

THREE

Applying a normative framework to assess the just transition to a net zero carbon society in South Africa

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INTRODUCTION

THE INTERLINKED CRISES of biodiversity and ecosystem loss, climate change and widespread poverty and inequality have created a window of opportunity for radical policy transformations – a moment to question both the purposes and outcomes of development pathways. A plethora of ‘green’ policies, plans and strategies have emerged, aimed at transitioning development pathways to increased sustainability. These are aligned with the vision of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the broad intent of the Sustainable Development Goals, both of which seek to transform economies and societies to achieve sustainable development.

Concurrently, the need for a just transition has gained prominence

in policy circles shaping green transitions. The concept emerged in the 1970s labour movement in the United States to provide workers exposed to toxic chemicals with support to transition away from their hazardous jobs (Just Transition Research Collaborative, 2018). It has since been embraced by the international trade union movement which advocated for its inclusion in the Paris Agreement to secure workers’ jobs in the shift to net zero carbon economies. It has now expanded to embrace ambitious social and economic reforms more broadly, encompassing workers as well as vulnerable groups and communities. This whole-of-society scope is illustrated in Figure 3.1. From an initial focus on impacted workers in energy transitions, the just transition agenda is increasingly adopted as a macro-economic and cross-sectoral framing that anchors social justice in policy, planning and investment processes driving green transitions.

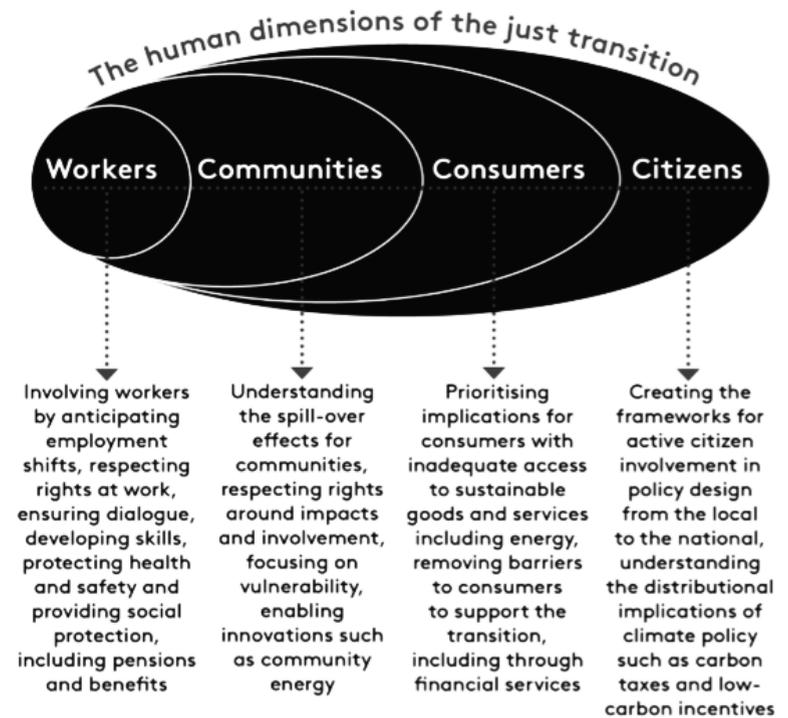


Figure 3.1: The human dimensions of a just transition

Source: Robins et al. (2019: 9).

The concept is now core to the green transition pathways of several countries and regions. Just transition visions, principles and outcomes have been adopted in global, national and subnational policy circles (Just Transition Research Collaborative, 2018). Chile is in the process of developing a ‘Strategy for Just Transition’ (WRI, 2021a) that protects the rights of the most vulnerable in decarbonising the energy sector. Ireland has worked on formulating a just transition plan for the agricultural sector (Social Justice Ireland, 2020). For small island developing states, like the nations of the Pacific Ocean, a just transition is about strengthening resilience to devastating climate impacts (ILO, 2019). A transition ‘deal’ in Spain, including early retirement for miners, re-skilling and environmental restoration, brokered through social dialogue processes, has been hailed as a practical illustration of a just transition (Neslen, 2018). In South Africa, the Presidential Climate Commission has spearheaded the development of a just transition framework to foster consensus. Yet, despite the growth in the adoption of a just transition vision, there is mounting concern that the term is being stripped of its meaning and transformational purpose.

This chapter seeks to understand how South Africa’s vision of a just transition to an ‘environmentally sustainable, climate-change resilient, low-carbon economy and just society’ (National Planning Commission, 2012) has made its way into public policy. It first develops and sets out a normative framework that proposes key dimensions of a just transition, and the variants of a just transition that can be discerned. It then assesses how this is expressed in key public policies in South Africa: industrial, employment and climate. Lastly, it draws out insights from these policy processes into how South Africa could maintain the transformative intent of just transitions.

