JTRG.UCD.IE

Just Transition
Embedding social justice in low-carbon transitions

A report of the inaugural conference, 7th of June 2023

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Just Transition:
Embedding social justice in low-carbon Futures

A report of the inaugural conference, 7th of June 2023

Authors: Oscar Mooney, Dr. Aparajita Banerjee, Assoc. Prof. Geertje Schuitema

The Just Transition Research Group (JTRG) is a research platform that bridges theory and practice to develop a just transition to a low-carbon society in Ireland and internationally. This conference brought together some of Ireland's leading academics to discuss their work relevant to Just Transition on the 7th of June, 2023, hosted by the UCD Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School. This report gives an overview of the main topics addressed in the conference.

Table of Contents

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Introduction to a Just Transition

Across the world, governments and civil societies have entered into discourses, procedures, and practices to navigate potential low-carbon transitions to address the ongoing climate crisis. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy requires transformative changes in technology, society, human behaviour, and institutional practices. While some of these transitions have received support, others have been met with concern and resistance. There is a need to have an interdisciplinary understanding of what a Just Transition means and how a Just Transition process can be designed and managed. To do this, it is important to understand existing social inequalities and historical injustices, as well as the consequences of routes a low-carbon transition pathway could take in terms of social support, decarbonisation, and economic developments.

The term Just Transition originates from the US labour movement. As trade union representatives foresaw the phasing out of environmentally-damaging industries, a *Superfund* for Workers was proposed to safeguard the welfare of workers across this process[1]. This superfund was later termed *Just Transition* and, in the era of the ongoing climate crisis, extended towards a transition process whereby livelihoods and the welfare of workers and communities may be adversely affected in the pursuit of low-carbon development. Since its origin, Just Transition has become a uniting term between concerned and affected stakeholders. The propositions of Just Transition, though varying, are primarily focused on ensuring the tenets of social justice become a central consideration in a low-carbon transition.

A low-carbon transition will entail changes to our local-to-global social, economic, and economic systems. In practice, a Just Transition is commonly translated into the aspiration to *leave no one behind* and that *the burdens and benefits are shared equitably* throughout the low-carbon transition. However, the sociopolitical context for designing and implementing decarbonisation policies and practices to achieve this is not without contestation.

A just and equitable low-carbon future is still undetermined. However, justice and fairness principles can help guide the policy process to achieve better policy outputs for the future. The Just Transition Research Group aims to build a national and international research network for promoting peer-to-peer learning of concerned, interested, and affected stakeholders for generating knowledge, debate, discussions, policy suggestions, and practical examples for a Just Transition to inform just and equitable policies.

[1] Mazzochi, T (1993) “A Superfund for Workers”. Earth Island Journal, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Winter 1993-94), pp. 40-41. Available at https://www-jstor-org.ucd.idm.oclc.org/stable/43883536

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Background

Ireland is committed to a transition to a low-carbon future as part of commitments made under the Paris Agreement, The UN Sustainable Development Goals, and to the European Union. As a result, an ambitious goal of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) is promised. A range of activities that have resulted from fulfilling this aspiration has been closely followed by JTRG researchers. Social scientists in JTRG are particularly tracking how the restructuring of the energy system required to achieve such a massive reduction of GHG emissions impacts society and the economy.

Well-formulated and properly implemented public policies can play a critical role in reducing any negative economic and social consequences of overhauling the energy system. However, public policies are often most successful when people agree with and accept those policies. The promise of a just transition can enhance the social acceptance of energy policies as fairness and justice are highly regarded social values. Not surprisingly, the term Just Transition is being used by different stakeholder groups. For example, in 2019, Irish trade unions called for a Just Transition highlighting that the low carbon transition in Ireland should be "*imaginative, flexible, generous*" especially for workers and communities who are asked to make a "*major sacrifice for the wider common good*"[2]. More recently, Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2023 stated that *"Just Transition principles are embedded in the plan, including the principle that people need to be equipped with the skills to benefit from changes and that costs need to be shared"*[3].

Despite sentiments around the principles and required dialogue of a Just Transition, however, the enactment of a Just Transition in Ireland will most likely be complex, requiring resources, management, and time as well as a process to design policies, given the uncertainty surrounding the operationalization of a Just Transition. To ensure justice, fairness, and inequality in the Just Transition process and discern best practices to achieve these objectives, Just Transition must be recognised as a critical topic of central importance within academic circles.

