



Just Transitions to a Net Zero World

Third International Conference

Theme 1 - Just Transitions to Govern Net Zero Strategies and Sustainable Development

This theme explores the implementation chains that link practices with global climate law and governance regimes. It foregrounds innovative governance choices that can either bridge or widen the gap between just transition discourse and the intertwined social, ecological, and economic practices of net zero pathways. On the one hand, it discusses the role of international law and courts (ICJ, ITLOS and IACtHR) in strengthening climate responsibility claims and challenging diplomatic euphemisms that dilute accountability. It also explores innovative governance approaches that mediate and translate treaty language and COP Decisions into concrete policies at national, sub-national and community levels.

On the other hand, it discusses emerging innovative community-based governance approaches — such as participatory budgeting, co-governance bodies and other locally driven innovations — that empower citizens, indigenous knowledge systems and civil society actors to shape, monitor and enforce climate action. By juxtaposing top-down legal instruments with bottom-up participatory models, this theme seeks to identify pathways that make net zero strategies technically feasible, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable, thereby ensuring that just transition principles genuinely govern the transition to a net zero world.

Theme 2 - Just Transitions: Reality or Utopia?

This theme interrogates whether *Just Transitions* can move beyond rhetorical optimism to become tangible realities, or whether they remain an unattainable utopia. It examines the 'green' veneer that frequently conceals widening and deepening inequality and asks how the material foundations of energy systems can be re-shaped and transformed. By moving beyond the destructive cycles of critical mineral extraction and uncritical techno-optimist narratives that fuel land grabs and human rights violations, the discussion re-imagines supply chain governance. It evaluates a suite of socio-legal instruments (human-rights-based due-diligence obligations, trade clauses to digital traceability tools) and assesses how they can be deployed to re-wire global value chains toward justice rather than exploitation. The theme also explores plural 'alternatives' that centre local knowledges (such as Mutirão, Ubuntu) and 'non-market models' (like cooperatives) as pathways to restructure energy production and distribution.

Ultimately, we seek to operationalise energy sovereignty by addressing how power asymmetries and financial dependencies can be reshaped to ensure a genuinely fair green transition. In doing so, the theme asks how existing material realities of energy systems, supply-chain governance, and structural economic inequalities can be re-wired to produce more equitable futures.



Theme 3 - Just Transitions in Industry and Technology

This theme refers to the process of shifting from fossil-fuel-based production systems towards low-carbon and environmentally beneficial technologies in ways that are economically and socially equitable across regions, workers, and countries. Because technological and industrial transitions create both winners and losers, a just transition requires policies that support affected workers and regions through reskilling, redeployment, and the development of new productive capabilities, thereby mitigating disruption and enabling participation in emerging low-carbon sectors. It also encompasses the global dimensions of industrial change, including the need for equitable and sustainable supply chains for the raw materials underpinning low-carbon technologies. This implies strengthening labour and environmental standards in extraction, ensuring that resource-producing countries capture economic benefits from the transition, and supporting their ability to move into more complex, higher-value activities to avoid new forms of resource dependence or 'resource curse' dynamics.

More broadly, assessing which technologies and industrial pathways are environmentally and socially beneficial requires drawing on diverse forms of knowledge across the climate, ecological, human health and production system dimensions of transition. A just transition recognises the heterogeneous distribution of assets, skills and capabilities across the economy and seeks to manage structural change in ways that promote inclusive and sustainable development.

Theme 4 - Just Transition: For Whom, By Whom, With Whom?

This theme relates to the procedural-participatory dimension of just transitions.

Discourse, planning and implementation must focus not only on outcomes, but also on agency, participation, and knowledge. Who is bringing about the transition? Is it governments, firms, workers, financial actors, or civil society? Who is most affected by it, whether through exposure to climate impacts, economic restructuring, or changing livelihoods? And who may resist it, due to uncertainty, real or perceived losses, or exclusion from decision-making?

Addressing these questions is essential to ensuring that transitions are legitimate, durable, and socially equitable. In particular, those most vulnerable to climate change and to transition-related economic disruption must be actively involved in shaping the pathways and policies that affect them. This requires inclusive democratic processes, meaningful stakeholder engagement across sectors and communities, and effective science communication to support informed participation. A just transition is therefore not only about distributing costs and benefits fairly, but about ensuring that the transition itself is co-designed with those whose futures it will shape.