Durham University
Centre for Sustainable Development Law and Policy

MARTIN-LUTHER-UNIVERSITÄT HALLE-WITTENBERG

JTC JUST TRANSITION CENTER

Just Transitions to a Net Zero World

Third Annual International Conference

Just Transitions in Implementation

Durham University, Durham

10-11 September 2026



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1. Executive Summary

The Third Annual International Conference on *Just Transitions to a Net Zero World*, held at Durham University on 10–11 September 2026, brought together researchers, policymakers, legal experts, practitioners and community voices to explore a central question: **how do we move from commitments to the practical delivery of just transitions?**

The conference demonstrated that the challenge is no longer establishing the importance of a just transition, but ensuring that justice is embedded in the decisions, institutions and processes through which transition is delivered. Across two days of interdisciplinary discussion, a consistent gap emerged between policy ambition and implementation. Commitments to workers, communities and vulnerable groups can have limited impact unless they are supported by clear targets, resources, responsibilities and mechanisms for review and accountability.

A second strong theme was the difference between **participation and influence**. Meaningful participation requires more than consultation or an invitation to engage; affected communities, workers and Indigenous peoples need genuine opportunities to shape decisions, with the capacity and rights to do so. This was particularly evident in discussions of energy infrastructure, mining, land use and climate finance. The conference also highlighted that the costs and benefits of transition are unevenly distributed. Place matters: local pollution, land use, employment, health, infrastructure and access to resources can create very different experiences of transition. Justice therefore needs to be considered across communities, regions and global value chains, and not measured through emissions reductions alone.

Data, modelling and artificial intelligence offer important opportunities to strengthen decision-making, but they are not substitutes for judgement, local knowledge or accountability. The discussions consistently emphasised the importance of transparency, validation, traceability and expert oversight.

The conference concluded that delivering a just transition requires **credible plans, meaningful participation, place-based approaches, stronger accountability and better evidence**. It also reinforced the value of sustained collaboration across disciplines and between academia, policy and practice.

We will take the discussions and connections developed during the conference forward at COP31, as well as through our research, policy and impact activities. We welcome opportunities for collaboration and to work with researchers, policymakers, practitioners, communities and other interested parties to turn the principles of just transition into practical action.



Professor Petra Minnerop
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability); Director, CSDLP; Principal Investigator, JusTN0W Initiative, Durham University



Professor Christian Tietje, Chair for Public Law, European Center of Just Transition Research and Impact–Driven Transfer, Martin Luther University, Germany

2. Conference Purpose and Rationale

On 10 and 11 September 2026, we held the third annual international JusTN0W conference at Durham University, together with the European Center of Just Transition Research and Impact-Driven Transfer (JTC) at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. We launched JusTN0W in October 2024 with a conference that set out an interdisciplinary research agenda for safer and fairer futures. This year we wanted to move from agenda to practice, so we chose the theme “Just transitions in implementation”.

2.1 Why Just Transitions in Implementation?

Just transition is now a familiar commitment in climate policy. It appears in the Paris Agreement, in the Just Transition Work Programme under the UN climate negotiations, and in a growing number of national plans. But a commitment on paper does not make a transition just. Arguably, it is in the implementation that we find out whether a transition is just or not. If we get implementation wrong, even the most well-intended transition can fail the people and places it is meant to protect.

Several speakers showed how this can happen. Plans can mention workers and vulnerable groups without linking them to targets, budgets or clear responsibilities. States can meet formal requirements while leaving the underlying problems in place, which Veronika Fikfak called “compliance minimalism”. Communities can be invited to take part in decisions without having any real influence over them.

Getting implementation right requires very granular data and knowledge across many domains: where emissions and pollution fall, who works in affected industries, how land is held and used, how finance flows and what the law requires. No single discipline holds all of this. That is why we see interdisciplinary work as essential, and why the programme brought together law, economics, environmental science, finance, data science and governance, alongside judges, policymakers and local government.

Justice in a transition also has more than one dimension. Distributive justice concerns how costs and benefits are shared. Procedural justice concerns who takes part in decisions and how. Recognition justice concerns whose experiences, identities and knowledge are acknowledged. Darren McCauley added a fourth, restorative justice, which asks how to respond to past harm. These questions become concrete during implementation, when decisions are made about specific places, people and budgets.

