2016).

Policies that aim to reduce private car use by improving the coverage and quality of public transport systems can improve access to economic opportunities, education and health (Jennings 2016; WHO 2011). The benefits arising from better public transport connectivity are greatest for the poorest households who rely more heavily on public transport for their mobility needs (Jennings 2016; Ürge-Vorsatz et al. 2014; WHO 2011). In urban contexts where female-headed households and minority ethnic populations are over-represented in low-income groups, improved access to economic and educational opportunities associated with improvements to public transport infrastructure will serve to reduce gender and ethnic inequalities.



Improvements to public transport systems will also create new jobs (Jennings 2016; Sims et al. 2014; UITP 2013; WHO 2014). Many of these jobs, especially jobs in customer service, will need to be filled with local workers. In developing countries, new jobs in the public transport sector are likely to be more secure and better paid than employment opportunities in the informal economy (UITP 2013).

Urban transport policies will exacerbate existing inequalities if they increase the costs of mobility, reduce the public transport services or involve redirecting public sector funds to subsidies that benefit primarily medium and higher income households, leaving low-income groups financially worse off (Jennings 2016; Lucas and Pangbourne 2014). Low-income households will be most vulnerable to the negative impacts of policies that increase the cost of public transport, such as regulations or standards that increase operating costs, reduce competition or require service providers to make large capital investments. Taxes and emissions standards that apply to older and more polluting private vehicles will likewise have regressive distributional impacts if subsidies or exemptions are not made available to low-income households who cannot afford to upgrade their vehicles and who cannot meet their mobility needs

using public transport (for example, those who work unsociable hours, have disabilities or live in areas that are not well serviced by public transport). Any cost increases will most likely exacerbate existing inequalities.

To maximize the potential of urban transport policies to reduce inequalities, policy makers need to ensure that new initiatives, such as subsidies to incentivize the uptake of electric vehicles or improvements to cycling infrastructure in wealthier neighbourhoods, are not financed by reallocation of public funds from social spending. Amendments to public transport infrastructure will need to be designed to address the needs of the lowest-income areas (Jennings 2016), while also paying attention to safety considerations that impact women's ability to benefit from improved access to public transport.

Case study: Energy efficiency in homes

Residential energy efficiency improvements have the potential to improve health equality and economic equality. These positive impacts can emerge directly as a result of greater living comfort (Hills 2012; the Marmot Review Team 2011; European Commission 2016), and indirectly through improved household finances as a result of reduced spending on energy. The positive



equality impacts are maximized when energy efficiency improvements are implemented among households that previously underutilized heating (or cooling) services due to financial constraints or suffered from fuel poverty (Grimes et al. 2012; European Commission 2016). Improved ability to afford adequate heating (or cooling) has also been associated with better educational performance among children and improved overall well-being (see Grimes et al. 2012; European Commission 2016; Howden-Chapman and Chapman 2012; Miller et al. 2017; OECD 2015; Willand et al. 2015; Smith 2010).

In contexts where female-headed households and minority ethnic populations are more likely than average to live in poor-quality housing, energy efficiency improvements in the lowest quality housing stock can help reduce gender inequalities and ethnic inequalities. However, effective targeting of energy efficiency improvement programmes to those in greatest need is often complex, time consuming and costly (see Rosenow et al. 2013). In some legal and regulatory contexts, it may be difficult to implement policies to improve energy efficiency in the poorest quality housing stock, especially if these homes are predominantly in the private rented sector (University of Cambridge 2012).

Large-scale retrofitting initiatives to improve energy efficiency in existing buildings will create new jobs in construction and the development and production of energy efficient technologies (see European Climate Foundation 2014; European Commission 2016). The employment benefits and positive equality outcomes from localized energy efficiency improvement programmes can be maximized by making the new job opportunities available to disadvantaged areas and population sub-groups, while simultaneously designing the programmes to reduce fuel poverty (which tends to be concentrated in the same areas as high unemployment) (Ürge-Vorsatz et al. 2010). Distribution of the employment impacts, however, depends heavily on equitable access to training opportunities.

Restrictions on participation, such as selective entry requirements or requiring a large up-front investment, reduce uptake among low-income households and can result in increased economic inequality as well as health inequality, especially if energy efficiency improvements are carried out in properties that are inhabited by middle- and high-income households.

Harnessing equality benefits in mitigation policies

The social impacts and inequality outcomes associated with climate change mitigation policies are complex and often indirect, making them difficult to predict and their extent hard to estimate. Many policies, as illustrated here in reference to urban transport and residential energy efficiency, have the potential to generate both positive and negative outcomes. The nature, direction and extent of the social impacts and associated inequality outcomes is determined by the way that policies are designed and implemented, as well as a range of contextual factors including the level of existing inequalities.

While existing inequalities are widely recorded and monitored, less is known about the way in which climate change mitigation policies can be used to effectively reduce these inequalities. Good practices include strategic thinking and a pro-poor approach. In policy design and implementation, it is necessary to consider who may be negatively impacted by a given policy as well as why and how this happens.

New ways of sharing and distributing information on the co-impacts and inequality outcomes associated with various types of climate change mitigation policies in an accessible format are needed to enable policy makers to better consider the complex social impacts that various policies may have and the pathways through which these outcomes emerge. Information on how to minimize and mitigate potentially negative outcomes is also highly valuable to reduce the risk of inequitable policy impacts. As countries strive to make progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, decision makers need to be able to show how the proposed policies will help to improve the lives of their citizens to secure public support. Better opportunities to share good practices, and lessons learned from situations where policies have resulted in negative outcomes, will aid this process and help policy makers avoid repeating the same mistakes.

If we are to restrict global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius as per the Paris Agreement, countries around the world will need to revise their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)² and increase their ambition on climate, both in terms of speed and scale of the transition to low-carbon development. To prevent large-scale civil unrest, it is essential for this process to be informed by the principles of equitability and just transition. To this end, the need to better understand the social impacts and inequality outcomes of climate change mitigation policies is greater than ever.

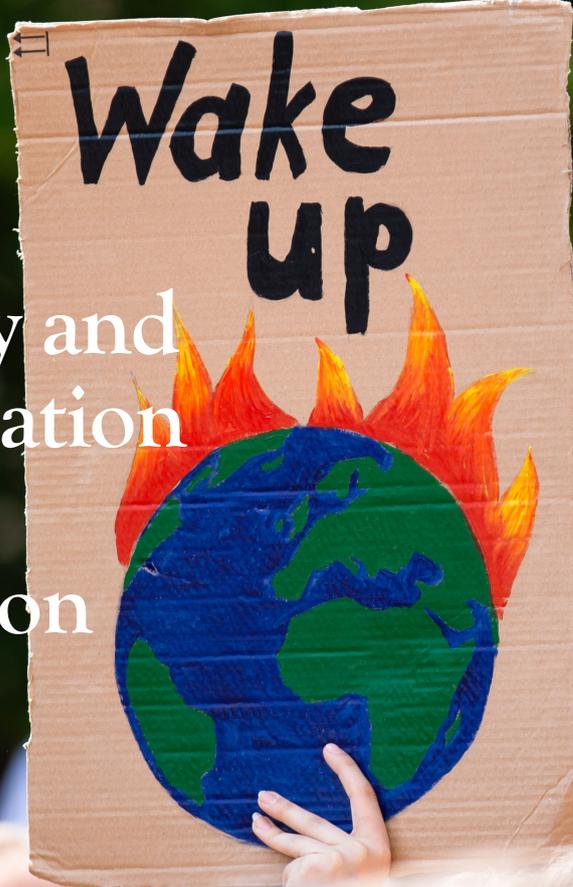
Box 1. Distributive impacts of energy policies in Indonesia

