



# Towards a Just Transition

From Extraction to Equilibrium - Transforming Law and Governance

## Briefing note 5

# Working with 'Just Transition'

We consider Just Transition to be a powerful and evocative lens through which to (re)connect the 'natural' with the community, and with the artificial (e.g., buildings, technology, infrastructures etc.) in ways that recognise the political, legal and governance instruments, practices and institutions that shape those relations, while centering on how responsive these are to communities' efforts for a more egalitarian, inclusive, nature-respectful future.

We consider the following to be key dimensions to working from a 'Just Transition' approach;

- **Grounded and informed**

Understanding injustice and transitioning towards more just outcomes frequently involves a reflexive engagement between practice and ideas. In reality, this means recognising the relevance and the importance of everyday shared *experiences* of injustice and collective intuitions about why these emerge and continue as they do, and the kinds of social change efforts that make most sense. In *ideas*, this means drawing from the wealth of existing, diverse thinking and writing on understandings, norms and approaches to justice, equality, human rights and social change, for inspiration, analysis and learning. Combining both facilitates a grounded approach to Just Transition.

- **Centred on specific justice aims, values and practices**

Just Transition strives towards social justice, equality and human rights for people, while nourishing and restoring our natural world. JT is deeply informed by values underpinning the ethos and practices of social justice movements including

- **Collectivity and solidarity** – analyse, deliberate and act together to address inequality and injustice, and value collective action based on solidarity.
- **Enabling community empowerment** – empowerment is a focus on how communities gain greater control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives. Community empowerment is a process of re-negotiating power to gain more control, recognising that this frequently involves struggles for power from others who need to share or give up power. Enabling means that people cannot 'be empowered' by others, they empower themselves by acquiring different forms of power. The role of an external actor (like an academic) is thus mainly to catalyse, support or facilitate the community in acquiring power.
- **Meaningful participation in decision-making** – this has two parts, an internal one and external one. The *internal* one means that mechanisms and processes of

decision-making within communities seek to be participatory, meaningful and inclusive. The *external* one means that governance bodies and forums should offer meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in decisions that affect them (see earlier ‘Assessing Community Influence’).

- Explicit recognition of the necessity for a **deep reduction in carbon use**, and of the **significance of nature, biodiversity** and the relations between the social and natural world, and how these are affected (positively and negatively) by the analysis and any response taken. Responses that seek to restore and regenerate nature and biodiversity are mainstreamed in any analysis and response.

- **Contextualised**

This implies having an understanding of the relevant *context* that shaped the emergence of the pressing issues that are important.

Who are *most negatively affected* by these issues, and how might different dimensions of identity and status (e.g., class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship status, sexual orientation, differing abilities and such) shape how people *experience their daily life*?

What are the economic, social, political, historical, technological, geographic, cultural and governance *relations and factors* that brought these issues about, and what kinds of *actors, instruments, practices and institutions* maintain them?

What *routes and strategies* to positive change make most sense in the shorter and longer term? What capacities and resources are available that we need or can mobilise?

- **A focus on governance - participatory and responsive governance**

We link participation to power. When we talk about participation in governance or decision-making, we mean the kind of participation that enables those currently excluded from political and economic processes to be intentionally included, with the aim of shaping how information is shared, how policy goals are agreed, how programmes operate and implemented, and how the benefits of society are shared.

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Excerpt from Siobhán Airey, Yağız Eren Abanus, Hüseyin Eryılmaz & Daniela García-Caro Briceno, *Towards a Just Transition - Walking practices & Legal possibilities* (ESL-CSJ: 2025), 31. Report available [here](#).

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