

# Just Transition

Contribution to a broad & more systematic understanding of a dazzling concept

Just Transition working group of CAN Europe

26<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Presentation by Dirk A. Heyen, Senior Researcher, Öko-Institut, Berlin

# Agenda

- 1** Intro: JT as a dazzling concept in need of clarification
- 2** Systematising social (justice) aspects of env. policy
- 3** Implications & recommendations for a JT agenda

## Brief history of the term Just Transition

- Term firstly used in **late 1970s** by the US Oil, Chemical, & Atomic **Workers Union** seeking support for workers
- Term used at **UNFCCC conferences**
  - first in stakeholder positions (since Kyoto)
  - later in official decisions (Cancun, Paris Agreement, Silesia Declaration)
- ILO Resolution 2013 + **ILO Just Transition Guidelines 2015**
- **UN 2030 Agenda**: “Transforming our world”, “leaving no one behind”
- **European Green Deal** aiming at a “just transition”
  - “this transition must be just and inclusive. It must put people first, and pay attention to the regions, industries and workers who will face the greatest challenges” ([EU COM](#))
  - Broad(er) JT understanding by DG ENV in our research project!

# Different understandings of Just Transition

“A just transition for all towards an environmentally sustainable economy [...] needs to [...] **contribute to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty**” ([ILO](#))

“A Just Transition secures the **future and livelihoods of workers and their communities** in the transition to a low-carbon economy” ([JTC](#))

“A ‘just transition’ means moving to a more sustainable economy in a way that’s **fair to everyone – including people working in polluting industries**” ([Greenpeace UK](#))

“By ‘just’ we mean: some chance of a **safe climate for future generations; an equal distribution of the remaining global carbon budget between countries; and a transition in the UK in which the costs are distributed progressively, and where everyone’s essential needs for housing, transport and energy use are met**” (FoE UK 2011).

## Need for clarification

Clarification needed on several issues:

- Which **transition / policy area**?
  - Climate – or environment in general – or even broader?
- **Who?**
  - Workers – or consumers – or citizens in general?
  - Distributional effects between which social groups and/or locations?
  - National – intra-EU – or global perspective (e.g. climate justice)?
  - Including next generations?
- With regard to which kind of **social dimensions & effects**? →
- Which **understanding of justice**? →

## 2) Systematizing social (justice) aspects of environmental policy

(at the same time: ... of insufficient environmental policy)

# Social justice dimensions of environment (policy)

## 1. Causation of environmental pollution

- Who pollutes how much?

## 2. Distribution of environmental pollution & benefits

- Who suffers or benefits from environmental “goods & bads”?

## 3. Access to information, participation in decision-making & legal protection in environmental matters

- Who has (easy) access?