FRAMEWORK FOR A JUST TRANSITION

Conceptualising a framework for a just transition is an important first step towards defining and implementing mechanisms and interventions that would effect a green and inclusive transition. Yet, there is no agreed definition of a just transition (globally or nationally), nor is there a blueprint to use as a reference. In practice, two key variables effectively

define the nature of a just transition: its scope of beneficiaries and its ambition of action (Montmasson-Clair, 2021).

Firstly, just transition approaches vary widely in their coverage of beneficiaries. At the one end, a narrow understanding would focus solely on workers directly impacted by a transition. At the other end, some definitions include society as a whole and are arguably too broad. The understanding applied in this chapter extends beyond directly impacted workers to include all vulnerable stakeholders who may be directly and indirectly impacted. This would comprise low-income communities at large, particularly women, the youth and the elderly, as well as small businesses (Robins and Rydge, 2019). However, it also recognises that not everyone in society is vulnerable. Beyond this, at the conceptual level, no specific order of priority between stakeholders is established as priorities would effectively be place- or issue-specific.

Secondly, the degree of ambition for achieving socially just outcomes from climate actions also varies extensively. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, this spread can be categorised according to three equally important dimensions: procedural, distributive and restorative justice (McCauley and Heffron, 2018; Just Transition Research Collaborative, 2018; Cahill and Allen, 2020):

- Procedural justice focuses on identifying the scope of the transition and aims at facilitating an inclusive process;
- Distributive justice deals with the distribution of risks and responsibilities, and focuses on addressing the direct impacts resulting from the transition process; and
- Restorative justice considers damages against individuals, communities and the environment, with the goal of rectifying or ameliorating historical damages.

A just transition, at its core, requires a recognition of the need for reform and transformation to address the roots of climate, inequality and ecological crises. Yet, in some cases, stakeholders aim to maintain the status quo, by protecting industries (such as fossil fuels) and resisting the changes needed to address the damaging social and ecological outcomes of the existing socio-economic system. Such approaches are

not consistent with a just transition.

Moving from status quo, three key variants of a just transition can be identified. They vary in ambition, ranging from managerial reform to structural reform, to transformation (Montmasson-Clair, 2021). Efforts to broaden just transition ambition – from visions to plans to financing strategies, from affected workers to a whole-of-society approach, from energy to cross-sectoral analyses - are increasingly visible. The variants of a just transition, outlined below, are used in subsequent sections to assess how South Africa fares with its just transition ambition.

The first variant of just transition ambition only achieves managerial reform. This version of a just transition does not envision changes to the economic model and the balance of power, but does seek to foster greater equity and justice within the existing system. In addition, the fact that the existing regime generates rising inequality, and that existing labour standards are ill-adapted to secure workers' health and wellbeing, is accepted. Vulnerability at the level of the labour market is also recognised. The focus is on dealing with direct impacts on workers. Other vulnerable stakeholders are, however, not included.

The next variant of ambition targets structural reform. Like managerial reform, the structural inequalities and injustices that are produced by the existing economic system are acknowledged. However, unlike managerial reform, the structural reform agenda aims to address (at least to some extent) the roots of inequities. Solutions are not solely produced via market forces or techno-economic innovations, but modified governance structures as well as democratic participation, decision-making and ownership are core to this variant. As such, achieving structural reform departs from top-down processes and promotes a bottom-up approach, driven by the agency of affected groups (workers and citizens).

The most ambitious variant of a just transition targets transformation. This implies an overhaul of the existing economic, social and political system considered responsible for the interlinked sustainability and inequality crises. It involves the dismantling and reconfiguration of existing systems, a change in the rules and modes of governance and the promotion of alternative development pathways. This approach

is rooted in bottom-up, grassroots democracy; high social/public ownership; strong social protection; community-level resilience; and inter- and intra-generational solidarity.

Procedural justice

A key underlying assumption in just transition discussions is that a just outcome can only emerge out of an inclusive process. Indeed, in the shift from brown to green economies, 'inclusion' is not a nice-to-have: it should be core to achieve procedural justice (Mohamed, 2020). A just transition should focus on facilitating an inclusive decision-making and implementation process, paying particular attention to enabling and empowering vulnerable stakeholders.

Overall, participatory justice calls for ongoing, rather than ad hoc public engagement. Processes at the community as well as firm level should provide the platform for meaningful, long-term engagement, enabling trust building, capacity development, experience learning and co-creation. Any meaningful process should be continuous, to ensure joint monitoring of implementation and, if needed, course correction. The participation process itself should foster inclusion