Indonesia has committed to reducing its emissions by 29 percent via domestic efforts and up to 41 percent conditional on receiving international support (Republic of Indonesia 2016). In order to reach these targets, the country is developing a wide-ranging low-carbon development plan to move to cleaner production and a less carbon-intensive energy sector. In order to reduce its dependency on fossil fuels, the Indonesian government successfully reduced energy subsidies from a volume of approximately IDR 1,214 trillion in 2011-2014 to about IDR 447 trillion in 2015-2018.³ The key challenge in this transition is to manage the distributive effects so that it does not disproportionately burden poor people who rely on the subsidies for their livelihoods or reduce the reliability of the energy system and hamper access to electricity in some areas. While the majority of fuel subsidies in Indonesia were captured by wealthier households, poorer households, in particular in urban areas, are hit harder by fuel price increases and they opposed initial reform proposals (Lindebjerg et al. 2015). To alleviate the impacts of the subsidy reform on poorer households and to increase social acceptability, a redistributive cash transfer programme was introduced to rectify this injustice (Chelminski 2018).

Indonesia still needs to improve its policies for a just transition to tackle those challenges in the long term and ensure a fair distribution of economic, social and environmental impacts. Both market- and non market-based policies are necessary to stabilize and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the energy sector. The government needs to introduce a carbon tax for polluters who produce greenhouse gas emissions beyond an acceptable level.

Indonesia recently introduced the Green Bonds and Green Sukuk Initiative, an innovative financial instrument based on Islamic Law principles to promote climate-aligned investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency and resilience to climate change. International support is essential to make such green financing initiatives a success. Non market-based climate policy mainly focuses on improving governance. The government needs to consider four main aspects: providing a consistent policy for renewable energy; easing rigid bureaucratic procedures for developing renewable energy; enhancing coordination across sectors and different government agencies; and streamlining regulations to gain better access to international funds.

Urgency and Participation in Just Transition



IN ORDER TO AVOID UNEQUAL OUTCOMES resulting from climate change mitigation policies, a participatory and inclusive approach in the policy-making process is pivotal. This is especially true at the local level where there is a good opportunity for engagement with grassroots social movements. These processes often require time, financial resources and a good strategy—applying care and diligence to ensure justice in drafting policy. However, the overwhelming urgency of climate change can overshadow the participatory methodology for policy making. The alarming, pressing nature of climate change has increased with each IPCC report, sparking attention worldwide. The 2018 IPCC Special Report *Global Warming of 1.5°C* points to the need for much more ambitious mitigation policies and global cooperation to secure at least a chance of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees and reducing the number of people exposed to severe climate risks (IPCC 2018). Following the report, there was a wave of public concern about faster climate action in the press, with articles such as “The fierce urgency of climate change” (Downie 2019, *The Washington Post*) and “We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe” (Watts 2019, *The Guardian*). In this political climate, climate change activists are pushing one key agenda: lowering greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible.

Just transition to a low-carbon economy is a concept that puts justice alongside urgency at the forefront of climate change mitigation policies. The tension between the urgency of climate action and the participation of frontline communities often leads to local struggles and conflicts between different groups of actors that can end in deadlock. Across the range of different just transition approaches, participation is an important element to ensure both fairness and people’s buy-in (see JTRC 2018). In a structural reform, for example, governance structures are modified to ensure inclusive and equitable decision-making processes that lead to more collective ownership and management of renewable energy systems (JTRC 2018). While structural reform secures both procedural and distributive justice in the transition away from fossil fuels, a transformative approach goes one step further and aims to overhaul the existing economic and political system that it sees at the root of the environmental and social justice crisis. Transformative approaches tackle existing inequalities and systems of exclusion, aiming for systemic shifts and transitions that are led by specific, often marginalized, social groups such as indigenous peoples and people of colour. Such approaches are often spearheaded by social movements and community groups but are rarely found in climate policy.

Mitigation policies must carefully balance urgency on the one hand and participation of communities on the other in order to achieve structural or transformative reform. Conceptualizing and implementing just transition policies alongside communities is necessary to achieve a low-carbon economy that works for everyone in the short- and long-term. As such, demystifying participation in mitigation policies can assist both policy makers and communities to engage effectively and efficiently for climate action. This section identifies several challenges to participation in just transition initiatives that could be ameliorated with more inclusive political processes to balance the urgency of climate action.

Challenges and opportunities for participation

At the [JTRC Cities in Transition workshop](#), it became clear that “participation” rhetoric from policy makers often degenerated into a box-ticking exercise needed to get the go-ahead for policies, instead of starting as community-led processes. Case studies from New York City, Boulder (Colorado) and Scotland will show the contrast between government-led and community-led initiatives, as well as challenges to participation. Localized solutions to engage communities to ensure community-led process have the potential to overcome these challenges. While policy makers are under pressure to act urgently to mitigate climate change, their policies can have adverse impacts if they do not actively ensure equitable community participation in the decision-making process. This section demonstrates how certain technical solutions to climate change mitigation exclude participation of affected communities.

✦ **Technical solutions limit participation: Scotland**
 Recently, an emphasis on the politics of accountability has led to a “measure it to manage it” ethos that relies heavily on data-driven governance strategies. As transparency has become increasingly important in environmental politics, so have markets and monetization. However, technical solutions monitored through numbers privilege certain modes of knowledge and silence others. Participation is limited by the degree that communities can engage with the measurement and monitoring of activities, which is particularly difficult in terms of carbon accounting.

The case of Scotland makes this point clear. In an effort to support community-led climate action, the Climate Challenge Fund established by the Scottish Government finances community decarbonization projects, usually undertaken by grassroots organizations who can apply for the funds. However, comprehensive monitoring and reporting requirements automatically exclude all community groups who do not have the resources or skill



set to participate. The application requires a familiarity with spreadsheets and carbon accounting, for example, to prove that the proposed project will lead to emissions reductions. This limits both the number of people who are able to submit a proposal and the kinds of projects that participate quite substantially as it is quite difficult to calculate the emissions savings. Some groups found workarounds, though, and included “easy to count” components in their projects in order to qualify for funding. One community group wanted to apply for funding for their existing community garden project, for example, for which the carbon accounting turned out to be too complex. The group then ended up shifting their project’s focus to encouraging local residents to reduce their air travel and promoted behavioural change to reduce emissions. This shift made it possible to measure the emissions savings comparatively easily and allowed the group to tap into resources that then supported their general operations and ensured the continuation of the community garden project (Aiken 2014, 2016). This example shows how monitoring and reporting requirements limit grassroots organizations’ ability to pursue their own aims and strategies that are more difficult to count and account for in terms of carbon savings. Because the decision-making process was led by policy makers who sought to spend public monies in the most efficient and effective way to reduce emissions, a technical solution was prioritized that excluded many groups from participating, thereby hindering a truly just transition.

● *Including participatory mechanisms in climate action: Boulder, Colorado*

Cities most eager to implement climate change policies and do their part to decrease emissions may also overlook participation in their initial planning. In that case, communities have to organize and advocate for themselves in order to be a part of the process and ensure just policies. One such city is Boulder, Colorado, which is well-known for its commitment to ambitious and fast climate change mitigation. Boulder has pledged to achieve the switch to 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, and 80 percent community emissions reduction by 2050. The city council declared a climate emergency in July 2019, prompting a sense of urgency in transitioning to a low-carbon economy (City of Boulder 2019).



However, justice and participation have been less prominent in the city's climate agenda. City officials did hold meetings with a variety of communities before deciding on climate change mitigation policies. One meeting proved insufficient, however, because communities did not have the time, resources or preparation to engage meaningfully in the decision-making process. As a result, a tax on fuel for cars adversely impacted some of Boulder's most vulnerable communities—immigrant households who relied on fuel to run their landscaping businesses. At the time, the climate action plan did not incorporate a just transition narrative which necessitates more community participation for structural or transformative reform.

In response, a Just Transition Collaborative was established at the University of Boulder, Colorado, to develop inclusive participation, projects, and policies

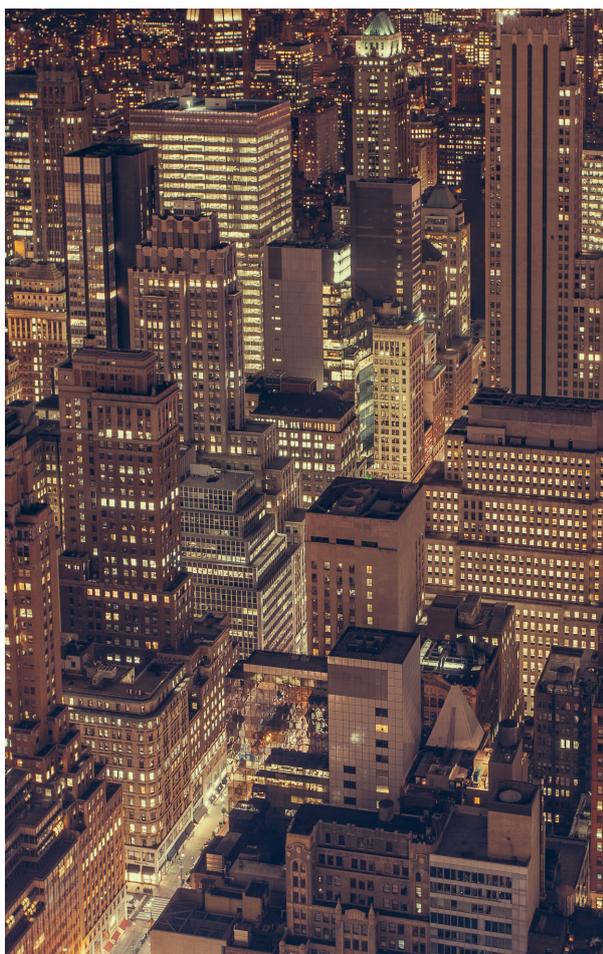
(JTC 2019). A group representing communities of colour, immigrants, youth, elders and low-income communities was trained over several months, creating the Climate Justice Leaders (JTC 2019). They then brought policy and programme ideas to the Climate Justice Assembly with heads of the city's departments, highlighting transportation issues. To foster a more inclusive process, the Climate Justice Assembly recommended the use of inclusive policy templates and protocols, an inclusive engagement fund, and inclusive engagement training and capacity building for city staff. In addition, the Collaborative is pushing for targeted policy recommendations such as job training, support structures for green transition, housing, transportation and child care reforms. This case study demonstrates one avenue for greater participation of a variety of marginalized communities—developing a coalition and leadership team to bring community concerns forward. However, it should be noted that this process is still driven by policy makers, not the communities themselves which limits the potential for just policies.

● *Grassroots coalition building: New York City*

Transformative change for a just transition requires more than increasing levels of participation. Instead, it needs grassroots coalitions that can push their concerns into the policy realm and, in the best cases, produce policies that tackle social as well as environmental concerns in a timely manner (JTRC 2018). The case of climate action in New York City shows how marginalized communities can leverage their political power together to enact policy from the bottom-up.

In New York City, activists working on a wide range of issues, such as housing advocates, trade unionists and environmentalists, came together for a common purpose—a just transition climate action agenda. Volunteers led lobbying days with politicians who were up for re-election, which eventually led to the “Green New Deal for NYC” being passed (see page 18 for more details).

This case study demonstrates that urgency can be used by frontline communities to leverage solutions that tackle long-standing social and environmental concerns of various communities. Community-led initiatives such as this one in New York City are transformative in shifting social power away from powerful, elite actors like the real estate industry. Local communities not only participated in developing climate action, they opted for solutions that changed the political game.



Reconciling urgency and participation

Equal participation of communities and political urgency of climate action interact in a variety of ways that can be either detrimental or useful to ensure a just transition. Policy makers can take the urgency of climate change as an impetus to develop technical, fast-acting solutions that exclude certain communities. Also, policy makers can make decisions about climate change mitigation policy without a participatory process, which can result in harmful social consequences. However, urgency can fuel strategic advocacy through coalitions to push for policies that tackle a multitude of social and environmental problems within a community.

The decision-making process for climate change mitigation policies, and who is leading that process, have significant implications for the social consequences as well as long-term effectiveness of climate mitigation policies. The exclusion of some communities demonstrates how political power is unevenly distributed. Transformative, community-led initiatives offer the only avenue to address and restructure the systems that have excluded some communities from the decision-making process in the first place.

Box 2. Cities as frontrunners of climate action

There are a range of international networks and transnational urban governance mechanisms that promote climate action at the city level and highlight cities as frontrunners of sustainability and decarbonization (see C40 Cities n.d.; Jægerfelt Mouritsen 2019; IFC 2018). These include the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, C40 Cities and ICLEI—Local Governments for Sustainability. They comprise a growing number of cities and proportion of the world population that are committed to sustainability and climate change mitigation. While cities still account for around 75 percent of global carbon emissions, cities' commitments to climate action and rapid decarbonization are often much more ambitious than Nationally Determined Contributions (REN21 2019a).



However, a commitment to sustainability may not go hand in hand with a commitment to a just transition to a low-carbon world. C40, for example, is a voluntary network that requires cities to disclose their emissions and governance actions which increase climate mitigation at the local level. Through measurement and transparent reporting, the idea is that cities are held increasingly accountable for their emissions (Gordon 2016). A key concern of this approach is that its focus on economics and carbon accounting represents a form of neoliberal urbanism that largely ignores justice and equity concerns (Davidson and Gleeson 2015). Instead, it uses the “carbon economy” to create insular accumulation strategies that safeguard local prosperity and resources, power relations and lifestyles (Davidson and Gleeson 2015). C40 is a case in point. While it may have made some progress to come up with strategies for more inclusive processes and better distribution of power (Davidson and Gleeson 2015), C40 cities largely use the network to secure private investments that only benefit the elites (Gordon 2016). In its current form, the network may contribute to lowering carbon emissions but it has little potential to foster a just transition. For that to happen, the narrative of accountability would need to look beyond investment opportunities and expand to policy debates about justice and equity (Gordon 2016).

Frontline Communities in a Just Transition



F RONTLINE COMMUNITIES are those that most directly experience environmental injustice, whether that is due to pollution or climate change impacts. Living side-by-side with polluting industries, they are often negatively impacted by both environmental and climate change, and by mitigation policies that can displace jobs. They are also at the forefront of the struggle for climate and environmental justice and are often key agents in advocating for a just transition and system change.

Trade unionists from the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers' Union first acknowledged that their industries caused environmental and health problems and crafted a programme, that was later labelled "just transition", during the 1980s, determined to mobilize for public policies that addressed environmental and labour challenges (JTRC 2018). Climate Justice Alliance—a US-based national alliance of grassroots organizations—considers these trade unionists some of the first frontline communities (CJA 2019). Similarly, Just Transition Alliance, as a programmatic movement bringing together labour and environmental justice, associates frontline communities specifically with workers in polluting

industries (JTA 2019). As such, a strong overlap between labour unions and just transition has been maintained since the initial environmental strikes.

Some definitions make a distinction between frontline communities and workers, seeing them as allies but not necessarily the same. For instance, the Climate Justice Alliance notes that just transition was "rooted in workers defining a transition away from polluting industries in alliance with fence line and frontline communities" (CJA 2019). It is clear, though, that in this case frontline communities "are those that witness direct impacts of climate change," largely "the first and worst consequences" (Orlove et al. 2019; Holland 2017).

Another defining feature of frontline communities is that they are usually communities without social, political or economic power. Climate Justice Alliance frames them as "low-income communities of color, who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health, and the planet" (CJA 2019). Holland uses a similar definition and adds that frontline communities are vulnerable, lacking basic infrastructure to support them (Holland 2017). Sampson et al. (2014)

extend the definition to involve land use planning in which they have been “historically and repeatedly marginalized”. The term frontline communities is preferable to “affected” or “host” communities because of their agency and ability to lead decision-making processes (Sampson et al. 2014).

Localized environmental injustices of oil and gas industries

Frontline communities not only voice health and environmental concerns that directly impact their geographical area, but also those that indirectly relate to climate change mitigation. By opposing oil and other extractive industries, frontline communities bring a localized voice to push for climate change mitigation strategies that are just. In order to ensure a just transition, these communities must be incorporated into climate change mitigation policies that affect their work, health and environment. The following examples of frontline communities in the USA and Nigeria demonstrate the kind of localized environmental and social impacts of oil and gas industries and how a transition can incorporate justice.

● Frontline communities’ complicated relationship with extractive industries: Gulf Coast, USA

The southern Gulf Coast of the USA is a region at the intersect of both the cause and the consequences of climate change and has a history of environmental injustice. It is a region where the oil and gas industry has been entrenched for decades as well as being highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, particularly sea level rise and storms. The oil and gas industry have had direct adverse health and environment impacts on many frontline communities, particularly through extremely high levels of toxic air pollution and increased cancer risk in the area between Baton Rouge and New Orleans that hosts over 100 petrochemical facilities and has been coined “Cancer Alley” (Federman 2015; EPA 2014). Additionally, the indirect consequences of the oil and gas industry affect the communities through climate change impacts. For example, sea level rise and coastal erosion makes an area larger than Manhattan disappear every year in coastal Louisiana (Kennedy 2013). The region also suffers the impacts of increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes, which are disproportionately felt by low-income communities of colour who lack the financial capacity to rebuild. Frontline communities in this case are thus hit twice: by direct and indirect environmental harm perpetrated by the oil and gas industry.

However, at the same time the oil and gas industries are the primary source of livelihood for these frontline communities and they have a lot of political power. As such, in the Gulf South region, participation of frontline communities is crucial to determine the best strategies for a just transition to a low-carbon world that makes sure they are not left behind and confronted with an additional injustice of losing employment and public revenues. Activists from frontline communities in the southern Gulf Coast area have already begun advocacy efforts at the national and international level. “Gulf South Rising” was a 2015 campaign to commemorate anniversaries of major environmental and human rights events: 5 years after the BP oil spill, 10 years after hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the BP refinery explosion, and 50 years after key milestones in the American civil rights movement: the Selma March and the passage of the Voting Rights Act (Federman 2015). One of the targets of the campaign was to link the region’s environmental injustices with the extractive industry, particularly as it houses the endpoint for the Keystone XL pipeline from the mines of Alberta, Canada (Federman 2015). In addition to regional advocacy, the campaign chose 31 delegates as representatives of frontline communities from Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida for the Paris COP 21 conference (Collin et al. 2015). Three of these delegates gained credentials to attend as official observers of the negotiations (Collin et al. 2015).

Frontline communities are uniquely positioned to advocate for a just transition that recognizes the nuances and impacts of the various social, health and environmental impacts of polluting and carbon-intensive industries. Furthermore, just transition to a low-carbon economy not only includes justice for those experiencing the impacts of climate change mitigation policies, but also for communities who have depended upon and suffered from a close connection to these industries.



● *Frontline communities' voices for peace and just transition: Niger Delta, Nigeria*

The case of the Niger Delta in Nigeria demonstrates how the marginalization of frontline communities can lead to conflict. The Niger Delta has about 31 million inhabitants and accounts for 50 percent of West African oil exports (Olori 2013). For this resource-dependent community, farming and fishing are the main sources of livelihood (Olori 2013). Local communities, led by the Ogoni ethnic group, first raised concerns about oil extraction operations in the Niger Delta in the 1980s. The region was rife with environmental degradation, leading to pollution of water sources and adverse health impacts. Initially, the frontline communities responded to this environmental injustice with protests and low-level acts of civil disobedience (Hallmark 2017). However, the conflicts escalated and culminated in the execution of the leader of the Movement for Survival of the Ogoni People, thereby radicalizing opposition to the oil industries. The conflict has been ongoing with various opposition groups using violence and intimidation to attempt to ward off oil extraction in the region, with little success.

Frontline communities, lacking a domestic avenue to ensure justice and peace, have occasionally found justice through the international judiciary. In 2008, four farmers from the region joined Friends of the Earth to file a lawsuit against Shell for reparations for lost income due to contaminated land and waterways in the Dutch courts (Sekularac and Deutsch 2013). Only one of the four farmers was compensated (Olori 2013). He testified that the oil leakages in 2004, 2005 and 2007 had destroyed 47 fishponds in his region, resulting in a loss of

livelihood. Shell considered the court case a victory (Olori 2013). However, advocacy continues for the frontline communities of the Niger delta, for example at COP24, the UNFCCC's 24th conference of the parties (Bassey 2018). In order to stop violence in the Niger Delta, Olori (2013) suggests that it would be essential for the Nigerian government to pay compensation to these communities for the environmental impacts they have endured.