2.2 Conference Objectives

The conference had three main objectives:

1. To establish Durham as a centre for interdisciplinary research and discussion on just transitions.
2. To bring together scholars across career stages and disciplines, from PhD researchers to senior academics, and to connect them with practitioners.
3. To foster new collaborations, within Durham and with partners in the UK and abroad.

The programme reflected these aims. Over two days, it included keynotes, plenaries, a judicial panel, eight parallel tracks and a poster exhibition. The first day ended with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between JTC and Durham’s Centre for Sustainable Development Law and Policy, a concrete step towards longer-term collaboration. The second day closed with a panel on what a just transition roadmap should contain.

3. Key Insights from Speakers

3.1 Day One: 10 September 2026 Opening of the Conference

Martin Evans, Petra Minnerop, Laura Marsiliani, Pia Andres, Christian Tietje and Katrin Seidel opened the conference by linking the day to Durham's work on just transitions and its collaboration with the European Center of Just Transition Research and Impact-Driven Transfer at Martin Luther University. The day's theme, "Just transitions in implementation", was reflected in the range of perspectives brought together, including law, economics, environmental science, finance, data and governance.



Morning Keynote

Professor Josephine van Zeben

European University Institute and Florence School of Transnational Governance

Who Gets to Be Resilient? Power, Vulnerability and the Just Transition

Josephine van Zeben focused on who gets to shape a transition. She discussed how power and vulnerability affect participation, and how institutional barriers can limit apparently bottom-up processes. The practical test was whether affected groups could influence decisions, rather than whether participation appeared in the policy.

Plenary: Dimensions of Just Transitions

Professor Tim Stephens

University of Sydney Law School

The law of the sea and the transition from fossil fuels
Tim Stephens reminded us that the move away from fossil fuels also raises questions under the law of the sea. His contribution extended the day's geographical reach and underlined that the legal and environmental consequences of decarbonisation do not stop at national borders.

Professor Martin Evans

Durham University

Working with nature to mitigate climate change
Martin Evans presented peatland restoration as a practical form of climate mitigation and adaptation. The UK contains around 15% of the world's blanket peatland resource, much of it severely eroded. He showed how revegetation, gully blocking and sphagnum planting can improve peatland condition, reduce peak flows and lengthen flood-response times, while targeted restoration can also reduce methane emissions. His wider point was that nature-based mitigation takes place in complex, contested landscapes with overlapping land uses and legal interests. Delivering it at scale is therefore a social and governance problem as much as a scientific one.

Professor Elisa Morgera

Durham University and UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change and Human Rights

Fair defossilization of our economies: insights from human rights analysis and health evidence
Elisa Morgera connected fair defossilisation with human rights analysis and health evidence. Her contribution made clear that the effects of climate policy have to be assessed through lived experiences of health and other human rights impacts, rather than through emissions indicators alone.



Judicial Voices on the Just Transition

Judge María Teresa Infante Caffi of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and Honourable Justice Sapana Pradhan Malla of the Supreme Court of Nepal brought judicial perspectives to the programme. The session shifted attention from policy design to the role of courts and legal institutions in interpreting climate-related responsibilities and protecting rights in changing social and environmental conditions.



Image directly above is of Judge María Teresa Infante Caffi

Afternoon Keynote

Professor Dr Phoebe Koundouri

Athens University of Economics and Business and University of Cambridge
United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report 2027: A Global Commons for Accelerating SDGs Implementation

Phoebe Koundouri outlined the systems approach being developed for the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Report 2027. It combines integrated modelling, measures that go beyond GDP, participatory co-design and sustainable finance. A particularly interesting element was the proposed link between AI-ready data, stakeholder input and actual policy and investment decisions. Climate, biodiversity, inequality, fiscal pressure and governance were treated as interacting problems.

Parallel Sessions, Track A: Value Chains and Carbon Pricing for a Just Transition

Dr Viet Nguyen-Tien
Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics

Input Uncertainty in the Green Transition: Firm-level Evidence from Critical Minerals

Viet Nguyen-Tien looked at what uncertainty about critical minerals does to firms downstream. Using earnings-call data from more than 14,000 listed firms, he distinguished mineral-specific concerns from general anxiety and ordinary price or sentiment shocks. The analysis also considered responses such as material substitution, reducing mineral content and circular-economy strategies. The result is a useful reminder that critical-mineral uncertainty can constrain downstream firms before a physical shortage occurs.

Edward Clinton
TPI Global Climate Transition Centre, London School of Economics

Just value chains: How decarbonising activities impact communities

Edward Clinton's analysis asked what decarbonisation does to communities outside a company's own sites. Three effects kept recurring: conflicts over land, unequal distribution of impacts, and decline in regions affected by closures. Because these effects can occur upstream, the work could help investors ask more concrete, sector-specific questions.

Héloïse de Gaulmyn
CREST, École Polytechnique

The Social Cost of Electricity: Location, Market Design and Local Air Pollution

Héloïse de Gaulmyn used a spatial model of electricity generation to show why location matters twice. Firstly, the grid determines which capacity is displaced, while secondly, atmospheric dispersion determines who is exposed to the remaining pollution. Her analysis of European coal generation showed that congestion can make market and social incentives diverge. Pricing pollution is necessary, but it may not be sufficient where network constraints pin local output. Siting and capacity decisions then become part of the social-cost question.

Parallel Sessions, Track B: Law, Finance and Accountability in Just Transitions

Dr Matteo Fermeglia
University of Amsterdam

Just transition through the lens of socio-ecological wellbeing and the SDGs: An analysis of the EU and South Africa

Matteo Fermeglia approached the just transition through socio-ecological wellbeing and the Sustainable Development Goals, comparing the European Union and South Africa.

Dr Giada Giacomini
University of Hull

The Accountability Gap in International Climate Finance: The Role of Independent Accountability Mechanisms in Advancing a Just Transition

Giada Giacomini used the Green Climate Fund's Bio-CLIMA project in Nicaragua to examine what happens when climate finance causes social and legal harm. The project was intended to reduce deforestation and strengthen resilience in the BOSAWÁS and Río San Juan biospheres, but affected Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities complained of inadequate consultation, failures relating to free, prior and informed consent, and weaknesses in environmental and human-rights due diligence. The Fund's Independent Redress Mechanism found non-compliance. Disbursement was suspended and the project agreement was later terminated, but the Board did not fully adopt the remedies proposed by the mechanism. Giacomini's wider point was that independent accountability mechanisms can identify harm without having the authority to secure a remedy. That enforcement gap is a direct challenge to the legitimacy of rights-based climate finance.

Parallel Sessions, Track C: Political Ecology, Representation and Indigenous Rights in the Transition

Nathan Whitebrook
University College London

Reassembling Power: Tracing the Controversies of Indigenous Participation in the Pilbara Energy Transition

Nathan Whitebrook examined the Pilbara as a resource-rich mining frontier where renewable-energy and critical-mineral projects are being built on landscapes shaped by colonial extraction. Drawing on six weeks of qualitative fieldwork with the Kariyarra Aboriginal Corporation, including interviews, participant observation, mapping and transect walks, he traced how states, companies, technologies and Indigenous communities negotiate participation. His central distinction was between invitation and power, as participation can be offered while decision-making remains structured by existing legal and economic arrangements. The presentation therefore called for Indigenous governance to be constitutive of the transition, supported by enforceable participation rights and sustained institutional capacity.

Dr Stefan Knauß
Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg

Spirits, Proxies and Silicon: Charting the Dangers and Opportunities of Representing Nature

Stefan Knauß explored three ways of representing nature in transition decision-making, namely embodied identification (spirits), human or institutional representatives (proxies), and technological surrogates using sensors and AI (silicon). Drawing on examples including an Oxford interspecies assembly, Dresden multi-species role-play and the Themis interface developed for the Elbe, he treated representation as a performative claim that can be accepted, contested or ignored. The examples also exposed different risks. Embodied identification can break down under the pressure of negotiation, while human representatives may compromise ecological interests too quickly. His conclusion was that context-specific hybrid forms of representation are more promising than a single universal model, provided that ecological limits remain visible.

