

Accelerate the Just Transition: the contribution of Further and Higher Education to achieve net zero and climate justice

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(+ feedback from Climate-U)

The argument

Thus far COP26 has ‘codified the emergency’ but actions have been underwhelming. In response, the scale and urgency of the crisis requires that the Just Transition (combined Green and Social transitioning) be accelerated (conceived in this symposium as the ‘race to net zero’). This will not be achieved by new national and global policies alone (important though they are), but by synergistic actions between different societal levels from bottom to top and from local to global. The presentation and paper take a ‘whole system approach’ by exploring the different elements of the Just Transition and building a multi-dimensional ‘Just Transition Social Ecosystem’ model. This conceptual framework is applied to further and higher education in which FHE institutions are seen as key Just Transition actors with fundamental educative and linking roles – local, national and global - to support the acceleration of ecological and societal transitioning. It is also argued that in order to become influential JT connective forces, FHE organisations will first have to reimagine themselves as place-based civic institutions and an active part of a connective global world.

Part 1. Multiple crises and the need for acceleration

The climate emergency & the need for Acceleration

- Greatest **existential threat** facing humanity and biodiversity
- **Intersects** with other global crises – COVID pandemic and growing inequality
- The most socially vulnerable in Global South and in other poor communities already being **disproportionately affected** and will require **protection and support** in a quickening Transition
- Official political response has been **wholly inadequate**, but increasing **radical calls for action** from 'civil society' both UK and globally
- Need to **Accelerate the Transition** informed by a **paradigm shift in thinking** and multi-level model of change – A synergistic **Just Transition Social Ecosystem**

Part 2. Introducing the concepts of the Just Transition and Acceleration

Concept evolution: from the GND to the Just Transition

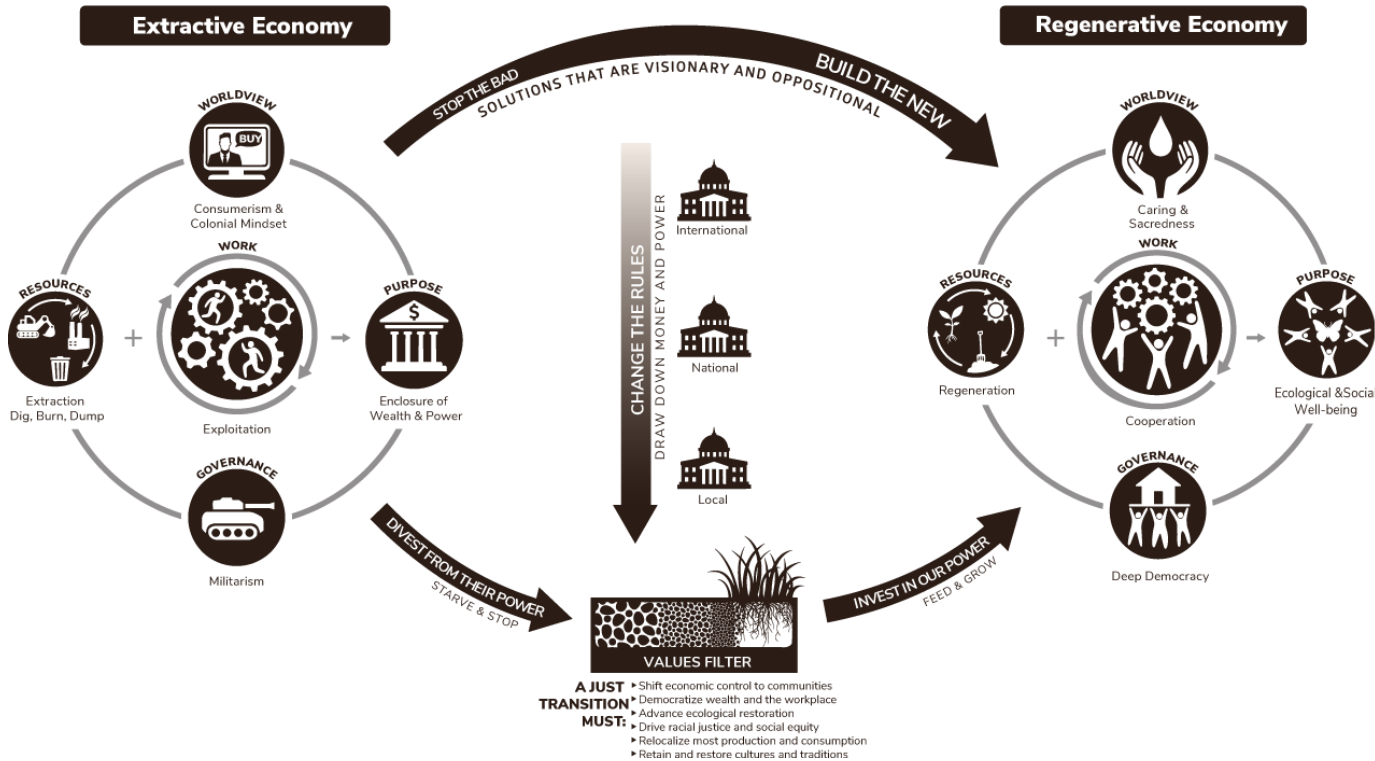
Green New Deal – original concept is rapidly evolving, but here defined as call for public policy to address the climate emergency