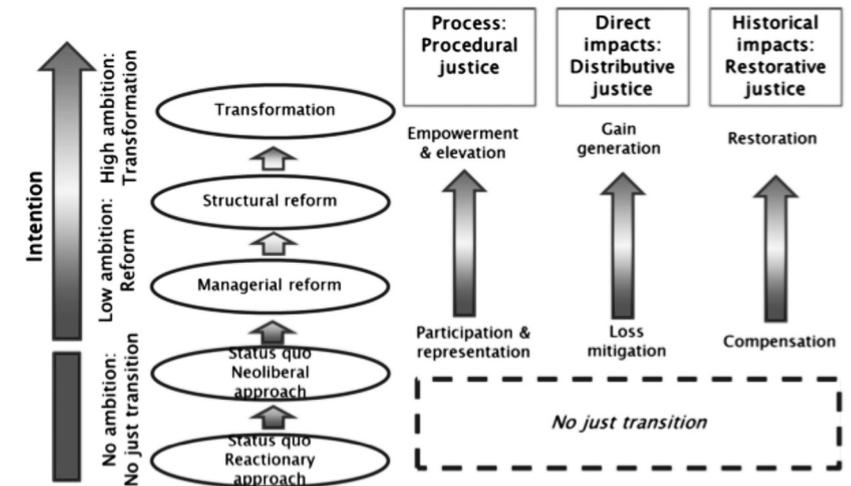


Figure 3.2: Dimensions of a just transition and degrees of ambition

Source: Montmasson-Clair (2021: 8).

and recognise the need to engage marginalised and excluded voices. All stakeholders should be provided the opportunity and resources to participate meaningfully. Participation and access to information should be transparent, equal and unrestricted, so that decisions can be informed by evidence, rather than opinions. All parties should have the opportunity and resources to collect and bring forward evidence.

A spectrum of procedural systems that enable participation, from direct to representative democracy, exists. To enact participatory justice, all available avenues that enable social inclusion should reinforce each other. A central difficulty is always to balance the power of organised constituencies and the desire for participatory and open procedures with the need to bring in expertise to test diagnostics and proposals against evidence, and to identify the resources necessary for action (Makgetla, 2019). A multiplicity of platforms is fundamental to build trust between both stakeholders and in the transition process itself.

Distributive justice

Achieving distributive justice hinges on addressing the direct negative impacts associated with the transition (such as loss of economic activity, employment and livelihood). It relies on harnessing a set of (generally) existing policy tools to lessen or mitigate adverse impacts as well as generate counter-balancing positive forces. Very often, these are focused on the world of work but should in fact be about equitable access to the opportunities arising from transitions as well as managing the impact on affected workers and industries. It is also about ensuring that all stakeholders benefit from new 'green' technologies, through direct access and/or indirect benefits. Over and beyond access, distributive justice, through the promotion of the social ownership of productive assets, aims to have a net positive effect on impacted communities.

A country-specific mix of 'macroeconomic, industrial, sectoral and labour policy' (ILO, 2015) reforms is critical and necessary to achieve distributive justice. For instance, labour market policy, in South Africa and elsewhere, has been identified as critical to foster green and decent work, and harness the employment creation potential of transitions. It combines both active labour market policies (ALMPs),

such as income support programmes, reskilling and small business support, with passive labour market policies that impact labour market conditions (Carter et al., 2019). Yet, labour market policies are necessary but insufficient to achieve distributive justice. They need to be complemented by sectoral and industrial policy to drive or support the emergence of new economic opportunities (UNCTAD, 2016) as well as strong social protection interventions, especially to provide safety nets beyond workers. Plans and strategies, centred on greening key sectors (such as energy, transport, manufacturing, construction and agriculture) should be socially just and concretise the distributive dimensions of a just transition.

Restorative justice

Restorative justice represents the truly transformative potential of a just transition, extending beyond process and direct, short-term impacts to address long-term historical dynamics.

It fosters socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable stakeholders, notably improving access to modern housing and associated services (energy, water, sanitation). It is also forward-looking, ensuring that intergenerational justice is taken into consideration (including through more equitable ownership), and that the rights of future generations to a healthy planet and society is prioritised.

Advancing socio-cultural restoration is a critical complement to progress on socio-economic empowerment and also acknowledges the historical marginalisation of vulnerable stakeholders. This restoration can notably be implemented by enforcing non-predatory use of the land, recognising local rights and ownership, as well as the validity of local and indigenous culture, heritage, knowledge and practice (Montmasson-Clair, 2015b). Access to and quality of community services (health, education, safety) is another core component of empowerment (Walton, 2012).

Last but not least, restorative justice involves environmental restoration. This is evident in the case of land (mine) rehabilitation, but also extends to air and water. Frontline communities have in most cases suffered the negative consequences associated with decades (if not centuries) of natural resource extraction and/or industrial pollution.

Besides the destruction of the natural environment and associated climate impacts, these impacts have had dramatic spill overs on the health of frontline communities.

APPLYING THE NORMATIVE JUST TRANSITION
FRAMEWORK TO KEY POLICY PROCESSES
IN SOUTH AFRICA

The ILO (2015) set out a policy framework for a just transition, which acknowledges that a country-specific mix of policies is needed to integrate a just transition into the national climate and development agendas. South Africa has been at the forefront of nations and regions that have sought to adopt a just transition approach with over a decade of institutional support, dialogue, policy and planning processes in place. What does this look like in reality? Who is engaged, consulted and driving dialogue? Who will reap the benefits and who will bear the costs? These questions are explored through the lens of three case studies, on industrial, employment and climate policy.