[2] SIPTU (2019) "Building a "Just Transition" Conference - the future of Bord na Móna employees" press release. Available at https://www.siptu.ie/media/newsarchive2019/fullstory_21215_en.html

[3] Department of the Environment, Climate, and Communications (2023) "Climate Action Plan 2023". Available at https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7bd8c-climate-action-plan-2023/

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Conference Overview

The Just Transition Research Group is a research platform aimed at bridging theory and practice for developing a Just Transition to a low-carbon society in Ireland and internationally. This conference opened the floor to integrated and interdisciplinary research and discussed practices and policy approaches for a Just Transition in Ireland. Themes and topics which intersect with the implications of a Just Transition both in Ireland and globally were discussed in presentations from leading academics in the field. They offered a variety of different perspectives, approaches, and solutions to the diverse ways in which sustainability and injustice can converge. In the next section, we elaborate on the main takeaways from the conference.

Organisers

Dr. Aparajita Banerjee, Senior Researcher, German Institute of Development and Sustainability
Associate Prof. Geertje Schuitema, UCD, School of Business.
Oscar Mooney, Research Assistant, UCD Earth Institute.

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

List of speakers

- Prof. John Barry, Queen's University Belfast, School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy, and Politics: *Transformations in the Anthropocene: Conflict Transformation and the Role and Responsibility of Academia in Democratically Navigating Pathways to Post-Carbon and Post-Growth Futures*

- Assoc. Prof. Julie Byrne, UCD, School of Business: *Financing the Just Transition: Feasible or a Fallacy?*

- Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry, UCD, School of Geography: *Place-based approaches to sustainable and just urban and regional development*

- Prof. Donna Marshall, UCD, School of Business: *Just Transition in Fashion: Can it happen?*

- Kieran Harrahill, Walsh Scholarship Ph.D. Candidate and Senior Climate Justice Researcher with Think-thank for Action on Social Change (TASC): *A farmer-centred approach to understanding Ireland's bioeconomy in the context of just transition.*

- Assist. Prof. Patrick Brodie, UCD, School of Information and Communication Studies: *Just Transitions and Ireland's Postcolonial Ecological Regime*

- Dr. Kate Flood, UCD, School of Biology and Environmental Sciences: *Just Transition and Irish peatlands: Fostering transformative relations with Irish Peatlands*

- Aoife Kirk, Connecting Communities with Peatlands Project Coordinator: *Connecting Communities with Peatlands*

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Main takeaway:

Radical change is needed

It was questioned whether, in a growth-based capitalist economy, a comprehensive Just Transition could be achieved. Other arguments proposed that through the agency and efforts of stakeholders at multiple levels of society and organisations, significant change could be realised. Across the talks, the scale of necessary changes in our economic and political systems, infrastructure, behaviour, and beliefs was presented as considerable and extensive. If social justice is to become a central tenet of decarbonisation, then radical change is needed to undergo a true Just Transition.

Following this argument, a true Just Transition will require a transformation in how civil society, industry, and government relate to one another. Currently, there are significant disconnects between policy objectives, industry targets, and the visions and demands of workers, farmers, and businesses. This fragmented stakeholder and developmental landscape is full of contestations and contradictions. With these divisions occurring, a more co-creative and participatory means for envisioning the transition is needed.

A radical transition must also integrate long-term changes into society, creating altered social and governance systems. Motivating personal agency, multi-actor partnerships, and stakeholder accountability will create shifts in our values and culture for radical transformation. An example is that top-down policy approaches are being transformed into multi-level governance structures, in turn enabling these inclusive and bottom-up processes.

To undergo this radical change for a true Just Transition, six key solutions are discussed below, namely:

1. Reduce existing inequalities
2. Multiple and inclusive solutions
3. Institutional change
4. Beyond technological solutions
5. Generating Collective Action
6. Navigating complexity through conflict

1. Reduce existing inequalities

Inequalities exist across any society. For a Just Transition to occur and change to be implemented, existing inequalities need to be recognised, acknowledged, and in some instances addressed. Current inequalities and power imbalances have been recognised as barriers to decarbonisation. However, in Ireland, many issues have arisen from historical processes as well as more recent national development strategies and consequently, are ingrained in places and institutions. If the aim is to create a more inclusive and participatory society, a Just Transition will require that both spatial and historical injustices are addressed.

An example provided by Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry was that for many communities across Ireland, immediate pressing issues, such as the Cost of Living

crisis, are affecting communities. This creates a context in which the attention of households is directed toward their day-to-day activities rather than consideration for how to create a low-carbon future. Another example given in Kieran Harrahill's presentation was how inequality and economic hardship are visible in the case study of a Just Transition for the Irish agricultural sector. Many Irish beef farms are not economically viable and rely heavily on governmental subsidies, and the need for a low-carbon transition is often felt as further pressure by many farmers.