The frontline communities in the Niger Delta have not been able to successfully advocate for environmental justice in Nigeria, leading to conflict. However, advocacy groups could potentially gain international support by adopting a just transition approach. By aligning with other frontline communities who experience impacts of climate change as a result of oil and gas reliance and/or direct impacts of oil and gas companies, international advocacy can highlight what might be suppressed at the national and local levels. Just transition, then, should incorporate the unjust, localized environmental impacts of oil and gas industries in addition to the climate change impacts.

Coalition of frontline communities for just transition

Just transition towards low-carbon development resonates with various types of frontline communities who have been impacted by carbon-producing industries directly or indirectly. These communities are often the ones that experience the “first and worst” impacts of climate change and/or pollution of their ecosystems which damage their livelihoods and health. While just transition has historically been championed by labour unions, the shift towards a low-carbon world will have much broader implications and affect not only (unionized) workers but entire communities and (local) economies.

As such, a coalition that unites these frontline communities could push international, national and local agendas towards environmental justice as well as low-carbon development. In this way, the just transition movement not only gains more political power, but also localized advocacy efforts expand to a global platform which could put pressure on national governments. Frontline communities who advocate for reforms at a local level should be some of the first communities that national and global actors engage with to determine what models of just transition could be successful.





Ensuring Transformative Just Transition

TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES to just transition are difficult to render in policy due to the lack of political, social and economic power of the groups that advocate for them. Several participants (names in brackets below; full credit inside front cover) in the *JTRC Cities in Transition* workshop offered ideas about how to make just transition approaches more transformative by ensuring the participation of these groups. First, local governments can increase their budget for participation and equitable distribution of resources (Ciplet). Secondly, universal basic services can potentially increase the political, economic and social power of disadvantaged actors so that marginalized communities have greater opportunity to participate in decision making (Aiken). Finally, a human rights approach to climate action and low-carbon development provides a legal framework for communities to claim their right to a transformative just transition (Chaudhry). The following principles, when combined, could lead to a just transition towards low-carbon development that transforms society's systems and reallocates power to those who are most marginalized. Local and national governments should incorporate these principles into their policy making around climate change mitigation.

Any climate change response must integrate human rights and environmental principles, including the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights; non-discrimination; gender equality; transparency and accountability; ecological sustainability; and intergenerational equity.



Box 3. Human rights principles for a transformative just transition (by Shivani Chaudhry)

Non-discrimination by mapping intersectional vulnerabilities

Vulnerability mapping, to determine who is most susceptible to the impacts of climate change, including adaptation and mitigation measures, must address the intersecting axes of income, gender, caste/race/ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, marital status and other parameters that increase the vulnerability of certain individuals, groups and communities to climate change. While the focus is normally on *who* the vulnerable are, we also need to examine the *why*: what are the reasons for discrimination, exclusion and inequality? It is only by addressing structural causes that vulnerability can be effectively addressed. Furthermore, certain groups require special attention. For instance, while designing low-energy, “green” homes and buildings, caution must be exercised to ensure they are accessible to persons with disabilities. The human rights principle of non-discrimination implies focusing on the most marginalized and directly links with the principle of “leaving no one behind” that guides the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Substantive gender equality

This requires incorporating not merely a gender-sensitive but a gender-centric approach to planning and climate change response. States must collect gender-disaggregated data and gender statistics, in order to better inform policy response. Steps should be taken to ensure that women are at the centre of decision-making processes related to urban and rural development and climate change, including at international treaty-level negotiations, development and implementation of international targets, and national and local action plans. Furthermore, there is a need to move beyond the binaries of male and female to include the concerns of transgender persons and other gender non-conforming persons.

Adequate participation and consultation

The principle of free, prior and informed consent must be ensured for all projects and at all levels of climate change-related prevention and response measures. In particular, indigenous peoples and other local communities, including urban and rural poor people, must have a say in decisions that directly affect their lives and livelihoods, including decisions related to mitigation and adaptation measures; Green Climate Fund allocations; and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). Their wisdom, traditional knowledge and experience should be relied on to develop sustainable and durable strategies at the local, national and international levels. The right to adequate and timely information must also be respected.

Human rights impact assessments

Closely linked to vulnerability mapping is the need for comprehensive human rights impact assessments (HRIA) of all projects and initiatives. Differential impacts need to be understood in order to address how different groups and communities—including coastal and mountain communities, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, forest-dwellers, farmers, and among them children, older persons, women and persons with disabilities—are affected. Such HRIA account for not only *who* is being affected but *how*.

They are also important because “carbon-neutrality” cannot be the only currency when speaking about justice. For instance, in many countries the NDC framework includes nuclear and hydroelectric power as carbon-neutral options, but the ethical dimensions of these alternatives have to be reviewed, especially in terms of adverse health impacts; loss of housing, land and livelihoods; and increased seismicity and flooding. Marketization of natural resources of indigenous and other local communities through REDD+ and other carbon trading regimes, is leading to displacement and other human rights violations. Climate mitigation projects must not be used to justify eviction and resettlement of urban poor people. Similarly, disaster management and climate urgency must not be used to infringe human rights. The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights must be implemented, including for all climate change-related projects.

Secure land and housing rights

Inequalities related to land use, distribution and ownership are at the heart of climate change vulnerabilities. Access to housing is also determined by access to land, which is extremely political as land management in most countries revolves around power and the elite capture of land. The prevalence of inadequate housing and living conditions increases the vulnerabilities of poor and marginalized people, as highlighted above.

The recent IPCC report highlights the importance of land, including of secure land rights, to addressing climate change (IPCC 2019). The right to land is central to a just transition. Cities should reserve land for poor people, in proportion to the size of the population, and provide legal security of tenure over land and housing, especially in the names of women. States should impose moratoriums on forced evictions without due process. Recognizing housing as a human right and investing in adequate housing that is disaster resistant and energy efficient would result in overall greater climate resilience. Linkages between urban and rural areas must be recognized and policies should address them as a continuum rather than as distinct binaries.

Environmental sustainability

Measures such as capping consumption and taxing excessive energy use need to be implemented. Poor people often pay more for basic services, including water and electricity, than rich people. Progressive taxation for unsustainable resource exploitation is necessary to rectify this injustice. The discourse needs to move beyond resilience to incorporate a more robust human rights and environmental sustainability framework. In order to move towards environmental sustainability and social justice, efforts need to be oriented towards developing and documenting alternatives that are ecological, democratic and people-centric. Inspiring examples can be found in movements such as Vikalp Sangam (India) and Radical Ecological Democracy. As many climate change problems emerge from the market, there is a need to shift from prevalent market-based solutions to sustainable alternatives.

International cooperation

While international cooperation is widely recognized as an important principle in the climate space, it is important to find ways to effectively implement it. How states operate beyond geopolitics will determine the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Beyond the need to improve transboundary cooperation for greater ambition in reducing emissions and implementing a just transition, there is also a need to address emerging challenges such as, for example, defining climate migrants as refugees in international law, as they are not currently protected. No global agreements exist to help the millions displaced by disasters and most countries do not have strong policies to protect internally displaced persons. In the near future, there may need to be a separate UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights to address these emerging challenges.