Case study on industrial policy

Industrial policy is a core component of an ambitious just transition framework. It is also fundamental to reverse the pattern of premature de-industrialisation witnessed in South Africa (Andreoni and Tregenna, 2018). In essence, industrial policy is a balancing act, between maximising the benefits of the transition, minimising the risks associated with not transitioning and mitigating short-term trade-offs and threats. This requires a careful alignment of industrial policy with the inclusive green economy paradigm to support green industrial development within a just transition. Ultimately, this requires a shift to green and inclusive industrial policy (Montmasson-Clair, 2015a; Montmasson-Clair and Chigumira, 2020; Nilsson et al., 2021). South Africa's industrial policy displays foundational 'green shoots' but is yet to be an ambitious green industrial policy.

Procedural justice

Historically, the development of industrial policy in South Africa

has been a top-down process, led primarily by the government, in consultation with select social partners. Effectively, the degree of stakeholder engagement has varied vastly from one industry to the next, with a strong focus on so-called 'strategic industries', such as the automotive value chain. In most cases though, engagement has appeared to be more reactive than proactive. The degree of engagement on green industrial development has also depended on the political agenda, as discussions around a carbon tax illustrated. Stakeholders (be it business, labour unions or civil society) have often expressed reservations on both the process and content of the tax, tabling concerns that their proposals were not considered meaningfully in its formulation. Moreover, pro-active attempts at creating a social compact in favour of an inclusive and green industrial transition, such as the Green Economy Accord and the Decent Work Country Programme, have failed to deliver on their promises, despite generating agreements approved by social partners (Montmasson-Clair, 2017). This contrasts somewhat with the management of industrial relations through bargaining councils and strong trade unions, which has delivered important social advances for workers (ILO, 2010).

Since 2019, a more inclusive approach in the development of industrial policy has been initiated under the leadership of the Presidency and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC). The master plan approach provides a more inclusive platform for pro-active, forward-looking planning and implementation (Levin and Makgetla, 2019). Led by national government, the process involves the co-creation of sector-specific plans by stakeholders, primarily industry and trade unions. This is a key departure from the previous approach. Industrial Policy Action Plans developed by the then-Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) from 2007 to 2018 did not involve such co-development, nor were plans discussed at the country's established social dialogue forum, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). While an important step in the right direction, master plans do not yet reflect an ambitious approach to procedural justice, particularly due to the lack of involvement of affected communities and society as a whole.

Distributive justice

Industrial policy is central to achieving distributive justice. Numerous policy measures have been implemented in South Africa to foster the transition to an inclusive and green industrial development (Montmasson-Clair and Chigumira, 2020).

About a fifth of South Africa's R&D expenditure in 2016/2017 was directed towards green activities (Montmasson-Clair et al., 2019). Likewise, 16 per cent of the funding from South Africa's Industrial Development Corporation targeted 'green industries' over the 2008–2017 period and 7 per cent of the DTIC's Black Industrialist Support programme assisted clean technologies and energy over the 2015–2018 period (Montmasson-Clair and Chigumira, 2020). Infrastructure development has, to some extent, also positively contributed to green industrial development, through the extension of rail and public transport. Furthermore, some of the country's special economic zones (SEZs) have aspects supporting the transition to a green economy, such as the greentech manufacturing hub of the Atlantis SEZ, and the move towards eco-industrial parks. Procurement requirements (such as local content targets and requirements) and fiscal rules (such as deductions for 'green' investments) have, likewise, been used with some success in South Africa to promote the transition to a green economy, essentially in the energy sector. Regulations (both command-and-control and pricing) have been utilised to support behaviour change, with some progress achieved for plastic bags, electric filament lamps and recycling. Master plans are also under development to actively promote some key 'green industries', such as renewable energy, and water and sanitation.

Overall, industrial policy tools remain to be meaningfully harnessed for supporting green industrial development (Altenburg and Assmann, 2017; Nilsson et al., 2021). In South Africa, only a small fraction of industrial policy targets the transition to green industrial development and much more can be done to fully utilise the power of industrial policy to foster an inclusive and green transition. In many cases, South Africa's industrial policy still promotes an economic development model that counteracts the transition to a green economy. The example of the envisaged Musina-Makhado SEZ, in Limpopo, which would include numerous industrial, steel and ferrochrome facilities, fed by a

coal-fired power plant, exemplifies this point. In addition, the amount of support directed at unsustainable activities remains particularly high. Based on International Monetary Fund data, direct fossil fuels subsidies amounted to 2.0 per cent of gross domestic product in 2017, rising to 13.6 per cent when the cost of externalities is included.

Restorative justice

South Africa's industrial policy has yet to be meaningfully aligned with the imperative of a just transition, particularly to break the historical pattern of injustice.