Recognising existing inequalities demonstrates the underlying challenges of Just Transition. Recent initiatives and research demonstrate how place-based turn in community development can alleviate these inequalities. Current initiatives, such as Think-thank for Action on Social Change (TASC)'s The People's Transition spoken of by Kieran Harrahill, aim to use climate action as a means for addressing community needs and ambitions. The People's Transition suggests that the fastest transition to a net-zero economy is the fairest transition and that climate action can be used as an enabler of local development designing solutions that benefit people and the planet.

2. Multiple and inclusive solutions

As heard across the conference, there are not one but many posed approaches and solutions to a Just Transition. As a wicked problem, Just Transition poses difficulties due to its intricate and interconnected elements, resulting in no single straightforward solution. Due to this complexity, no single solution will be able to pave the way forward for a comprehensive Just Transition. Instead, multiple solutions will be needed which, contributing together, will lead to the alleviation of underlying issues and consequently, drive these radical and significant changes for developing Just Transition pathways.

In her presentation, Niamh Moore-Cherry emphasised how multiple issues around Just Transition approaches contribute to communities not engaging. This includes how many of the terms used in Just Transition discussions are disconnected from the actual experiences of affected communities, historical underinvestment in certain places, and how Just Transition seems distant and vague, particularly in the face of the ongoing Cost of Living crisis. A solution to these issues, as suggested in Niamh Moore-Cherry's presentation and across the literature, is a capabilities approach. A capabilities approach entails increasing the capabilities of communities to create change to address the issues they face. However, also highlighted in Niamh Moore-Cherry's presentation is how ongoing development conflicts have reduced communities' trust in just transition-type terminology, and consequently, a capabilities approach may not alone lead to a Just Transition. As described by Patrick Brodie, one suggested solution to contested developments is to challenge the underlying rationalities behind them and determine

their beneficiaries. Hence, a combination of both capabilities approach as well as interrogating conflicting developmental practices may together contribute towards a more comprehensive Just Transition pathway.

The above paragraph is used to illustrate how certain solutions could interact together, but also to demonstrate how inclusivity relies upon consulting and including stakeholders in the process. Stakeholders relevant to a Just Transition identified during the conference included communities, workers, and farmers in Ireland. Additionally, global stakeholders were identified as supply chain workers with concern also given towards the non-human. As all of these groups are being impacted by the current low-carbon future, their voice should impact and influence a Just Transition. To further determine inclusive solutions for a Just Transition, we can aim to answer questions such as: what are the blockages to making the transition, what assets can contribute to generating capacity building, and who else will be impacted by the low-carbon transition?

3. Institutional Change

Speakers highlighted the challenges of a Just Transition in the areas of academia, the financial sector, agriculture, governance, and the fashion industry. This illustrated how issues of sustainability and social justice are deeply embedded within societal organisations, structures, and procedures. As a result, addressing these challenges goes beyond seeing to those most apparent and visible issues but will require targeting the drivers of social injustices and unsustainable practices through fundamental institutional change.

Julie Byrne spoke of the financial requirements of a Just Transition referencing estimates for a Just Transition by the International Renewable Energy Agency and McKinsey and Company. These organisations project the total costs to be €131 trillion and €275 trillion by 2050, respectively. However, considering that the EU has committed to mobilising €55 billion for a Just Transition, this comes up significantly short of the projected €275 trillion. Argued from the position of the financial sector, the challenge of the Just Transition is to identify and allocate finance toward firms that have sustainable and socially progressive initiatives. Achieving this within the sector involves strategies such as comparing the shareholding needs with other stakeholders, short-term and long-term perspectives, internalising externalities, and quantifying qualitative data. This will also depend on how internal stakeholders exercise their influence within an institution and the overall political stances of the firms and board members.

However, while It was argued that the necessary changes could be realised through existing institutions, it was also suggested that these challenges would require challenging existing power dynamics and the development of entirely new economies. As stated in Donna Marshall's presentation, altering power relations across fashion supply chains will require

empowering workers and ensuring they influence policy. Additionally, John Barry debated that there are deep contradictions as the demands of growth-driven capitalist economies are in direct opposition to sustainable resource use. Supporting emerging economies not based on fossil-fuel extraction and combustion but instead based on human well-being and supporting dignified livelihood creation was suggested. An example of this given by Kieran Harrahill was the development of the bioeconomy: an economy based on biotechnology and biomass that could support agricultural workers in developing new, sustainable livelihood streams.