Dr Piotr Szwedo
Jagiellonian University

Rights of Nature and ecocentric approaches in international economic law

Piotr Szwedo situated Rights of Nature within wider ecocentric critiques of growth-oriented international economic law. Referring to investment-law cases from Ecuador, he suggested that Rights of Nature can play a supplementary interpretive role in reinforcing environmental principles, while also noting that participation and inclusion were present in some legal frameworks before the newer terminology emerged.

Dr Diana Vela-Almeida
Copernicus Institute of Sustainable Development, Utrecht University

Where is reproductive labour in the just energy transition? A feminist analysis of extraction and manufacturing in Chile and Sweden

Diana Vela-Almeida questioned the focus of just-transition debates on formal jobs, especially male-dominated jobs in the Global North. Her feminist analysis followed the lithium and copper commodity chain from extraction in Antofagasta, Chile, to battery manufacturing in Skellefteå, Sweden. Almost 60 interviews and ethnographic observation were used to map paid, unpaid, informal and community labour, including food provision, cleaning, childcare, emotional support and environmental monitoring. The argument was that this reproductive labour sustains and subsidises industrial production, while its costs are borne disproportionately by low-income, migrant and racialised women. A just transition therefore needs to account for labour relations beyond the formal workplace.



Parallel Sessions, Track D: Sustainable Finance, ESG and Long-Term Investment Governance

Professor Anna Tilba
Durham University Business School

Financing Net Zero in a Short-Term World: Temporal Narratives and the Limits of Long-Term Investing

Anna Tilba examined why pension funds continue to favour short-term investment performance despite their potential to provide patient capital for net zero. Her study combined 22 interviews with pension trustees and experts with documentary analysis of policy and industry materials. It identified three recurring narratives about the past: systemic legacies, organisational legacies and trusteeship legacies. These narratives help actors make sense of current decisions, but can also reproduce short-term behaviour. The policy implication was that regulatory reform and stewardship initiatives are unlikely to be enough unless trustees also have the knowledge and confidence to challenge dominant investment narratives.

Vincenzo Elia
Centre for International Law, National University of Singapore

From Abstraction to Benchmark: Operationalising Climate Responsibility in Just Transition Governance

Vincenzo Elia examined how climate responsibility can be turned into a practical benchmark for just transition plans. He argued that international climate agreements use the language of just transition without setting clear criteria for assessing whether plans are adequate. Drawing on recent advisory opinions and a comparison of plans from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia and Indonesia, he proposed fifteen elements covering the transition pathway and its social consequences. The comparison suggested that references to workers and vulnerable groups do not necessarily affect the substance of a plan unless they are linked to targets, budgets, responsibilities and review.



Dr Conrad Felix Michel Landis
University of Ioannina and AE4RIA Research Centers

ESG Momentum in International Stock Returns

Conrad Landis presented an international asset-pricing analysis based on more than 11,400 companies in 68 markets between 2002 and 2023. The study examined whether changes in ESG performance, or ESG momentum, are reflected in subsequent stock returns, while also treating ESG controversies as a distinct measure of risk. The proposed framework links ESG and Sustainable Development Goal indicators to asset-pricing models and may also help assess firms that do not publish conventional sustainability reports. The contribution connected the measurement problems discussed elsewhere in the day with the incentives facing financial markets.

Astrid Fionna Harningtyas
Durham University

Islamic Finance Development and Climate Resilience: A Cross-Country Comparative Analysis

Astrid Harningtyas examined whether the values associated with Islamic finance translate into measurable climate resilience. Her cross-country analysis covered 113 countries from 2012 to 2023 and compared Islamic and conventional financial development with climate vulnerability, readiness and carbon intensity. Islamic finance development was positively associated with resilience and lower vulnerability, particularly in Organisation of Islamic Cooperation countries and low- and middle-income economies, although the relationship with carbon intensity was not significant. The results suggest that values-based finance may have a distinctive role in adaptation and resilience, especially in countries with limited fiscal and institutional capacity.

Parallel Sessions, Track E: AI, Data and Digital Tools in Just Transition Governance

Tobias Schimanski

University of Zurich and ETH Zurich

AI and transition-plan analysis

Tobias Schimanski showed how AI can analyse climate disclosures and transition plans. He presented a human-checked retrieval-augmented workflow using indicators and separate validation and test sets. The reported accuracy was high but imperfect, and he cautioned that fixed indicators can privilege what is easiest to disclose. A second example used several language models to debate whether climate claims were true, improving verification over a single baseline at substantial computational cost. His practical conclusion was to keep experts in the loop, validate outputs and use AI for partial rather than unquestioned automation.