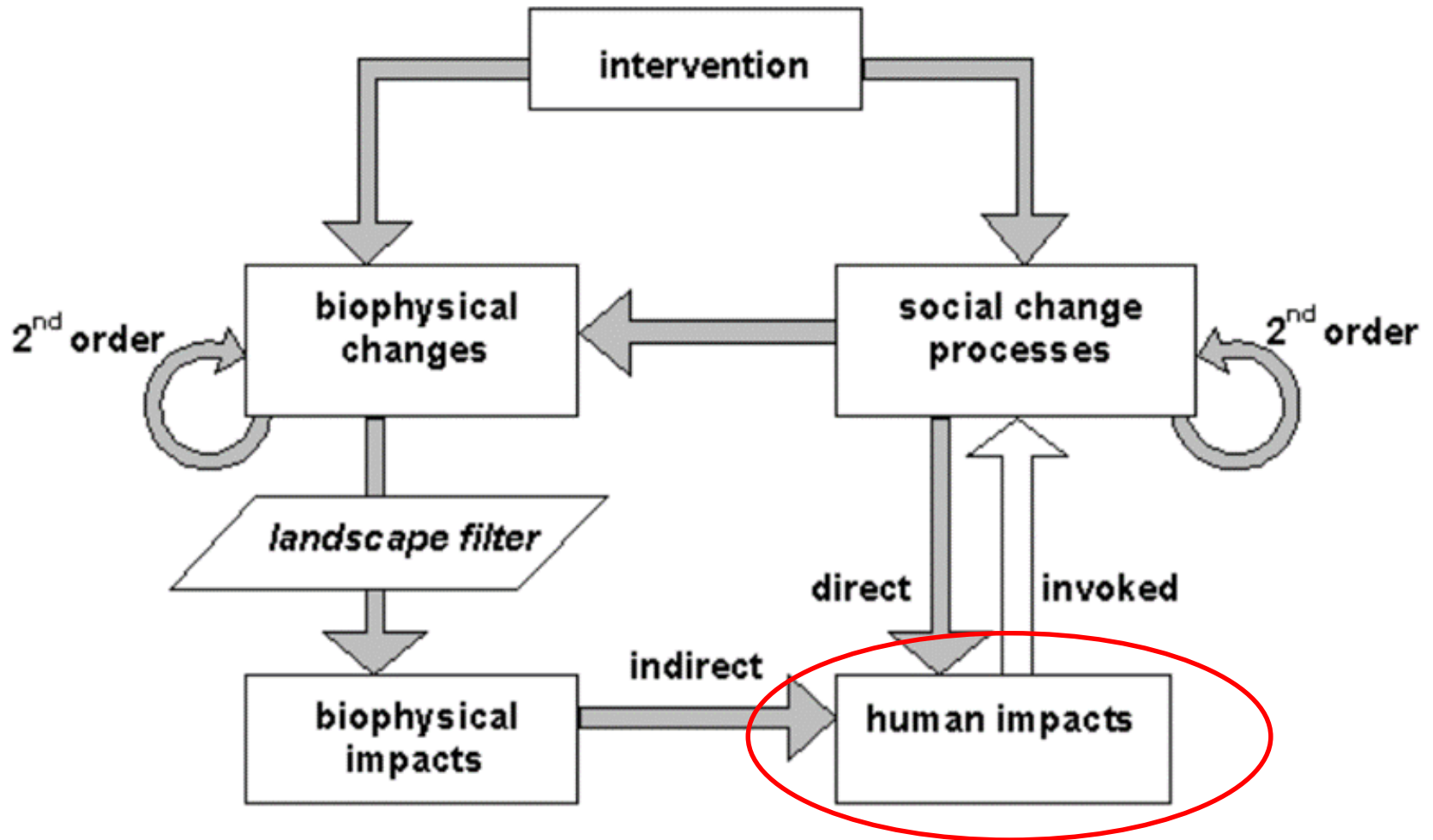
## 4. Social effects of environmental policy & transitions

- Who bears the costs or enjoys the benefits of env. policy?
- Focus of **Just Transition discourse**, mainly jobs & income – but should be broader than that, and also broader than just the environmental quality effects focused by env./climate justice

Focus of environmental & climate justice discourses

Next slides

# Social effects of env. policy: conceptualisation



Source: Slootweg, Roel; Vanclay, Frank & van Schooten, Marlies (2001). "Function evaluation as a framework for the integration of social and environmental impact assessment". In: Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal 19 (1), pp. 19–28.



## Primarily monetary / socio-economic effects

- Job & income
  - Employment gains & losses in different sectors
  - Net employment effects
  - Distributional effects: who loses, who benefits from new jobs?
  - Income level & job quality (conditions, job security, right to organize...)
- Household costs
  - Mainly looking at net costs (e.g., considering not only prices but also savings through technological and behavioral changes)
  - Distributional effects: regressive / progressive
  - Who can afford investing in (long-term) saving opportunities?
- Assets & returns

## Primarily non-monetary / immaterial effects

- Health (incl. occupational health)
  - Effects on “environmental bads & goods” and their distribution
  - Effects of pollution exposure on health is intermediated by vulnerability
- Feelings like fun & pleasure
- Social recognition & self-esteem
  - Valorizing or stigmatizing certain behaviors or jobs
- Conditions for organizing & self-determining one’s (everyday) life
- Social relations & inclusion (participating in community life)
- Political participation

## Attention for different distributional effects

---

- Among socio-economic groups
  - E.g., income group, employment status, job category, sector
- Among socio-demographic groups
  - E.g., education level, household type, gender, age, ethnicity
- Among localities
  - Community size, rural vs. urban, different regions