On the one hand, industrial policy has been a key avenue to address inequality in the South African society. Although imperfect, regulations on Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), which set sectoral targets in terms of empowerment of, ownership by and control by previously-disadvantaged South Africans, have made some inroads in addressing inequality (Makgetla, 2021). In addition, several initiatives, such as the Black Industrialist Support programme, and agencies, such as the Small Enterprise Development Agency and the Small Enterprise Finance Agency, have been actively supporting the diversification of the economy.

On the other hand, the longstanding promotion of an extractive and polluting industrial development model is at the root of the very problems which restorative justice must address. South Africa's industrial policy is rooted in the minerals energy complex, i.e. energy-intensive industrial activities underpinned by mineral extraction and abundant, cheap coal-based electricity (Fine and Rustomjee 1996). For the most part, the country is yet to meaningfully move to a more sustainable development paradigm (Mohamed, 2019).

Case study on employment policy

Socio-economic transitions affect employment in different ways, depending on the prevailing conditions and dynamics of the labour market. In the last decade, there has been a drumbeat around the potential of low carbon transitions to create jobs (ILO, 2018; IRENA, 2020). Notwithstanding the promise of the creation of 'green jobs' in new industries, such as renewable energy, public transport and eco-

agriculture, most existing jobs are likely to be either transformed or substituted for similar but hopefully more sustainable jobs. And some jobs will be lost in carbon-intensive industries. A national employment vulnerability assessment (Makgetla et al., 2020), and a complementary assessment of job opportunities arising from a green transition, affirm that a just transition in South Africa must address the grave unemployment challenge facing the country.

South Africa has a vision of a ‘just transition to a resource-efficient, low-carbon and pro-employment growth path’ (DEA, 2011: 7). Despite gains in economic development since its democratic transition, the country has faced persistent high unemployment (43.2 per cent in mid-2021, using the expanded definition, which includes discouraged job-seekers). While few countries have enacted employment policy and legislation aimed at greening employment, South Africa has a mixed approach, centred on social dialogue and has increasingly integrated labour issues into sectoral laws and policies.

Procedural justice

South Africa has had an ‘extended, critical engagement with just transition, including a range of assessments, social dialogues and policies’ and was among the handful of countries to mention a just transition in its climate change commitments in 2015 (WRI, 2021b). It has experienced growing dialogue and strengthened capacity on the labour market implications of low carbon transitions, including ‘green jobs’ and ‘green skills’ assessments and mapping, employment vulnerability analyses and social dialogue processes. These have put the country on course to implement a wide range of labour market policies that support a just, inclusive transition.

For the last decade, policy assessments and ongoing multi-stakeholder social dialogues have focused on the analysis and promotion of green jobs. In 2014, a national dialogue provided a platform for discussing and (collaboratively) refining government approaches to promoting green employment. Green jobs training and capacity development programmes, and an increasing focus on green skills anticipation and research ensued at macro-economic and sectoral levels. By 2020, another iteration of the national green jobs

dialogues fully addressed ALMPs, in particular skills development and entrepreneurship support, as core to employment policy reform. The National Planning Commission’s (NPC) ‘Social Partner Dialogue for a Just Transition’ (NPC, 2019), identified the need to plan for job losses and job absorption as part of a just transition. National-level analysis and dialogue have supported the development of a job-rich transition (Makgetla et al., 2020). Labour market analysis has increasingly embraced a just transition approach, exemplified in the National Employment Vulnerability Assessment (NEVA) and associated Sector Jobs Resilience Plans (SJRPs) for stakeholders vulnerable to climate change-related impacts (Makgetla et al., 2020). Social dialogue, particularly at sectoral, firm and sub-national level, now needs to take this further.

Social dialogue has been supported by an array of green jobs assessments, to identify and quantify existing green jobs and to project how effective policies and investment programmes can be in providing new job opportunities. In 2011, a national report (Maia et al., 2011) presented an assessment of the potential for creating green jobs in key sectors in South Africa. While the study has played a central role in showing the anticipated net direct green jobs creation, it paid scant regard to not only the challenges and enabling conditions required to realise these projected jobs, but also to how these would be measured in future. This has been partly addressed through studies on green jobs in renewable energy, natural resource management, food systems and through specific initiatives, notably the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) discussed below (Mohamed, 2017). Civil society-led research, such as the 1 Million Climate Jobs campaign, complements this analysis (AIDC, 2016). However, there is very little reliable and on-going reporting on green jobs creation in South Africa.

Distributive justice

Public employment programmes, which were identified as one of the key labour market policies for scale-up by the NPC (2019), have created a significant amount of work opportunities which could be classified as green jobs. They have also featured prominently in social dialogue on green employment policy in South Africa.

The EPWP is the country's long-standing and cross-sectoral public employment programme, which delivers multiple outcomes: employment, social protection (income) and the provision of assets and services. The programme covers all spheres of government and state-owned enterprises, and partners with civil society through non-governmental organisations, aiming to draw significant numbers of unemployed people into productive work accompanied by training. The EPWP has made a weighty contribution to creating work opportunities, and has a targeted focus on youth, women and persons with disabilities. It remains a key mechanism for poverty alleviation and income provision, and has played a central role in the country's developmental journey by offering social protection for the most vulnerable, while promoting environmental sustainability and climate resilience. The programme has contributed substantively to the country's green employment ambition: about 13 per cent of all work opportunities created by the EPWP are deemed 'green jobs' (Mohamed, 2017), primarily through the programmes focused on environmental outcomes.