Dr Anne Sietsma and Kalyan Dutia

Climate Policy Radar

Building justice classifiers for global climate policy

Anne Sietsma and Kalyan Dutia described Climate Policy Radar's human-led and auditable pipeline for analysing more than 35,000 climate-policy documents. Expert-validated topics and a knowledge graph are used to define concepts before language-model outputs are distilled into smaller classifiers. The resulting justice classifiers distinguish generic, procedural and distributive justice across a large corpus. They reported that the smaller models retained most of the performance of much larger reasoning models, while being easier to inspect and run. A particularly useful point was the care taken with contested categories, and the reminder that the tool cannot by itself distinguish an aspirational statement from a firm commitment.

Closing Day One

The day concluded with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the European Center of Just Transition Research and Impact-Driven Transfer at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and Durham's Centre for Sustainable Development Law and Policy. Petra Minnerop and Christian Tietje then closed the formal programme, before the conference continued with a drinks reception.

Dr Carsten Meyer

Department of Biosciences, Durham University

Problems in Interdisciplinary Models Usable for Just Transition Research

Carsten Meyer presented on the reliability problems that arise when models from different disciplines are coupled. Coupling turns the output of one model into the input of another, so flawed assumptions can compound and the domains in which each component is valid can be lost. He also discussed sparse observations, hidden uncertainty in gridded datasets, the difference between model intercomparison and validation, and the tendency to add complexity without checking whether it improves fitness for purpose. The final part of the presentation focused on practical conditions for better modelling, including investments in data, theory and validation, shared assumption and metadata standards, longer time horizons for quality assurance, and a balance between models needed for today's policy windows and stronger models for longer-term decisions.

Dr Milad Kazemi, Professor Petra Minnerop, Dr Katalin Sulyok and Professor Camila Caiado

Durham University

Article 6 Readiness Navigator

The closing contribution presented an Article 6 Readiness Navigator combining a seven-section assessment of readiness with a nine-obligation transition-plan view. It links answers to a library of roughly 900 documents and preserves traceability by showing the underlying Party documents and verbatim passages. Reviewers can also override a status with a reason and export the result. The presentation also included a warning about carbon credits, as over-crediting, weak additionality and the limits of avoided emissions create continuing environmental and litigation risks. The tool is consequently framed as decision support, not a substitute for expert judgement or the best available science.

The Article 6 Readiness Navigator was an output of the ELEVATE-ProClima Project.

3.2 Day Two: 11 September 2026 Opening of Day Two

The second day began with a plenary on the links between climate data and climate justice. The programme then moved between climate attribution, human rights, legal duties, local experience and practical delivery. The parallel sessions showed how different forms of evidence and knowledge shape the design of a just transition.

Plenary: From Climate Data to Climate Justice

Professor Ilan Noy

Victoria University of Wellington and Gran Sasso Science Institute

Who bears the climate-change-attributable impacts of extreme weather, and who may pay for it?

Ilan Noy examined how much damage from extreme weather can be attributed to climate change. He showed applications of attribution methods to global damages, flooding from Hurricane Harvey and indirect costs. He also linked the work to future projections and to the question of when evidence can support liability for climate-related harm.

Dr Laure de Preux

Imperial College Business School

From climate policy to climate justice: Who benefits from emissions reductions?

Laure de Preux examined who benefits from emissions reductions. Her work joined facility-level emissions with atmospheric transport and health data. She showed that carbon policies can also change local co-pollutants and health burdens, and that reductions are uneven across borders and communities. The China example illustrated how local air-quality and economic benefits can help build support for rapid deployment.

Dr Angel Hsu

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Can We Trust AI for Climate Action? Evidence, Integrity, and the Net-Zero Transition

Angel Hsu asked whether generative AI can be trusted for climate action. She focused on fabricated information, unreliable sources, plausible but unsupported sustainability claims and bias in the data used by AI systems. She also noted the energy, water and land demands of data centres. AI therefore appears both as a possible tool for climate work and as a source of new environmental pressure.