Integrated monitoring framework

There is a need for a unified monitoring framework linking climate targets with states’ human rights obligations. This would require not only monitoring implementation of the Paris Agreement but also of international human rights obligations, Sustainable Development Goals, and recommendations of UN treaty bodies, Special Procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review.





Developed Countries: Transformative Just Transition as a Broad-Based Coalition of Working People and Environmental Activists

JUST TRANSITION has the potential to attain wide political support, uniting the working class with environmentalists across political divides. The social concerns of the working class can be integrated with the mitigation concerns of the left, thereby gaining political support for climate action. In developed countries, commitment to climate mitigation is dwindling due to political resistance and right-wing leaders taking centre stage. Transformative just transition provides an avenue to unite politically marginalized groups who by themselves have too little social power to be adequately heard in debates and decision making on climate change mitigation.

The example of the Green New Deal for New York City will illustrate the power of activist coalitions and collective action around a common goal. Centering the efforts for social justice on a shift toward zero emissions, housing advocates, trade unionists and environmentalists worked together and combined social and environmental concerns

to push for radical changes to address the housing crisis and the climate crisis simultaneously. The influence of such grassroots movements for transformative just transition does not stop at the local level, but in fact contributes to national level commitments to climate mitigation and adaptation (REN21 2019b). Just as just transition initially rose to national and international governance through advocacy, so too can a transformative approach. The strategic coalition building and advocacy that passed the Green New Deal in New York City is expanding to other cities in the USA and Europe. This social movement opens up political opportunities for transformative just transition in urban areas that not only incorporate social and environmental concerns simultaneously, but also shift the power relations in society. As more cities adopt these municipal policies, state and national agendas are likely to follow suit at a slower rate. In this way, a more progressive version of just transition can move beyond the local to the national and international level.

How a “Green New Deal for New York City” Came to Pass



New York City is by far the largest city in the US, a seat of international power and the centre of global finance. There are entrenched interests within the city set on maintaining the status quo which has been immensely profitable for the elites. The largest of such interests in the city is the real estate lobby. As manufacturing left the city in the 1970s, real estate expanded its lobbying organization, the Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY), and has placed a stranglehold on local politics that continues today.

While transportation is the largest source of emissions in the US overall (EPA 2019), in New York City it is buildings. In fact, building emissions, which make up 70 percent of the city’s total (Kellermann 2015), stand at roughly double Kenya’s total emissions (Kusnetz 2019; The World Bank 2019). And while buildings account for 70 percent of the total emissions in the city, it is just 2 percent of the buildings that account for nearly 50 percent of the city’s emissions (Kaufman 2018). These 2 percent are the largest buildings in the city built decades ago that had not been retrofitted to new design standards.

So it made sense for environmental activists to team up with housing activists to take on a joint problem. Housing activists were fighting for rent control on the state level as environmental allies came together behind three core principles: to cut climate and air pollution by 80 to 90 percent by 2050, to maximize the creation of good-paying union jobs hired locally, and to protect tenants in rent regulated housing from incurring the cost of the building efficiency retrofits through rent increases. Together, this campaign was called the Dirty Buildings Campaign.

The way this alliance worked can be seen specifically in the work of New York Communities for Change (NYCC). NYCC is a housing justice organization of tenants in low-income communities of colour across New York City. In recent years, they began a climate change and inequality programme. Using their experience, NYCC proved vital in both the climate and tenant campaigns, adding their knowledge to propel both campaigns forward.

The movement towards a Green New Deal had three key supporting factors. First, highly visible supporters at the national level like new Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez helped turn climate from a back-burner issue into a key policy battle. Utilizing the activist

energy surrounding the Green New Deal nationally, the campaign decided to change its name from the Dirty Buildings Bill to the Green New Deal For New York City. Almost immediately, this new name garnered media attention and traction bringing previously reticent politicians on board.

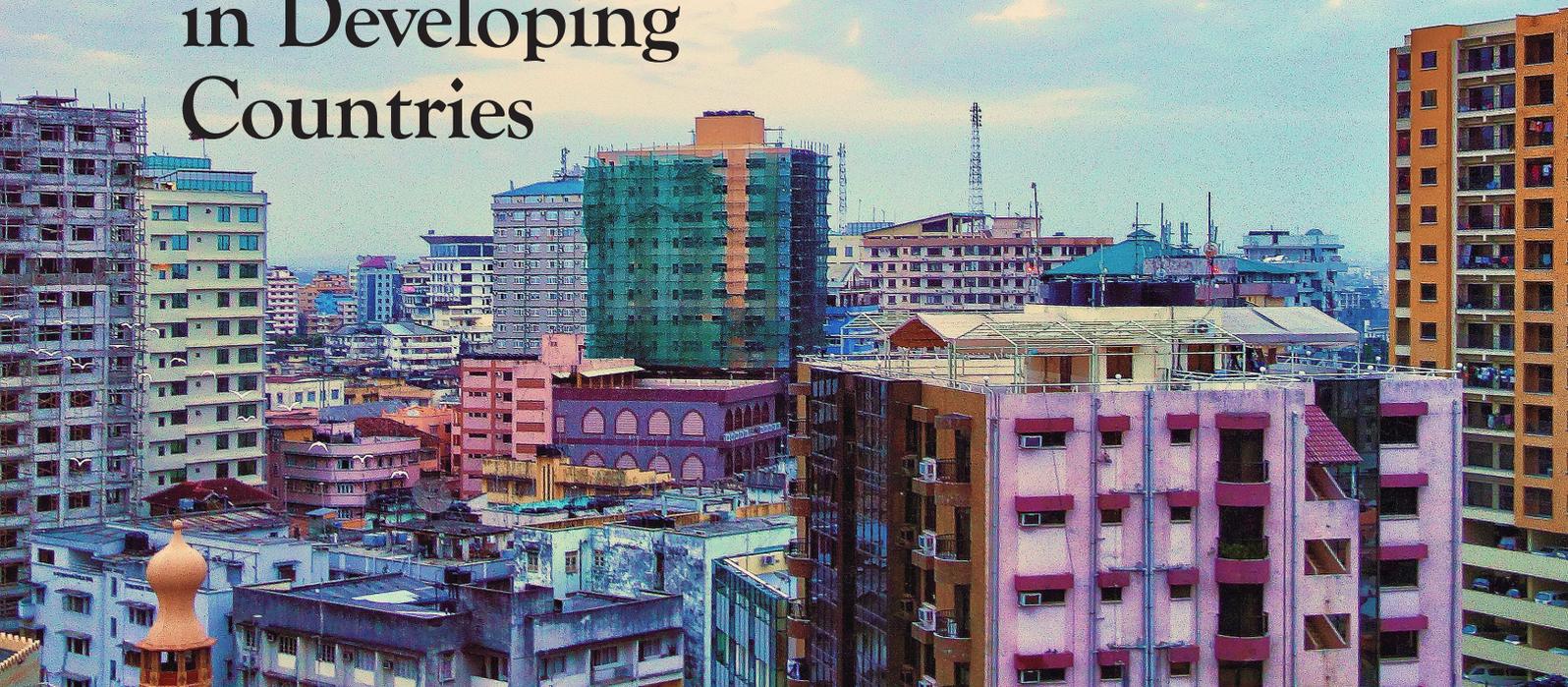
Second, the growing impetus behind the issue brought many new activists into the climate movement. With these new activists, the coalition could utilize lobby days, rallies and phone banking sessions to employ the power of the hyper-local and pressure city councillors. Since these elected officials live in their local neighbourhoods, activists were empowered to meet with them, and to press them to pass the Green New Deal For NYC Bill that the campaign was advocating for.