# Definitions of justice & fairness in the context of environmental policy

- Different **justice dimensions** (e.g., in env. & climate justice debates):
  - Distributional justice: distribution of costs & benefits
    - Incl. or in addition: Justice of access (to a clean environment & resources)
  - Procedural justice: inclusive access to decision-making (and courts)
  - Recognitional justice: recognition of everyone's equal dignity
  
- Different **fairness principles / values** for distributional justice:
  - Equality: everybody equally
  - Equity: everybody according to his/her responsibility – or capacity
  - Need: everybody according to his/her needs

## Pragmatically defining Just Transition policy goals

Policy goals for just environmental policies (EnvP) in the project for DG ENV (as an example):

1. EnvP **reduce inequalities in the distribution of environmental [bads & goods]** and with regard to **social inclusion**
2. EnvP themselves **do not disproportionately burden vulnerable / underprivileged households** and ensure that **financial (saving) opportunities are also available to them**
3. EnvP **positively affect quality & quantity of employment** and, together with structural policy, they also **open up perspectives for workers & regions affected by the transition**

# Implications & recommendations for a Just Transition agenda

## Implications & recommendations (1/3)

- Recognising the variety of social dimensions & effects from env. policies / transitions, and the variety of justice principles
- Considering well how to define a Just Transition – for your purpose (there is not a single perfect definition for all purposes)
  - Which environmental policy areas? my proposition: broader than climate
  - With regard to whom?
    - My proposition: not only workers, but citizens in general
    - Linking with global dimension & next generations (climate justice) but not focus?
  - With regard to which social dimensions/effects?
    - My proposition: at least 1) jobs (including quality and recognitional aspects), 2) household costs, 3) health (distribution of environmental “goods & bads”)
  - Which understanding of justice?

## Implications & recommendations (2/3)

- Communicating that the status quo also includes injustice, regarding
  - Socio-economic aspects
  - Socio-environmental aspects: responsibility for & distribution of pollution
 and that a green transition can help to overcome injustices
- Putting the focus on net impacts at household-level (e.g. net income & costs) instead of intermediate economic effects like prices
- “Transition” or “transformation”: both terms are fine
  - There is no congruent differentiation between the two terms



## Implications & recommendations (3/3)

- Important issues to address, beyond “typical coal workers & regions”:
  - Jobs in other sectors like transport, energy-intensive industries, resource extraction, agriculture & fishery...
  - Household costs for energy (incl. efficiency measures) & food
    - Avoiding regressive effects via revenue recycling of environmental taxes, e.g.
  - Energetic building refurbishment & upgrading residential areas (regarding traffic & green spaces) while avoiding “green gentrification”
  - Health benefits from env. policy & avoiding new risks by green technology
  - Procedurally: participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making
  - Internationally: “climate justice” & strong legal provisions for companies’ due diligence in international supply chains

## Background material & further reading

- Issue paper for DG ENV summarising evidence on social effects of EU env. policy and basic approaches to mitigate negative effects
  - Along EGD thematic areas: a) climate & energy, b) Circular Economy & resource efficiency, c) biodiversity & land-use; d) “zero pollution”
  - Focus on socio-economic effects on workers & consumers
- [www.researchgate.net/publication/341129913\\_Just\\_transition\\_in\\_the\\_context\\_of\\_EU\\_environmental\\_policy\\_and\\_the\\_European\\_Green\\_Deal](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341129913_Just_transition_in_the_context_of_EU_environmental_policy_and_the_European_Green_Deal)
- Paper for the German Environment Agency (UBA)
  - More systematic regarding social dimensions & (non-monetary) effects
  - Short on policy recommendations (up to the next project steps)
  - Publication forthcoming (main paper in German; summary in English)

# Thank you for your attention!

**Dirk Arne Heyen**

Senior Researcher

**Öko-Institut e.V.**

Berlin office

Borkumstraße 2

13189 Berlin

Phone: +49 30 405085-356

E-Mail: [d.heyen@oeko.de](mailto:d.heyen@oeko.de)

Follow me on Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/DAHeyen>

Follow me on Researchgate:

[www.researchgate.net/profile/Dirk\\_Heyen](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dirk_Heyen)