Professor Darren McCauley

Newcastle University

Unifying Dimensions of Just Transitions

Darren McCauley argued that just-transition policy should not treat distributional, procedural, recognition and restorative justice as separate issues. Using Bulgaria and the EU Just Transition Fund, he showed how legal and policy frameworks distribute resources, structure participation, recognise affected groups and respond to past harm.

Morning Keynote: Human Rights and Rights of Nature in the Just Transition

Professor Veronika Fikfak

University College London and UCL Institute for Human Rights

Just Transition and Compliance Minimalism: Lessons from Human Rights Cases

Veronika Fikfak compared just-transition commitments with human-rights compliance. Drawing on more than 25,000 European Court of Human Rights judgments and six years of fieldwork, she argued that implementation depends on internal state structures, learning between jurisdictions and the quality of remedies. She used the term compliance minimalism for measures that satisfy formal requirements without addressing underlying problems. Her proposed response was to assign responsibility clearly, keep a shared record of effective and ineffective measures and review progress regularly.

Parallel Sessions, Track F: What Makes Transitions ‘Just’?

PD Dr Katrin Seidel
European Center of Just Transition Research and Impact-Driven Transfer, Martin Luther University

Rethinking Climate Responsibility as Human Duty for Just Transition: Lessons from the African Banjul Charter

Katrin Seidel argued that climate responsibility should be treated as a legal duty rather than only a financing target. She linked historical emissions and common but differentiated responsibilities to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, especially its environmental rights and duties. The proposed framework would use regional and domestic legal mechanisms to make climate finance, technology transfer and reparative obligations more enforceable.

Ebru Metin
Tallinn University of Technology

Whose Knowledge Counts? Epistemic Justice and the Sensing Layer in Just Transition Governance

Ebru Metin examined whose knowledge enters transition governance. Using Estonia’s Ida-Virumaa oil-shale transition as an example, she showed that surveys and consultations can still leave workers’ views indirect, passive or filtered through formal requirements. Her legal-design approach maps how knowledge moves from voice to decision and identifies where local, experiential and Indigenous knowledge can be lost.

Professor Kim Schumacher
Kyushu University and Tokyo Institute of Technology, presenting online from Japan

AI and greenwashing, how next-generation algorithms are changing sustainable finance

Kim Schumacher discussed how AI is changing sustainable finance and the risks of greenwashing. The presentation considered how algorithms and improved data might help assess environmental claims, while also creating new ways for misleading claims to spread. It also raised the role of universities and science in developing integrity standards.



Lena Helińska
Jagiellonian University

Can transitions be objectively just? Indicator-based frameworks in the light of plural narratives

Lena Helińska questioned whether a just transition can be judged objectively through indicators. She compared the need for comparable data with the need to account for local context. Her proposal combined a small core of indicators with wider qualitative assessments that can show trade-offs and threats to the goals being measured.

Parallel Sessions, Track G: Places and Knowledge in Just Transitions

Alba Pérez Victorio
European University Institute

The governance of place in EU wind energy development

Alba Pérez Victorio treated wind energy as a socio-spatial process rather than a uniform technology. She examined how wind becomes a resource, how expert and local knowledge compete and how EU law allocates authority over places. A place-based approach could help address tensions between EU renewable-energy goals and local interests that appear in planning disputes and litigation.

Dr Rebecca Clube
University College London

Land Governance for Mining Transitions in Low and Middle Income Countries

Rebecca Clube examined land governance around mining transitions in Zambia. The research combined legal and policy analysis with interviews and community workshops. It found tensions between customary and state land, poor coordination between authorities, insecurity where customary land is undocumented and no legal requirement for benefit sharing. These problems can leave communities exposed to displacement, pollution and loss of livelihoods even where mining creates national economic benefits.

Mônica Faria Baptista Faria
University of Coimbra

Mining in the Legal Amazon: Proposals to Achieve a Just Transition for Indigenous Peoples of Brazil

Mônica Faria Baptista Faria examined mining for critical and strategic minerals in the Legal Amazon. She described the overlap between mineral reserves and Indigenous territories, constitutional protections for Indigenous lands and recent changes to environmental licensing. The presentation also discussed a recent Brazilian Supreme Court decision and the risks of allowing mining policy to move ahead without broad consultation with Indigenous peoples.