The EPWP is instrumental to achieving social protection in South Africa. It can also make a key contribution to the employment shifts envisaged as South Africa transitions to a climate-resilient development pathway. The EPWP is among the key strategies of the country's post-pandemic reconstruction and recovery plan (The Presidency, 2020). Its focus on women and youth assists in addressing the gendered and generational dimension of unemployment. The programme has been identified as one of the key ALMPs that needs to be expanded to achieve a just transition (NPC, 2019), ensuring that job opportunities from the transition are distributed equitably. Some examples of possible sectoral extension for the EPWP (Mohamed, 2017) include renewable energy and energy efficiency; sustainable water management; transport (eco-mobility); construction (green buildings and sustainable infrastructure); waste management and climate-smart agriculture. These provide a key lever to balance interventions between climate mitigation and adaptation.

The decent work dimension of the EPWP, however, begs consideration. Remuneration levels in the programme are not in

line with minimum wage levels, and there has been limited success in supporting workers to enter the labour market so that the state becomes 'an employer of last resort'.

Restorative justice

While green transitions are resulting in the creation of new employment, there is no guarantee that these jobs will be created in areas or among those most in need of employment, or that they will be decent jobs. Well-informed employment policies (supported by diagnostics and assessment) can help anticipate the labour market challenges and opportunities of moving toward a green economy. However, they often assume that workers are fully mobile between jobs and locations, that there are sufficient workers equipped with the required skills to take up new jobs, that decent work criteria are prioritised or that workers can, in fact, access opportunities to upgrade or reskill to keep their existing job.

The lack of social protection has been magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic and labour policy instruments, such as universal basic income grants or wage subsidies, have been back on the table globally. This reflects the growing recognition that income protection should be fundamental in planning for resilient societies and communities.

Neither employment policy in general nor green jobs diagnosis and planning processes have yielded the granularity required to achieve restorative justice and to fundamentally address the greening of work. South Africa's climate policy has begun to take this further through its focus on employment vulnerability and job resilience planning.

Case study on climate policy

Climate policy has been central to crafting an enabling framework for a just transition in South Africa. The country's climate policy processes have been developed through an inclusive process, including social dialogue with business, government, unions and civil society. It is lauded globally as one of the 'few countries that have conducted national-level, ongoing social dialogue to develop a vision for a just transition' (WRI, 2021b). South Africa has played a leading role

globally in placing a just transition as a central goal of climate policy.

Yet, due to its dependence on coal, it is one of the most carbon-intensive economies. Linked largely to its colonial and apartheid history, South Africa is also among the most unequal societies, not only in terms of income but also access to opportunities and essential services, stressing once more the need for a just transition.

Procedural justice

Several milestones along the climate policy process highlight the centrality of a just transition and the application of a procedural justice approach to climate policy formulation. South Africa's first stakeholder-driven National Climate Change Response Strategy in 2004 identified the country's vulnerability to climate change, as well as key issues and problems related to climate policy. This was followed up by the development of the Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios (between 2006 and 2007) and the 2013 Long-Term Adaptation Scenarios. These were both developed through facilitated stakeholder processes and technical analysis, the twin-formula that has been applied consistently in formulating climate policy. In 2011, the South African government approved its National Climate Change Response White Paper. This outlines a vision for an effective climate change response and the long-term just transition to a climate-resilient and lower-carbon economy and society, setting the tone for a decade of climate policy.

Two policy processes structured around social dialogue and engagement are particularly noteworthy for their attention to social inclusion – in both process and outcome, namely the inclusion of a just transition in the 2012 National Development Plan (NDP) and the establishment of a Presidential Climate Commission in 2020. The formulation of Chapter 5 of the NDP ('Ensuring environmental sustainability and an equitable transition to a low-carbon economy') involved extensive engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, including focused discussions with individual stakeholder groups, culminating in a vision and key principles of a just transition. There was broad consensus on the challenges and trade-offs in implementing South Africa's climate policy, and in 2018–2019, the NPC initiated a further step, a facilitated consensus-building stakeholder engagement

process to develop options for a just, climate-resilient, and equitable future for South Africa (NPC, 2019).

Taking on the reins for steering this vision, and chaired by the President of South Africa, the Presidential Climate Commission is rooted in social dialogue. It emanates from the Presidential Jobs Summit held in October 2018 when social partners agreed that a statutory body be formed to coordinate and oversee the just transition. The Commission has the mandate to advise on South Africa's climate change response; provide independent monitoring; review emissions reduction and adaptation goals and drive the engagement of key stakeholders. It seeks to facilitate a common understanding of a just transition and formulate a national just transition framework. The Commission epitomises a commitment to social dialogue, with representatives from government, business organisations, labour, academia, civil society, research institutions and traditional leadership.

These government-led social dialogue processes have been complemented by a wide range of civil society processes. Civil society coalitions and alliances have called for deepening just transitions by addressing structural economic reform. The Climate Justice Coalition is made up of an array of members working on justice issues. It seeks to foster 'a transformative climate justice agenda' and advocates for a 'vision of climate justice which advances environmental, energy, gender, racial, immigrant, climate and economic justice together' (Climate Justice Coalition, 2021). This intersectional lens also characterises the work of the Climate Justice Charter, a movement for a people-centred and society-driven just transition with 'democratic, transformative and just solutions' (SAFSC, 2021). These platforms for democratic participation and citizen ownership are central to social dialogue for a just transition, and should be integrated in inclusive policy processes, from diagnosis and design to monitoring and impact analysis – in cities, communities and companies.

Distributional justice

Climate policy has deepened its analysis and application of a just transition approach, outlining the climate change-related impacts on vulnerable groups in the NEVA, and developing SJRPs that seek

to protect vulnerable groups that may lose their jobs or livelihoods because of climate change impacts. In-depth assessments and proposals for five value chains identified as particularly vulnerable in the near future, namely coal, metals, petroleum-based transport, agriculture and tourism, were developed in 2020. These stressed the need for a multi-pronged response encompassing the three dimensions of transitional justice (Makgetla et al., 2020).

For the coal value chain, five key interventions were put forward (Patel et al., 2020). The first relates to allocating responsibility for driving the development and implementation of a resilience plan. It is vital that responsibility is clearly vested in an agency that is able to monitor impacts on the coal value chain as well as implementation itself. This function would need to be dynamic and responsive given the current uncertainty in the coal value chain. It would also have to mobilise resources and stakeholder inputs at community level. A second intervention is to improve the effectiveness of existing Social and Labour Plans (SLPs), which are a prerequisite for acquiring mining and production rights. In their current form, evidence indicates that SLPs have not delivered on their intended purpose of developing opportunities for workers and communities post-mining. Critically, the SLPs need to be more accountable to workers and coal towns that are affected by mine downsizing and closure. Third, the coal towns need to have additional support in developing plans to diversify their economies away from coal over the longer run. Industrial policy would here play a critical role in developing new economic activities. Fourth, ALMPs have to be strengthened and adjusted to serve potential future downsizing in coal. Linked to this, a fifth proposal relates to strengthening income support and social protection for workers and communities, including through an extension of public employment schemes.

Restorative justice

As South Africa's just transition deepens, reparations to 'stranded' workers and communities for historical and ongoing damages are needed. Accordingly, options to finance just transition plans and strategies need to consider reparations. Place-based just transition

strategies have highlighted the need for contextualised approaches that prioritise local and regional economic development.

For example, the Mpumalanga province, which accounts for more than 80 per cent of coal production and the bulk of South Africa's coal-fired power production, has emerged as a testbed for a just transition approach. The provincial government has established a Green Cluster Agency – engagement at the intersection of government, business and academia, to unlock opportunities in the green economy. Many other economic opportunities are also contemplated, notably in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism. Furthermore, tensions between the expansion of the mining industry and the development of other economic activities across the province (such as agriculture and tourism), will have to be resolved. Significant efforts are also required to rehabilitate the environment (land, air, water) as well as address the inequalities in terms of access to housing and associated services (energy, water) and economic opportunities more broadly.

Much of the restorative dimension of just transitions will come to life in places, such as Mpumalanga's coalfields. The planning frameworks, partnerships, dialogue mechanisms and policies for a just transition need to be tried and tested on the ground. They must be pitted against the structural barriers that they will inevitably face. They must deliver the lessons needed to craft employment-rich, equitable and inclusive low carbon pathways. The lessons emerging from Mpumalanga will be critical as just transition frameworks are increasingly implemented in regions, sectors, firms and communities.

ADVANCING A COHERENT AND COORDINATED JUST TRANSITION POLICY FRAMEWORK

South Africa has put in place a political and policy vision for a just transition to a low carbon economy, which features prominently in the long-term development vision and is an integral part of the country's national climate change response strategy. Changing the trajectory of the political and economic system, rooted in carbon dependence, is a herculean task. Close to 90 per cent of the country's electricity mix is derived from fossil fuels, while soaring unemployment and inequality

compound the context. Climate action still rests largely on mitigation actions, although both public and private sector stakeholders have increasingly put emphasis on climate adaptation. So, does South Africa make the grade in its ambition for a just transition? It's a pass, but with a very narrow margin.

South Africa's vision of a just transition advanced in this chapter is broad-based, extending beyond directly impacted workers and communities to include all vulnerable stakeholders likely to be affected by transitions. In terms of the variants of a just transition, South Africa sits somewhere between low and high ambition, between reform and transformation (see Figure 3.1).