Third, the campaign was able to use strategic insights in city politics. The then mayor, Bill de Blasio, was entering his last term of office which opened a space for politicians to jockey to be his successor. Utilizing this to the campaign’s advantage, activists were able to push the three main frontrunners for the next mayor’s race to be the strongest advocates they could be for the bill. The campaign was also aided by significant high-level support within current city government, for example from Costa Constantinides as City Council Chair of the Environmental Committee.

With City Council Speaker Cory Johnson’s leadership and Chair Constantinides’ stewardship, the bill passed through the City Council nearly unanimously. The bill garnered national media attention and was called the “largest disruption in the history of New York City real estate” (Sun 2019). At the press conference to celebrate the win, Eddie Bautista, Executive Director of the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance said “There is nothing new about a Green New Deal. We’ve called it ‘climate justice’ for decades, we call it a ‘just transition.’”



Expanding Justice Domestically: Just Transition in Developing Countries



COMPARED TO THE STRONG HISTORY of just transition in the global North, developing countries have different entry points to climate change mitigation and equity that need to be explored. At the international level, many developing countries outright oppose the just transition narrative as they have hardly contributed to global emissions and see the responsibility for mitigation with developed countries, and early industrializers in particular. In developing country contexts, it therefore needs to be explored if and how the just transition concept can be reconciled with the right to development and climate justice. Setting aside these general concerns regarding the concept, it remains valid to address questions of justice in structural transformations and the implementation of low-carbon development strategies, especially in contexts where international finance and largely top-down decisions lead to large scale changes and developments at the local level. Instead of requiring transitioning and sun-set industries to reduce overall levels of emissions, just transition in low-emitting countries might be more about ensuring fairness in decision-making processes and in the distribution

of benefits and costs while promoting low-carbon development and ensuring universal and affordable energy access. So far, there has been little interest in, or political movements advocating for, just transition in developing countries (with the notable exception of South Africa). This by no means implies that there are no environmental movements or environmental and climate justice struggles, but simply raises the question of how useful the just transition concept and language are seen to be by activists in developing countries.

Just transition brings social justice issues to the forefront of low-carbon development policies. As such, it largely refers to ensuring equal, just access to low-carbon transportation, energy and infrastructure. The following sections will explore how just transition complements developing countries' emphasis on equity in international climate negotiations at a sub-national level. The case studies of India, the Philippines and Tanzania demonstrate several ways in which just transition concepts could be applied to just low-carbon development—through an emphasis on justice for energy access, mitigation policies and sustainable forestry.

International to domestic justice

In climate negotiations, developing countries have highlighted two key points—the “right to development” and the importance of climate finance to assist their low-carbon development. The key rationale linking these two concepts is justice. In other words, because developed countries have emitted much more than developing countries and have grown their economies as a result, developing countries should have an equal right to develop and receive financial support for any emissions reduction programmes. Developing countries’ claim to justice in the form of common but differentiated responsibilities was not based on capacity to mitigate, but rather the historical responsibilities for climate change (JTRC 2018). This concept was adopted in the 1992 UNFCCC treaty that reads: “the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and capacities and their social and economic conditions” (UN 1992). Based on this, international climate justice groups largely focus on differences between countries in terms of their share of global greenhouse gas emissions and the uneven impacts of climate change that hit the poorest and most vulnerable nations first and hardest (see Fisher and Galli 2015).

The outcome of these justice claims and the right to development is a complex global climate finance architecture and developed countries’ pledge to mobilize 100 billion USD per year by 2020 (UNFCCC 2009) to support developing countries climate action (the goal was extended until 2025 when a new goal will be set). Most developing countries’ NDCs distinguish between unconditional and conditional emissions reduction targets to emphasize both their willingness to contribute to tackling climate change and their need for financial support to achieve higher emissions reductions.

Tanzania’s NDC highlights that their activities “will require timely access to adequate and predictable financial resources”, for example (United Republic of Tanzania 2018). Also, in May 2019, participants in Africa Climate Week⁴ voiced a strong commitment to implementing climate action and for Africa to become “a global powerhouse,” yet underscored the corresponding need for increased financial flows to the region (Comstock and Hackmann 2019).

However, justice is not only relevant at the international level. National climate policies and programmes need to ensure that the right to development also establishes justice

at the local and regional levels. Just transition should argue for equity “in light of different circumstances” that goes beyond the nation state and would apply to differences in socio-economic class, ethnicity, gender, community, education and so on. In this sense, vulnerable and frontline communities that are resource or carbon dependent can claim a right to development and justice to ensure that climate policy will not disproportionately impact or further disadvantage them, similar to developing nations’ arguments at the international level. The following examples highlight communities who can claim unjust low-carbon development in the energy, forestry and transportation sectors.

Just transportation: Philippines

In the Philippines, the INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contribution)⁵ sets a target of reducing emissions by 70 percent by 2030 in the energy, transport, waste, forestry and industrial sectors (Republic of the Philippines 2015). As a measure to reach this target, the national government decided to cut emissions from the most used public transportation system in Manila: jeepnies. The policy required that drivers pay most of the cost to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles and organize into cooperatives. However, jeepney drivers did not have the financial capacity to invest in new vehicles, leading to economic hardship for them and for the individuals who rely on this transportation within the city. At the same time, most emissions in and around Manila come from private cars, which have much higher per capita emissions and belong to wealthier people. The impact of the climate change mitigation policy was felt disproportionately by lower-income citizens in Manila including drivers and those who rely on jeepnies for everyday transportation.





📍 *Just energy access: India*

In India, the Nationally Determined Contribution emphasizes “universal energy access and energy security as one of the fundamental development goals for the country” which is to be achieved through both an ambitious renewable energy expansion target and energy efficiency measures (Government of India 2016). Their actions include a national smart grid to make the power supply network more efficient and a focus on renewables. However, renewable and non-renewable energy access is both disjointed through different providers and unfair in the amount of energy and type of energy given to different groups of citizens (Kumar et al. 2019). Urban communities are often provided with ample energy access at a low cost, while entire rural communities share an energy

grid with a capacity equivalent to just one urban household (Kumar 2018). Furthermore, civil society interventions have provided solar power lamps to rural households as a rural electrification measure, even though people would prefer grid access and energy provision for productive uses, similar to urban areas. In this sense, rural communities are not given just and equitable energy access. By integrating justice into low-carbon development frameworks, just, equitable access to renewable and low-carbon energy plans can be demanded from the state, which has the duty to provide energy for both urban and rural households. Without emphasis on justice and equity in terms of energy access, India limits its propensity for sustainable low-carbon development as well as eradication of poverty.

Just forestry: Tanzania

Forests are important carbon sinks which makes forestry a key sector of reform to implement climate change mitigation. In Tanzania, while renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies are used to achieve mitigation targets, there is also an emphasis on the forestry sector and carbon sequestration (United Republic of Tanzania 2018). Forest conservation is central to the global REDD+ framework, where countries receive financial and capacity support to reduce emissions from forest deforestation and degradation. One such conservation project is implemented in Pangani town, along the northern coast of Tanzania. From a national and international perspective, the restoration and protection of these mangrove forests will enhance emissions reductions and contribute to successful climate change mitigation.

However, at the local level, there are indications⁶ of a mismatch between forest conservation and community needs, in particular when it comes to resource-dependent households (see also UNRISD 2016; McAfee 2012). For example, household dependence on the forest, for firewood for cooking and as a source of income, is threatened. The expansion of settlements on the margins

of Pangani town will likely generate greater demand for mangrove forest resources and threaten current conservation efforts. The legal provision for participatory forest management in the Tanzania National Forestry Policy of 1998, which gives communities regulated access and rights of use in protected mangrove forests, has not been fully operationalized in Pangani.

Mangrove ecological zones are also changing. Sea level rise is pushing sea water inland. This will expand mangrove forest zones into areas currently occupied by community farmland. Land and forest policies are unclear about what happens to private land that is naturally converted into a mangrove zone. Because mangrove forests are protected under national forestry laws, communities will likely lose their farmland. The vulnerability of these coastal communities to both climate change impacts and mitigation measures makes them another frontline community that could benefit from the just transition narrative. For these communities, just transition offers an opportunity to demand more inclusive climate policy making and engagement that achieves low-carbon development while also addressing the negative impacts on communities created by these actions.





Outlook Just Transition as a Pathway to Climate Justice?

JUST TRANSITION, or the idea that justice and equity must form an integral part of the transition towards a low-carbon world, has travelled through levels of governance from the local to the international arena. It began as a local and national effort by progressive trade unionists in the US in the 1980s to reconcile environmental and social concerns (JTRC 2018). Through the global union federations and most notably the International Trade Union Confederation, the concept was also put on the agenda of the international climate change negotiations (Rosemberg 2020). After this journey from the local, grassroots level to the multilateral arena, the just transition concept has trickled back down and is now used again at the grassroots level, in particular through community-based labour and environmental justice organizations who are pushing for transformative shifts for sustainability and justice (JTRC 2018).

Just transition in international debates

At the international level, just transition quite firmly remains an issue of developed countries. Equity concerns expressed in the Paris Agreement and discussed at climate conferences are largely conceived as an issue between developed and developing countries in relation to their respective historical contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions and the question of fair burden sharing. As a result of these discussions, the narrative of just transition is still opposed by many developing countries. Embracing the concept of transformative just transition and rooting mitigation measures in a social justice framework could be a way to access climate finance that supports both emissions reductions and more equitable development, ultimately leading to greater political support and ambition. It could be an entry point for developing countries to better align international mitigation mechanisms with domestic concerns and priorities.



Transformative just transition

The most transformative and critical approaches to just transition often begin at the local level, but as just transition has entered mainstream international debates, it is increasingly being captured by international networks and actors that promote neoliberal urbanism rather than a transformative shift to greater sustainability and justice. Without a solid social justice framework, climate change mitigation policies can provoke a backlash from vulnerable, working class communities instead of buy-in, which is essential in the long run. The political feasibility of climate action depends on more progressive and transformative approaches to just transition. Without transformative just transition, mitigation policies become increasingly unpopular and unsustainable.

Broad-based coalitions for environmental and climate justice



Ultimately the success of just transition as a global concept will depend on its ability to unite working people and frontline communities of all backgrounds in a movement for environmental and climate justice that is rooted in solidarity and spans across the global North and South. This must be based on a holistic approach to the environment and go beyond carbon emissions to form deep collaboration across the whole range of environmental issues and actors. Only if it manages to counteract the *jobs versus environment* narratives that aim to divide workers and environmental activists and that ultimately work to the advantage of powerful elites can it truly contribute to the transformation we need in order to achieve environmental justice, and the speed of decarbonization we need, in a way that is socially just.

Endnotes

¹ This section draws heavily on a paper by Sanna Markkanen and Annela Anger-Kraavi that was published (open access) earlier in 2019: “Social impacts of climate change mitigation policies and their implications for inequality.” *Climate Policy* 19(7):827–844.

² The UNFCCC invited its parties to submit Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) detailing nationally intended emission reductions plans prior to COP21 in Paris that were turned into official Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the process of ratification, accession or approval of the Paris Agreement.

³ USD = 14102.50 Indonesian Rupiah (November 2019).

⁴ Africa Climate Week is one of the regional climate weeks organized under the Nairobi Framework Partnership that supports developing countries in preparing and implementing climate policy (see nfppartnership.org for more information). Climate weeks bring together a wide range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors.

⁵ The Philippine Government submitted its INDC on 1 October 2015 and declared with its accession to the Paris Agreement in April 2017 that it would submit its (updated) first NDC to the UNFCCC before 2020 (<https://climate.gov.ph/our-programs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndc>).

⁶ This example is based on empirical research and data collection that was conducted as part of Jessica Omukuti’s PhD research from February to September 2018.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
BP	British Petroleum
C40	Cities Climate Leadership Group
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
CJA	Climate Justice Alliance
COP	Conference of the Parties
ENERGIA	International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
ETR	Environmental tax reform
GHG	Greenhouse gases
HRIA	Human rights impact assessments
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IDR	Indonesian rupiah
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
JTA	Just Transition Alliance
JTC	Just Transition Collaborative
JTRC	Just Transition Research Collaborative
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRDC	Natural Resources Defense Council
NYC	New York City
NYCC	New York Communities for Change
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
REBNY	Real Estate Board of New York
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REN21	Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TTN	Transition Towns Network
UITP	Union Internationale des Transports Publics (International Association of Public Transport)
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
US	United States
USD	United States dollar
WHO	World Health Organization

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Climate Justice from Below Local Struggles for Just Transition(s)

There are many understandings and practices of just transition(s). They range from change at the margins that largely preserves the neoliberal or developmentalist status quo, on one end of the spectrum, to overhaul of existing economic and political systems and a transformative shift towards sustainability and climate justice, on the other.

Many examples of the more transformative forms of just transition are rooted in local movements and community organizations exerting pressure on their local, regional and sometimes national governments to adopt alternative development strategies. Urban and local-level transitions are not always or automatically progressive and just, however. The extent to which they can contribute to a transformative shift to low-carbon development, and how their potential can be leveraged to accelerate a progressive just transition, needs careful assessment.

This report discusses a selection of urban and local-level transitions to a lower carbon economy. By exploring these examples from both developed and developing countries, it aims to kick-start a conversation on the potential of local just transition policies and frameworks to influence higher level policy change. It calls for safeguarding just transition's original objective of reorganizing the political economy to protect both the environment and workers as a way to mobilize broad-based support for a transformative shift towards sustainability and climate justice.