Dr Jonathan David Smith
Universitas Gadjah Mada and University of Leeds

Why some energy transitions increase polarization: geothermal energy developments in Indonesia

Jonathan David Smith discussed geothermal development in Indonesia using data collected with communities at 14 sites. He argued that opposition to renewable energy can reflect real disagreements about justice and local futures, not simply misinformation. Top-down mitigation strategies can increase polarisation, while collaborative approaches and open deliberation can reduce it.



Parallel Sessions, Track H: Agents in the Delivery of a Just Transition

Rachel Somerville

Newcastle City Council

A Just Transition from a Local Authority Context: Newcastle City Council's perspective

Rachel Somerville described Newcastle City Council's work on a local just transition. Examples included housing retrofit, community engagement, apprenticeships, green careers and links between residents and local employers. The presentation defined success through both lower emissions and improvements in energy efficiency, fuel poverty, health, jobs and resilience.

Dr Jillian Schacher

University of Leeds and Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission

The Good Futures Framework: A practical tool to integrate Just Transitions into local and regional policymaking

Jillian Schacher presented the Good Futures Framework, a tool developed with more than 150 policymakers, researchers, businesses, workers and community leaders in Yorkshire and the Humber. The framework gives local authorities a flexible way to test plans against principles such as place, inclusion, jobs, climate ambition and future generations. It was tested with Leeds City Council and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and the presentation included lessons from what worked and what did not.

Dr Philippa Hammond

Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australia

Building living roadmaps for transition using a place-based participatory systems approach

Philippa Hammond presented a participatory systems approach for regional energy transitions in Australia. The work maps interactions between sectors, resources, infrastructure, skills and community support, then uses scenarios to explore possible pathways. A Tamar Valley case study showed how the approach can support coordination across industry, government and communities. She also described practical barriers, including limited resources and the unclear role of regional institutions.

Dr Maja Pupovac

Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade

A Future without Guarantees: Workers' Agency under Prolonged Uncertainty in Southeast European Coal Regions

Maja Pupovac examined how prolonged uncertainty affects coal workers in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia. Survey and focus-group evidence showed that unclear timelines and weak trust lead workers to protect current jobs, wait for clearer decisions and demand guarantees before retraining or accepting new work. The presentation treated these responses as a rational reaction to uncertain transition plans rather than simple opposition to decarbonisation.



Plenary Discussion: Towards a Just Transition Roadmap

Professor Petra Minnerop chaired the final session, that brought together Professor Veronika Fikfak, Professor Lorenzo Cotula and Professor Glenn McGregor for a discussion of possible elements of a just-transition roadmap. The panel linked legal responsibility and human rights with place, climate science and the practical delivery of policy. McGregor also emphasised that planning needs to account for short-term climate variability, including seasonal risks such as heat, drought, flooding and food insecurity.

Closing Remarks and Final Reflections

Professor Petra Minnerop and Professor Christian Tietje closed the conference and reflected on the next steps for the initiative. The second day ended with a focus on moving from broad commitments to procedures, responsibilities and evidence that can support implementation.



4. Cross-Cutting Insights

Across the two days, a small number of themes came up again and again, across disciplines and regions.

The gap between commitment and delivery.

Many speakers pointed to the distance between what transition plans promise and what they deliver. References to workers, vulnerable groups or Indigenous peoples often make little difference to a plan unless they come with targets, budgets, clear responsibilities and regular review (Elia, Fikfak, Seidel). Where accountability mechanisms exist, they may identify harm without being able to secure a remedy (Giacomini).

Participation is not the same as influence.

Speakers from very different fields made this point: van Zeben on power and vulnerability, Whitebrook on Indigenous participation in the Pilbara, Metin on how workers' views are filtered out of consultations in Ida-Virumaa, and Smith on geothermal development in Indonesia. Being invited to take part matters only if it changes who can shape decisions. Opposition to a project can reflect real disagreement about justice and local futures, not simply misinformation.

Costs and benefits fall unevenly.

The effects of decarbonisation differ across places and groups, and often reach beyond national borders or along supply chains. Examples ranged from local air pollution from electricity generation (de Gaulmyn, de Preux), to critical minerals and land (Nguyen-Tien, Clinton, Clube, Faria), to the unpaid and informal labour that sustains lithium and copper supply chains (Vela-Almeida).
Location matters, and carbon pricing alone may not address it.