4. Beyond technological solutions

While technological change will be part of this radical change, it won't be the only driver of it. A transition to a low-carbon society will require an overhaul of the current fossil-fuel-based energy system and its replacement with a renewable energy system. However, the primary demand of Just Transition, that workers are compensated and reskilled, illustrates how a low-carbon transition needs to be accompanied by appropriate social and economic policies if social justice is to be embedded in the transition. From this argument, Just Transition can be considered the recognition that the low-carbon transition goes beyond a technological transition as the process can also have adverse social consequences, requiring both planning and oversight.

It was argued by John Barry, and also suggested in Donna Marshall's presentation, that the coupling of emissions and environmentally damaging practices with production chains details a contradiction between sustainability and growth-based economies and industries. Such reasoning suggests that Just Transition is a political challenge, requiring significant changes in how our economies are structured and operationalised. This contradiction was further displayed in Patrick Brodie's presentation which illustrated how policy that motivates energy producers and consumers in Ireland has its roots in specific development and investment strategies, namely foreign direct investment, while being a historical strategy of Ireland's development policy. Shifting such policy, Patrick Brodie argued, would require challenging these forms of development demonstrating further the political dimension of particular Just Transition pathways.

5. Promoting collective action

During the conference, several of the presentations emphasised how collective action across workplaces, communities, and civil society is a promising approach to Just Transition. In their respective talks, both John Barry and Donna Marshall argued the relevance of collective action in driving institutional change. Additionally, both Kate Flood and Aoife Kirk illustrated how collective action can have profound effects on ecosystem restoration. Considering the breadth of actors relevant to a Just

Transition, collective action cannot be the sole responsibility of the public, communities, or workers but also requires the collective action of actors such as academics and researchers.

However, collective action requires agency and is not without its challenges. For instance, John Barry argued that there is a need for activism that fosters societal dialogue and questions existing power structures to move beyond individualistic mindsets within academia. He further suggested that integrating participatory research for collaborative, equitable, and engaged projects could lead to knowledge production to support collective organising. During the closing remarks of the conference, it was suggested that academics are well-positioned to provide evidence-based views and evidence to responsible authorities and industry players. Academic collective action could consequently help motivate the forms of leadership, ownership, and stewardship which were implied across the conference in communities, affected groups, and companies, evolving social actions and relations for radical change.

In both their presentations, Kate Flood and Aoife Kirk gave a detailed account of the ways communities are coming together to promote peatland restoration. Kate Flood argued that for academics to support this collective action, there is a need to understand the futures that communities are constructing already and create knowledge that can contribute to these emerging pathways. She described how through engagement with the lived experience of communities, academics can contribute to fostering community resilience. This could in turn support and strengthen diverse economic practices, *ecological livelihoods*, and relational networks already contributing to social and ecological resilience. This aim of community resilience had similarities to the place-based turn and capabilities approach described in Niamh Moore-Cherry's presentation.

6. Navigating complexity through conflict

The talks at this conference indicated the wide range of approaches, contexts, and sectors in which principles of Just Transition can be applied. Considering how broad the topics and themes of this conference were, and that not all sectors relevant to a Just Transition were spoken of, a complex and unfinished discourse of claims on Just Transition becomes apparent. Within this conference of limited speakers, the contestations between these approaches and conflictual perspectives also became evident as speakers told of conflicting approaches to a Just Transition from their disciplinary lens. However, these conflicts and emerging debates could have a constructive function. We suggest here that rather than conflict being avoided, it should be considered a necessary element for navigating the complexity of a Just Transition.

The low-carbon transition is very much still contested, with power imbalances existing

across stakeholders. In financial institutions, Julie Byrne stated how opposition is often perceived between shareholders concerned with financial gain and other stakeholders concerned with social progress and sustainability. A conflict between workers, managers, executives, and shareholders in fashion supply chains was also suggested by Donna Marshall. Within these contestations of good practices for social justice, a Just Transition will most likely not be a simple or smooth process. Instead, it may require supporting and shifting power imbalances, such as female leadership in corporations and worker empowerment in supply chains as proposed by Julie Byrne and Donna Marshall, respectively. Ensuring that these stakeholders would have greater influence would not just alter these institutions but could lead to broader implications for greater society as well.

Lack of negotiating power across value and supply chains, as well as concern over public opinion, could lead to a further deterioration of trust between actors according to both John Barry and Kieran Harrahill in the case of agriculture. Considering that contestations and challenges to the low-carbon transition are increasingly becoming apparent, there is a need for academia to challenge and disrupt these forms of “climate action” and engage in local grievances before bad-faith actors, according to Patrick Brodie. The acknowledgment that Just Transition is a contradictory and multi-layered issue could consequently lead to constructive debate.

