



USING THE SDGs TO SOLVE THE 'JUST TRANSITION RUBIK'S CUBE'

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We are in an 'urgency dilemma'

Urgency

- Paris Agreement 2C and 1.5C
- Highest GHG emissions per capita in EU
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021
 - 51% by 2030 on 2018 emissions
 - Net zero by 2050

Dilemma

- a) reduce greenhouse gas emissions at an unprecedented scale and speed
 - while also
- b) ensuring that the distributional effects of this transition don't cause harm to those least able to bear it

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY




6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER




15 LIFE ON LAND



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



**Sustainable
development
and just
transition: Two
branches of the
same root**





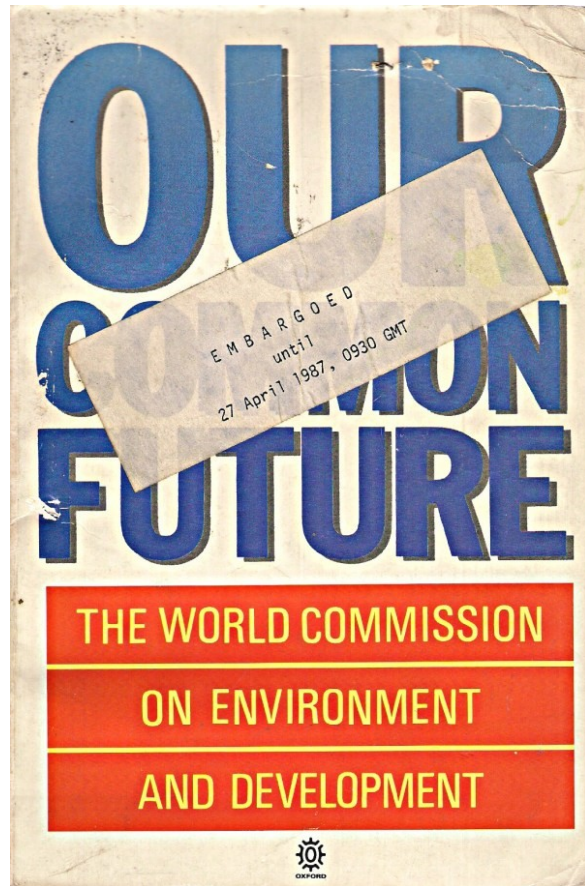
Transition/transformation

- A **transition** has been defined as a “radical shift in the provision of services such as energy, transport, food or sanitation” (Newell and Simms, 2020, p. 2).
- **Transformation?** A fundamental, structural, systemic change is needed rather than simply a linear change from one state to another.
- A **‘just’** transition is an integrated approach to sustainable development which brings together social progress, environmental protection and economic success into a framework of democratic governance (UNECE, 2023).



Issues of an *unjust* transition spurred international conversation on sustainable development





Sustainable Development

“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987).



Years of negotiations

- 1992 First Conference on Environment and Development in Rio ('Earth Summit')
 - Agenda 21
- 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development
 - Expanded reach of SD
- 2012 The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+20)
 - Outcome document: 'The Future We Want'



History is made at the United Nations in New York as Ambassadors David Donoghue of Ireland & Macharia Kamau of Kenya gavel consensus on the post-2015 development agenda.



Agenda 2030





What has this got to do with a just transition?

The '*how*' of transition determines whether it succeeds

FRANÇAIS EN
COLÈRE



Centre de
formation
Généraliste
de la
Police
N° 100 000 000



Social power and distribution

The just transition will have to centrally address the key political economy questions of 'who wins, who loses, how and why' as they relate to the existing distribution of energy, who lives with the side effects of its sites of extraction, production and generation, and who will bear the social costs of decarbonising energy sources and economies (Newell et al., 2011).