However, from the analysis undertaken above, the policy agenda is mostly at the level of managerial reform and sits at the lower end of the ambition spectrum. South Africa's just transition variant aims to foster greater equity and justice and recognises vulnerability at the level of the labour market, likely a consequence of the strong voice of trade unions in social dialogue processes. However, it does not yet address the roots of vulnerabilities and resultant inequalities, nor does it consider meaningfully reviving democratic participation, decision-making and ownership, which are core aspects of a structural reform approach to just transitions. The transformation of existing economic and of social and political systems considered to be responsible for the multiple crises, has increasingly become a rallying point of civil society alliances demanding a deep and transformative transition.

The policy framework that shapes the enabling environment for just transition largely reflects this managerialist approach. Industrial policy has only recently taken on board more participatory policymaking processes, even though green and inclusive industrial development is key to achieve the distributional dimensions of a just transition. And despite 'green shoots', it remains to be meaningfully aligned with the tenets of a just transition. There has been much dialogue, diagnosis and some planning for a job-rich transition, but not nearly enough policy reforms to achieve a pro-employment pathway. While public employment programmes create green jobs and offer a measure of social protection to vulnerable and unemployed workers, they cannot drive the country's efforts to green the labour market. A much deeper

transformation is necessary. Climate policy has been built on a rich tradition of participatory policymaking and has made inroads into the distributional dimensions of a just transition by virtue of necessity. As climate change impacts hit harder and faster than anticipated, climate vulnerable regions (like Africa) will have to face the challenge of applying restorative just transitions in the decades to come. This is yet to be internalised by climate policy. Key insights emerge from the analysis that provide some direction for achieving a more transformative approach to just transitions.

The policy processes discussed in the previous section, when viewed through a just transition lens, have shown strong recognition and support for procedural justice, but insufficient enactment at the local level. This commitment to social dialogue should evolve from engagement with civil society representatives, for the most part at national level, towards a societally driven dialogue at multiple levels (notably in firms, cities and communities). This requires not only recognising and including multiple voices, but also activating citizen (and worker) agency to engage throughout the policy cycle – from problem identification and diagnosis through to policy monitoring and review. Just transitions without inclusion are both unjust and risky – but with policies and institutions that foster inclusion, participation and citizen agency, the essential foundations for a sustainable, enduring and transformative transition could be established.

Just transitions must address the needs of the most vulnerable – affected workers, urban and rural poor, women and youth – to ensure that the benefits of transitions are accessible to everyone and that transition risks are borne equitably. Some headway has been made in this regard, notably in identifying the impacts of climate change on employment and in the efforts to develop resilience plans. A deeper application of the distributional dimension of a just transition would require applying the right policy mix – taking into consideration the availability of policy tools such as industrial, social protection, skills and labour market policies. There is no 'one size fits all' and a low carbon transition will impact sectors, industries and places differently. Policies that address this dimension should consider the specific conditions to identify negative impacts (direct and indirect) associated

with the transition as well as the responsibilities for bearing the costs of the transition. The work underway as of August 2021, to take forward the SJRPs as well as develop both a just transition framework and a just transition finance roadmap for South Africa, is a welcome step in this direction.

South Africa has a rich tradition in restorative justice, given the reparations that were needed to craft a post-apartheid society. This dimension contains the truly transformative nature of any just transition. Restorative justice extends beyond process and direct, short-term impacts to include long-term historical dynamics and pathways. It adopts a rights-based approach to development, with the intent of improving the access of vulnerable stakeholders to healthy and safe environments, upholding universal economic and social rights, and safeguarding and protecting equitable access to and ownership of assets. It is about development models and imaginaries that rethink the relationship between people and nature, and between people and the state. It seeks to redefine the relationship between the state and citizens, based on the welfare of all people. It leads to a just, new and inspiring social contract that spurs the transformation of economies and societies to fight poverty and inequality, halt climate change and address environmental breakdown. This dimension is championed by the civil society movement in South Africa.

Operating at the nexus of social, environmental and climate justice, civil society is holding power to account, highlighting the need for government and business to meaningfully embrace their role in effecting restorative justice. Civil action, on the streets, in bargaining councils and in the courtrooms, has put South Africa's just transition ambition to the test – and won some battles.

CONCLUSION

Just transitions towards sustainability, in which the equity and wellbeing of all South Africans and the environmental sustainability of the country's valuable natural systems is prioritised, need to be commensurate with the scale of the challenge. They should deepen and pick up pace. And they must shift from managerialist approaches

towards structural and transformative just transition ones, which add meaning to the mantra of 'leaving no one behind'.

The COVID-19 pandemic has unmasked (once more) the full extent of the inequalities between and within countries, and reinforced the need to carve a safe and just space for all of humankind. It has opened, in some places, the political moment to question the purpose of our economies. It is possible to build societies and economies that are more just, equal and inclusive; are better integrated with nature; that offer social protection for all and that are more informed by science, but only if we act now. A just transition is imperative to achieve the policy frameworks and processes that will deliver development pathways leading to a fair and sustainable world.

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