Allowing the different angles, perspectives, and disciplines to be brought together could help in revealing the preferred Just Transition pathways of stakeholder groups. This could also contribute to different solutions and outcomes that researchers and stakeholders envision rather than discourse will remain fractured and disagreement unresolved. Consequently, conflict and debate may not just be inevitable but essential for a Just Transition.

Stakeholder mapping

Following the conference, the JTRG conducted a brief stakeholder mapping exercise. Identifying and grouping the actors mentioned across the conference led to more generalised categorisation. The primary categories which emerged from this exercise were research institutes, workers, communities, civil society organisations, state agencies, international agencies, and the private sector with the internal actors of corporations being mapped as an offshoot of the private sector. A visual representation of this categorisation and grouping can be viewed in the image below (Image. 1).

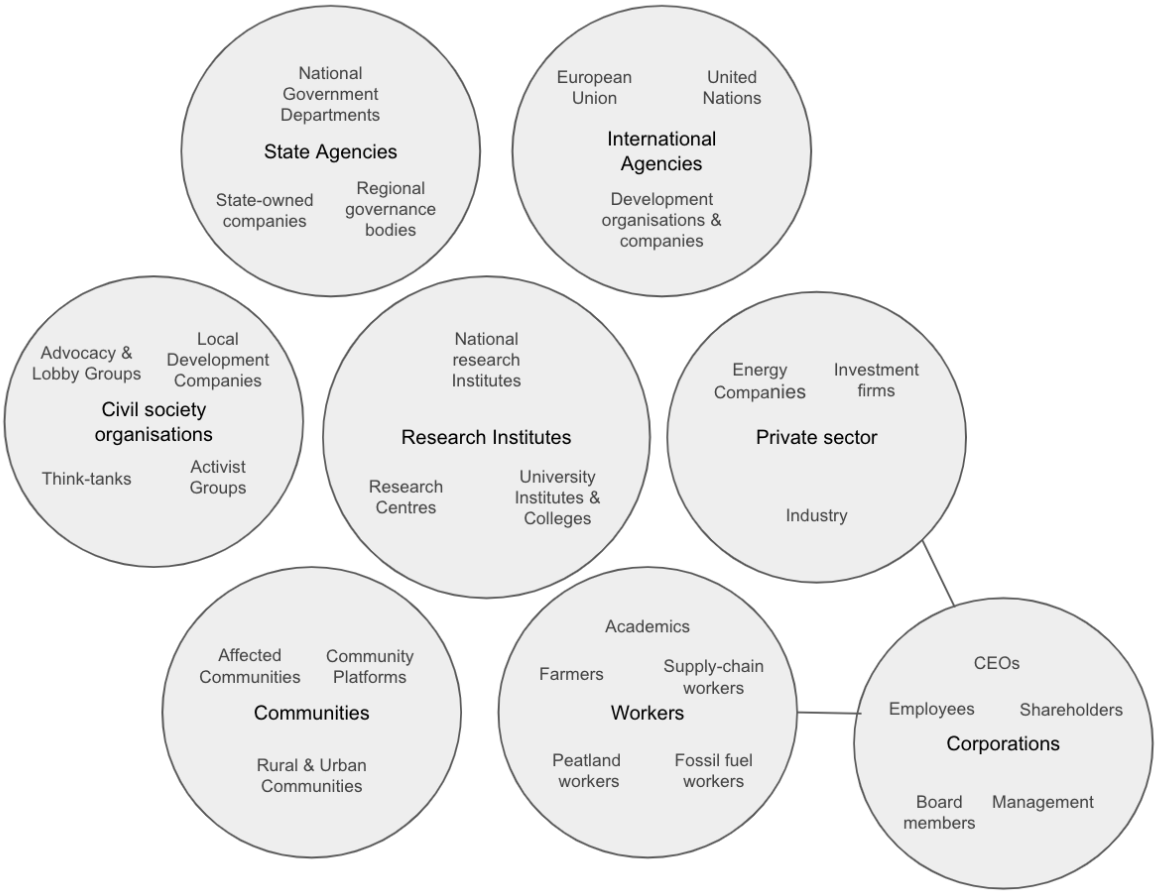

Image 1 shows the relevant actor groups identified through the Just Transition conference. These have been grouped and categorised into Research Institutes, Workers, Communities, Civil society organisations, State agencies, International agencies, the private sector, and corporations. Further categorisation and links could be drawn. For example, the internal structure of corporations also applies to institutes and civil society organisations. However, the above image best illustrates how these stakeholders were related during the conference.

Research Institutes

The predominantly mentioned stakeholder groups across the conference were research institutes. This can be attributed to the conference being both organised by and for an audience of researchers and academics. The research institutes mentioned were categorised as universities and colleges, but also national research institutes, and research centres. The disciplines encompassed by these research institutes include the earth sciences, geosciences, economics, political science, geography, and social sciences as well as the bioeconomy.

Workers

Throughout the conference, there was a consistent reference to workers, aligning with the origins of the term Just Transition. Workers were often referred to in sectoral terms such as “fossil fuel workers”, with less reference to the specific employer or corporation which employed the worker. Notably, within the Irish context, farmers and peatland workers received significant attention. This was due to Irish agriculture having contributed a disproportionate amount to the nation's emissions profile compared to the workforce provided by the sector and the significant job losses following the cessation of Bord na Móna peat harvesting affecting both workers and communities in the Irish midlands.

Donna Marshall’s presentation on the fashion industry additionally illustrated that the concern for workers in Just Transition discourse has a global dimension and that actions and practices of decarbonisation and sustainability affect this stakeholder group, who are often underpaid and underrepresented. Additionally, we also included academics in this category, as was argued by John Barry that academics are civil servants and consequently, have a responsibility towards society at large.

Communities

Alongside workers, the impact of Just Transition on communities was consistently highlighted throughout the conference. Talks by Niamh Moore-Cherry, Kate Flood, and Aoife Kirk underlined that the engagement and involvement of communities were key to a Just Transition. Notably, these talks detailed the diversity of communities impacted by climate mitigation, with both rural and urban communities mentioned as well as both peatland, midland, and farming communities. This diversity highlighted how extensive Just Transition approaches are, but also highlights the interconnectedness of modern society and communities across Ireland.

Civil society organisations

Throughout the conference, several civil society organisations were either referenced or represented. Representatives of civil society organisations were also in attendance. These civil society organisations included lobby and advocacy groups as well as grassroots activist groups. In his presentation, John Barry argued that academics should aim to support the

demands and join such activist groups. Notably, two of the speakers, Kieran Harrahill and Aoife Kirk were also representing civil society organisations in their presentations. This highlights how, in Just Transition-related research, participation and engagement with communities is key to understanding contexts and developing appropriate solutions. Also of note, Local Development Companies were mentioned for their role as anchor institutes for place-based Just Transition projects and initiatives.

State agencies

State agencies such as national government departments, regional governance bodies, and state-owned companies were referred to in a number of the presentations. Considering that Just Transition principles have been embedded across Ireland's Climate Action Plans, there is interest in researchers in these national policies. State agencies also overlapped with research institutes as a number of these agencies have research remits. Notably, several of the speakers at this event work jointly with and on behalf of national research agencies.

International agencies

Several of the talks referred to the global dimension of a Just Transition. These concerned the effects of climate change, the effects of climate mitigation on global workers, as well as the international relations and development strategies affecting Just Transition in Ireland. The European Union was mentioned as a driver of a Just Transition through the mobilisation of funds as well as a political body with influence on the Irish economy. Other international agencies referenced included developmental organisations and intergovernmental research networks.

Private sector

The private sector was broadly categorised into industry, investment firms, and energy companies. This allowed for the inclusion of industries highlighted during the conference such as the fashion and agricultural industry while also alluding to the many other industries relevant to Just Transition, such as construction. Investment firms include both private investors and institutional investors while also signposting to foreign direct investment development strategies.

Corporations

The internal structures of corporations, as highlighted in both Julie Byrne and Donna Marshall's presentations, were stated to have a significant contribution to their sustainable and social justice endeavors and outcomes. We have broken down these structures as employees, management, CEOs, shareholders, and board members, although many other positions and stakeholders could also be included. All talks concerned with institutional structures referred to the power imbalances which exist across these organisations. This internal structure of corporations can also be partly applied across all the types of organisations present in the Actor Map. We

consider it useful as it highlights the personal agency and collective action that can be exercised at all levels of organisations.

Stakeholder positionality

Further analysis of Just Transition stakeholders should incorporate where conflict and opposition between stakeholders arise. Such an analysis would have to take into account the power imbalances that exist across these stakeholders. Also, while all these stakeholders are relevant to a Just Transition, not all of them are concerned equally with the implementation of a Just Transition. While some of these stakeholders are concerned with Just Transition as a function, say institutional investors for the longevity of continued financial accumulation, for others it is a key concern for their livelihoods, well-being, and dignity, such as supply chain workers and farmers. It also could be argued that not all of these stakeholders are concerned about a Just Transition. While in this conference, the point was made that both stakeholders and shareholders will use their influence for social progress and sustainability, this may not be an overall target, driver, or mission of specific actors or conglomerates. Therefore, and if a true Just Transition is the aim, stakeholders need to be supported, managed, or influenced according to both their positionality and their aims and goals.