Agenda 2030: Leave No One Behind

- Central, transformative promise
- International and *intranational*
- Compels a focus on the impact of *multiple* and *intersecting* inequality
- Highlights that barriers that leave people behind are structural and need to be addressed at the root

An approach to just transition informed by the SDGs could be described as an approach to reconciling development and environment that fully includes those at risk of being left behind

Leaving No One Behind: In practice

Distributive
justice

Procedural
justice

Restorative
justice

LNOB

A transition can only be just and fair if it can ensure social justice for the vulnerable groups in society (Heffron and McCauley, 2018).

This is what the SDGs can offer given their focus on leaving no one behind.



**LEAVE
NO ONE
BEHIND**

Political or evidence-based? The 'burden of adjustment'

Travellers



Older people



Distributive justice: Who should bear the burden?

- Distributive justice = the perceived justice of the distribution of costs and benefits inherent in any transition (Banerjee and Schuitema, 2022).
- A just transition process based on distributive justice would aim to prevent an *inequitable* or *unequal* distribution of harms and benefits across groups in society (McCauley and Heffron, 2018).





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**Procedural
justice:
'Nothing about
us, without us,
for us'**

Restorative justice



- Implies rehabilitating those affected by an industry's end of operations.
- New roles cannot just be any roles - they must constitute 'decent' work, conceptualised as paying a living wage, providing decent working conditions, being accessible to those with a range of skills and offering clear career progression opportunities (Bird and Lawton, 2009)

Example: Bord na Móna



Source: Banerjee and Schuitema, How just are just transition plans? Perceptions of decarbonisation and low-carbon energy transitions among peat workers in Ireland (2022)

The local and global

BNM interviewee: We're experiencing:

“globalisation on a local scale”

Highlighting that there was a lack of jobs in local wind farms since the bulk of manufacturing was taking place in Germany.





Offshoring injustice?

An attempt to achieve a just transition within Ireland via a strategy of growth of all industries, regardless of their impact on sustainable development more broadly, offshores an unjust transition and threatens the achievement of SDGs in other countries which we depend on for resources.

ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT

VERSUS

CARBON FOOTPRINT

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ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT	CARBON FOOTPRINT
The impact of a person or community on the environment, expressed as the amount of land required to sustain their use of natural resources	The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a particular individual, organization, or community
Measures renewable and non-renewable resources used	Measures carbon dioxide generated by activities
Contains both carbon emission and environmental impact	Contains only carbon emission numbers
Directly impacts continuing life on earth	Directly impacts climate change

Usefulness of the SDGs

The concept of sustainable development encapsulated by the SDGs encourages us to consider *all* the impacts of our policies – not just carbon emissions – and the impact of our policies abroad, not just in Ireland.

The SDGs force us to analyse the ecological *and* human impacts

To remain in line with Agenda 2030 and the principles of sustainable development, developing a just transition **should consider everyone within the entire supply chain**, with a special focus on respecting human rights

TARGET 8-8

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



PROTECT LABOUR RIGHTS AND PROMOTE
SAFE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

TARGET 8-7

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



END MODERN SLAVERY, TRAFFICKING AND CHILD LABOUR



Policy coherence... or empty words?

Ireland “commits to bold, accelerated, just and transformative actions...anchored in international solidarity and effective cooperation, to create a sustainable future for all.”

Target 17.14 enhance policy coherence for sustainable development...





**“Transition is inevitable;
justice is not”**

(Climate Justice Alliance, 2023).

Policy Coherence and Long-Term Thinking



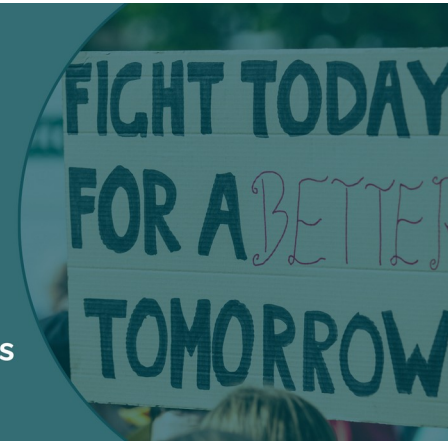
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Safeguarding Rights of Future Generations for Long-term Sustainability



Learning from
Wales' First
Future Generations
Commissioner



Thank you

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2030

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT