

Just Transition, Energy Transition and Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform

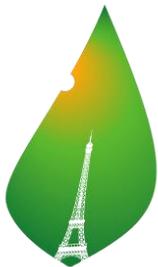
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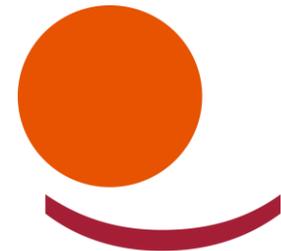
Sungrow Huainan Solar Farm on the site of a former coal mine in China. Photo by Adam Dean

What is a just transition?

- JT is context-dependent: it is a shared, negotiated vision and process supported by a set of guiding principles
- JT mentioned as “imperatives” in the Paris Agreement
- ILO’s *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all* focus on workers in all sectors
- International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC) and other organisations stress the importance of social dialogue in the JT process
- Different groups interpret JT differently



PARIS2015
UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE
COP21·CMP11



ITUC CSI IGB

“Be prepared” is a key idea of a just transition

ILO Guidelines view a just transition as “a **bridge** from where we are today to a future where all jobs are green and decent, poverty is eradicated, and communities are thriving and resilient” (ITUC Just Transition Center’s Report to the OECD, May 2017).

How broad and firm can be this bridge, depends on the country.



Photographer:
[Anders Birch/laif](#)

Just transition isn't a new idea: it was called differently in the past



The world has seen many difficult transitions leaving certain groups behind and creating the fear of future transitions being similarly painful. Historical examples of proactive mitigation of such negative impacts include:

- Efforts to convert war veterans and military workers to civil jobs
- Adjustment programmes in the agricultural sector
- Complementary policies to mitigate possible negative social impacts of structural reforms such as fossil fuel subsidy reform

Internationally, the labour and environmental movements have been the first to advocate the need for a just transition in the context of climate change policy. JT has a unique history in each country.

Fossil fuel phase-out narratives

Moral framework = normative: we should stay within the carbon budget to avoid climate change beyond 1.5 or 2 C°

Mostly used in the climate community

Deliberately negative & creating a sense of urgency: “unburnable carbon,” “carbon budget,” “Keep-it-in-the-ground” (KING) campaigns

Deliberately neutral: “supply-side mitigation,” “fossil fuel phase-out,” “managed decline” as a better alternative to “unmanaged decline”

Trying to be positive: “Fossil-Free,” “Beyond Coal,” “Powering Past Coal”

Risk framework = fossil fuels are increasingly risky investments, yet jobs and economies depend on them

Mostly used in the investor community and among mainstream policy-makers

Deliberately negative & creating a sense of urgency: “stranded assets,” “stressed assets,” “carbon bubble”

Deliberately neutral: “energy transition,” “responsible investment”

Trying to be positive: “just transition,” “no one left behind,” “economic diversification”

Source: Authors’ summary.

Learning by doing and learning from other countries

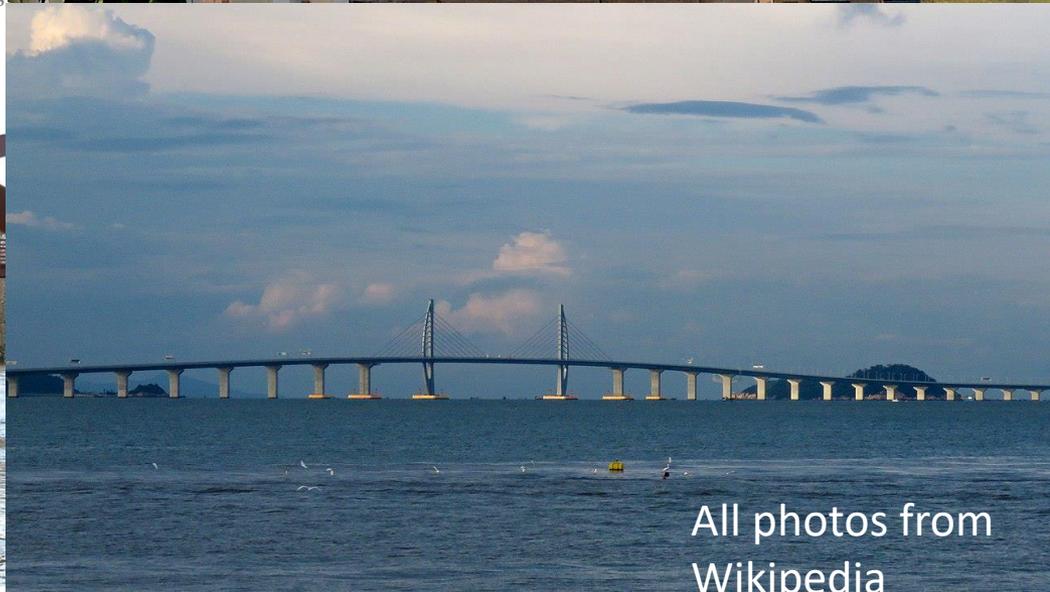
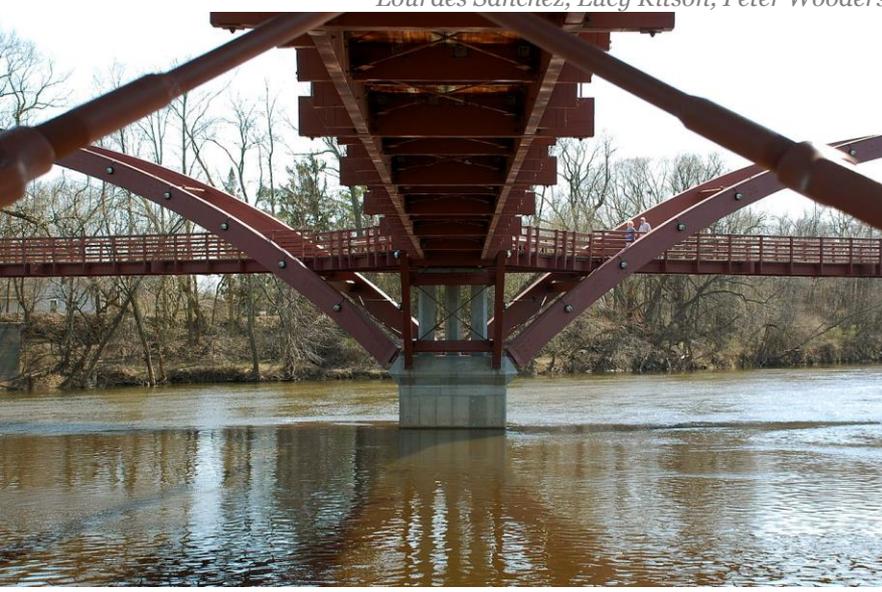
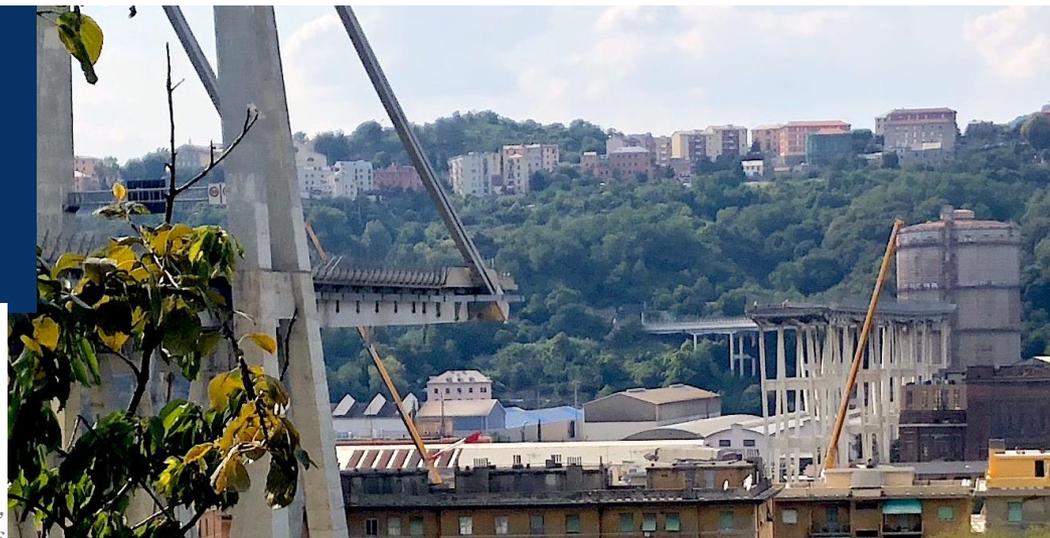


**STORIES FOR SUCCESS FOR
THE UNFCCC TALANOA DIALOGUE**

FOSSIL FUEL PHASE-OUT AND A JUST TRANSITION:

Learning from stories of coal phase-outs

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Lourdes Sanchez, Lucy Kitson, Peter Wooders*



All photos from
Wikipedia

Further reading:

Bridle, R., Kitson, L., Duan, H., Sanchez, L., & Merrill, T. (2017). [At the Crossroads: Balancing the financial and social costs of coal transition in China.](#)

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International Labour Organization. (2015). [Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all.](#) Geneva: ILO.

Stanley Foundation. (2017). [Setting and international policy agenda for just transitions.](#)

UNFCCC Secretariat. (2017). [Just transition of the workforce, and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.](#)

Zinecker et al. (forthcoming). Real people, real change – strategies for just energy transitions. IISD.