Further Research Questions

The presentations at this conference detailed the perspectives and approaches to Just Transition in the Republic of Ireland and global contexts. These presentations described some of the arguments for how to create a true Just Transition. The need for radical change across our institutions, industries, communities, and global changes was described, as well as the need for changed social relations and facing the complexity of a Just Transition. Additionally, not all of the speakers agreed with each other, and many of the approaches given were contradictory to one another. This highlights the inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of Just Transition research. However, we interpret these contestations as constructive arguing that conflict is required for navigating the contested and underdetermined pathway for a Just Transition.

Bringing together the details of each of the presentations, we give three research questions, as well as sub-research questions to pursue a true Just Transition.

1. How do we bridge theory and practice?

While bridging theory and practice is a central question across applied academia, a considerable portion of Just Transition research remains highly theoretical. However, we know that a Just Transition

needs to be operationalised otherwise social justice remains an abstract ambition. This is not to imply that all just transition research should be solely focused on pragmatic application but instead, that we should be aiming to connect the theoretical frameworks to real-world applications. Considering the complexity of a realising Just Transition, with the multitude of ideologies, approaches, and domains involved, the connection between theory and practice may be key for driving a transformative process.

Academia serves, in part, as a means of bridging theory to practice. Approaches for bridging theory to practice are mentioned in the personal engagement and agency, conflict and debate, statistical data, and discursive and developmental challenges among others. However, these theoretical lenses will not always align with one another and often depend on the positionality of the researcher and their preferred discipline. With these theoretical foundations shaped by an academic's research, the successful or unsuccessful application of theory to practice should consequently lead to the re-shaping of theory surrounding Just Transition. This may be crucial for a topic as complex and sensitive as Just Transition.

Intermediate questions for determining how to bridge theory with practice include:

- What is the role of all relevant stakeholders in facilitating a Just Transition?
- How can collaboration be fostered across research institutes to support a Just Transition?

2. How can we approach the global dimensions of Just Transition?

The global dimensions of Just Transition illustrate there are not just global drivers of Just Transition policies, but also global concern for the social well-being of people and ecosystems affected both by climate change and climate mitigation policies. When we consider the broad implications of both climate change and Just Transition across both global and local economies and workforces, the countless people that can be considered stakeholders becomes evident. We also need to recognise that there is not one global dimension to a Just Transition. Instead, there are multiple. Consequently, any approach to Just Transition at a global or international level must appreciate and discern the subjectivity of social justice between communities and cultures, as well as Just Transition as a primarily *Western* proposition having originated in the US labour movement

However, considering the interrelatedness between climate mitigation, social justice, and climate change, what is meant by justice for all the affected stakeholders? The fastest form of climate action has been argued in this conference to be the fairest form of climate action, and in this sense, Just Transition streamlines a low-carbon transition. At the same time, Just Transition should arguably not become merely a means to a low-carbon transition in itself. Just Transition, as many of the speakers of this conference stated, holds a genuine

concern for those people who will experience the adverse force of a low-carbon transition. The prime consideration of many Just Transition approaches heard within this conference was social justice itself.

Intermediate questions for analysing and interpreting global dimensions of Just Transition include:

- How can subjective justice be actualised in the pursuit of climate mitigation and adaptation?
- How can cultural understandings of justice be incorporated into international policy?
- How can internal and external shareholders shift power across industries?
- How can due diligence for both sustainability and social justice be implemented across supply chains?

3. How do we connect bottom-up and top-down approaches?

Both bottom-up and top-down approaches have their merit in Just Transition approaches. However, arguably neither alone can develop a comprehensive Just Transition. There is a need to connect ambition to application, while also acknowledging that the ambition of communities will not be the same as national government, and visa versa. Consequently, in a world of contested future trajectories, connecting bottom-up and top-down approaches will be a key component of a Just Transition.

Arguably, there are different agendas between top-down and bottom-up processes. A climate action plan for the Republic of Ireland exists, however, the spatial distribution of political support for climate action may not be distributed equally across the isle of Ireland. Additional consideration of a Just Transition process will need to be given to the societal structures and power relations which exist across society, organisations, and across communities. In considering that the agendas of administrations and communities may not align, the question may not be how to embed social justice in a low-carbon transition, as was explored in this conference, but how a low-carbon transition can be embedded in social justice.

Intermediate questions of connecting bottom-up and top-down approaches include:

- How can livelihoods be supported in the transition from a fossil fuel-reliant society to a low-carbon society?
- How can the adverse effects of climate mitigation and adaptation be mitigated?
- How can a Just Transition support the needs of communities who are impacted by the low-carbon transition?
- What are the needed foundations to support a community-led Just Transition?