Uncertainty and time horizons.

Coal workers in Southeast Europe respond to unclear timelines by holding on to current jobs, which is a rational reaction rather than simple opposition (Pupovac). Pension trustees continue to favour short-term performance despite long-term goals (Tilba). Planning also needs to account for short-term climate variability, such as seasonal heat, drought and flooding (McGregor). Credible information about the future is itself part of a just transition.

Evidence, data and tools.

Both days included work on AI, classifiers, indicators and models. These tools can make patterns visible and handle large amounts of information. But their results depend on definitions, assumptions and validation, and they can favour what is easiest to measure or disclose (Schimanski, Sietsma and Dutia, Meyer, Hsu, Helińska). The most convincing examples kept experts in the loop and combined technical analysis with attention to rights, local conditions and the people who live with the results.

Local and regional delivery.

Many transition decisions are made locally. Newcastle City Council, the Good Futures Framework in Yorkshire and the Humber, and CSIRO's living roadmaps in Australia all showed practical ways to test plans against local needs. They also showed the limits that come with scarce resources and unclear institutional roles (Somerville, Schacher, Hammond).

5. Implications for Policy, Practice and Research

5.1 Policy

- Link just transition commitments to targets, budgets, responsible bodies and review dates, so that plans can be assessed. The fifteen benchmark elements proposed by Vincenzo Elia offer one starting point.
- Give affected groups enforceable participation rights and the resources to use them, rather than consultation alone.
- Give workers and communities credible information about timelines early, so they can plan.
- Strengthen remedies where climate finance causes harm, including the powers of independent accountability mechanisms.
- Treat location explicitly in energy and industrial policy, including siting, grid constraints and local pollution, rather than relying on carbon pricing alone.

5.2 Practice

- Local and regional authorities can use existing tools, such as the Good Futures Framework or participatory systems mapping, to test plans against local needs. They need resources and clear roles to do this well.
- Investors can ask concrete, sector-specific questions about community impacts along value chains. Pension trustees need the knowledge and confidence to challenge short-term investment narratives.
- Organisations using AI and data tools should treat them as decision support: validate outputs, keep experts involved and make results traceable to their sources.

5.3 Research

- Invest in shared data, metadata standards and validation practices, especially where models from different disciplines are coupled.
- Combine a small core of comparable indicators with qualitative assessment of local context and trade-offs.
- Look beyond formal, and often male-dominated, jobs in the Global North, and include informal and reproductive labour and communities in the Global South.
- Continue to build interdisciplinary work that connects law, economics, environmental science and data science with practitioners and affected communities.

6. Conclusion



Image above of PD Dr. Katrin Seidel, Team Lead at the Just Transition Center

Acknowledgements

We thank all speakers, chairs, participants, and partners from Durham University and Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg for contributing to our Third Annual International Conference.

"At our second collaborative JTC-CSDLP conference *Just Transitions to a Net-Zero World: Just Transitions in Implementation*, our long-standing academic partnership was vividly illustrated through the collaboration of scholars, judges, policymakers, and practitioners who came together around a shared vision of equitable climate action and just transitions.

Together, we explored how legal, economic, technological and governance frameworks can enhance low-carbon outcomes that are also socio-ecologically fair. We discussed topics such as human rights, socio-technical change, public perception, just finance, transnational value chains, digital tools and community agency, among many others. Throughout the conference, speakers emphasised the importance of local contexts, unequal vulnerabilities, and the fair distribution of costs and benefits.

We celebrate with great enthusiasm the institutionalisation of this long-standing partnership, particularly driven by Professor Petra Minnerop (Durham University) and Professor Christian Tietje (Martin Luther University), through the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* between the two universities. The MoU recognises the continuity of our collaboration and paves the way for more interdisciplinary work. We look forward to scaling up our joint projects, nurturing early-career scholars and continuing to promote critical reflection on *just transitions*.

We warmly thank our colleagues at Durham University for so marvellously organised this inspiring conference in Durham and for their unwavering commitment to helping to turn climate-justice commitments into more tangible just outcomes."

PD Dr. Katrin Seidel, Team Lead at the Just Transition Center
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