Presentation abstracts

John Barry: *Just(ice) Transformations in the Anthropocene: Conflict Transformation and the Role and Responsibility of Academia in Democratically Navigating Pathways to Post-Carbon and Post-Growth Futures.*

John Barry, Professor of Green Political Economy in the Centre for Sustainability, Equality and Climate Action at Queens University Belfast, gave his presentation on the need to bring together the literature on conflict transformation and energy transitions and examine the role and responsibility of academia during times of a planetary crisis.

Read the full abstract here: https://jtrg.ucd.ie/just-transformations-in-the-anthropocene/

Prof. Julie Byrne: *Financing the Just Transition: Feasible or a Fallacy?*

Julie Byrne, Associate Professor of Banking and Finance at UCD School of Business, will discuss the financing of a Just Transition in the context of corporate economics where maximising shareholder wealth appears to come into conflict with inclusive development pathways.

Read the full abstract here: https://jtrg.ucd.ie/julie-byrne-financing-the-just-transition-feasible-or-a-fallacy/

Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry: *Place-based approaches to sustainable and just urban and regional development: Lessons for policy and practice.*

Drawing on two recent projects, Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry, UCD School of Geography and College of Social Sciences and Law, gave an account of how urban and regional policies and programmes must not exacerbate existing inequalities.

Read the full abstract here: https://jtrg.ucd.ie/place-based-approaches-to-sustainable-and-just-urban-and-regional-development/

Prof. Donna Marshall: *Just Transition in Fashion: Can it happen?*

Professor Donna Marshall's presentation explored the tensions between economic, social, and environmental demands of a fast fashion giant and the impact on its supply chain and specifically its workers.

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

Read the full abstract here:
https://jtrg.ucd.ie/donna-marshall-implementing-a-just-transition-in-fashion-supply-chains/

Kieran Harrahill: *A farmer-centered approach to understanding Ireland's bioeconomy in the context of just transition.*

Kieran Harrahill, senior researcher at TASC and Ph.D. candidate, will give a background to Just Transition with relevance to the agricultural sector in Ireland, introduce bioeconomy production processes that reduce society's reliance on fossil fuels, and give an overview of The People's Transition initiative, led by TASC.

Read the full abstract here:
https://jtrg.ucd.ie/kieran-harrahill-a-farmer-centred-approach-to-understanding-irelands-bioeconomy-in-the-context-of-just-transition/

Assistant Prof. Patrick Brodie: *"Just" Transitions and Ireland's Postcolonial Ecological Regime*

Lecturer and Assistant Professor Patrick Brodie, UCD School of Information and Communication Studies, will present his work with Dr. Patrick Bresnihan, Maynooth University, about anti-extractivism and environmental justice movements in Ireland against multinationals.

Read the full abstract here:
https://jtrg.ucd.ie/just-transitions-and-irelands-postcolonial-ecological-regime/

Dr. Kate Flood: *Just Transition and Irish peatlands: fostering transformative ecological, economic, and socio-cultural relationships with peatland landscapes.*

Dr. Kate Flood, Environmental Protection Agency researcher, will explore the cultural context and experiences of communities in the midlands regions of Ireland as they transition from extracting peat systems to more regenerative models.

Read the full abstract here:
https://jtrg.ucd.ie/kate-flood-just-transition-and-irish-peatlands-fostering-transformative-ecological-economic-and-socio-cultural-relationships-with-peatland-landscapes/

Aoife Kirk: *Connecting Communities with Peatlands.*

Aoife Kirk, Project Coordinator with the Communities Wetland Forum, gave an account of how the project is helping build the capacity of communities to work collaboratively in the restoration of peatland ecosystems.

We give a brief summary of Aoife Kirk's presentation:

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN

The Connecting Communities with Peatlands aims to connect communities across Galway, Kildare, and North Tipperary. Working with communities, the project aims to show communities how to engage with their local peatlands and bring in community groups to be part of the Community Wetlands Forum. This has involved training in Citizen Science, social media, plant identification, as well as relationship and conflict management. This project also identifies natural, built, and cultural heritage, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities. Challenges for a Just Transition identified through the Community Wetland Forum have been a lack of meaningful engagement with communities, top-down approaches, accessibility of European Union Just Transition funding for community organisations, and community buy-in. Solutions to Just Transition were suggested as; continuing to include people through restoration projects and habitat management; partnerships with NGOs, agencies, and local authorities; and creating local jobs for long-term impact.

NEXSYS

UCD DUBLIN