Green Transition – societal actions required to achieve the target of carbon net zero by 2050 or earlier

Green Industrial Revolution - refers to a range of specific economic and industrial policies from political parties and governments aimed at supporting the GND and GT

Just Transition – the Green Transition should be accompanied by social justice to help more vulnerable communities make the Green Transition including a ‘double reparation’

The JT as radical transitioning

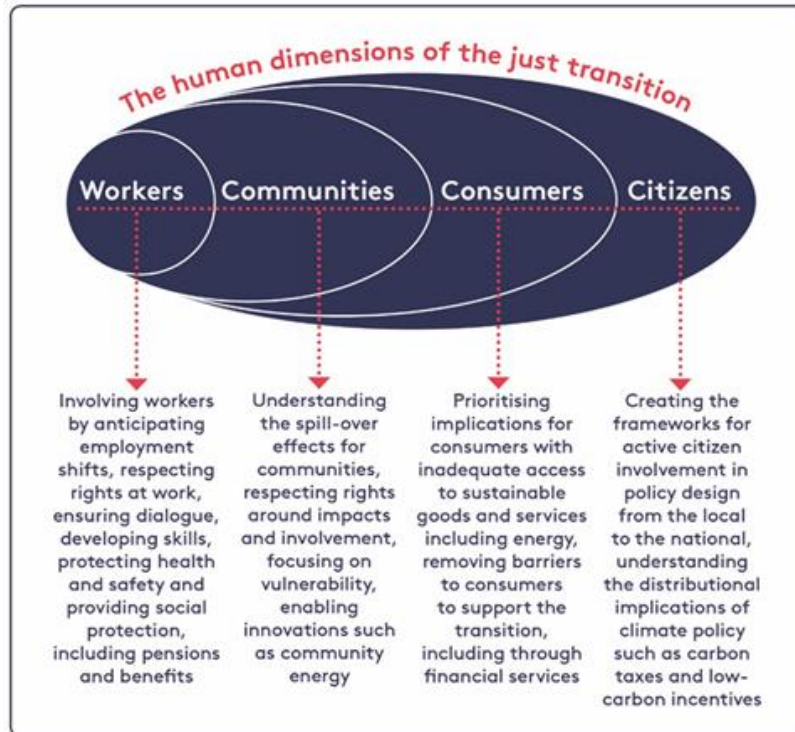


Source: Climate Justice Alliance

Vision and key principles

- From extractive to regenerative economies
- From competition to collaboration
- From political exclusion to deep democracy
- From exploitation to caring
- Reparations to address existing harms to vulnerable communities

JT pragmatism - smart and ethical business practice

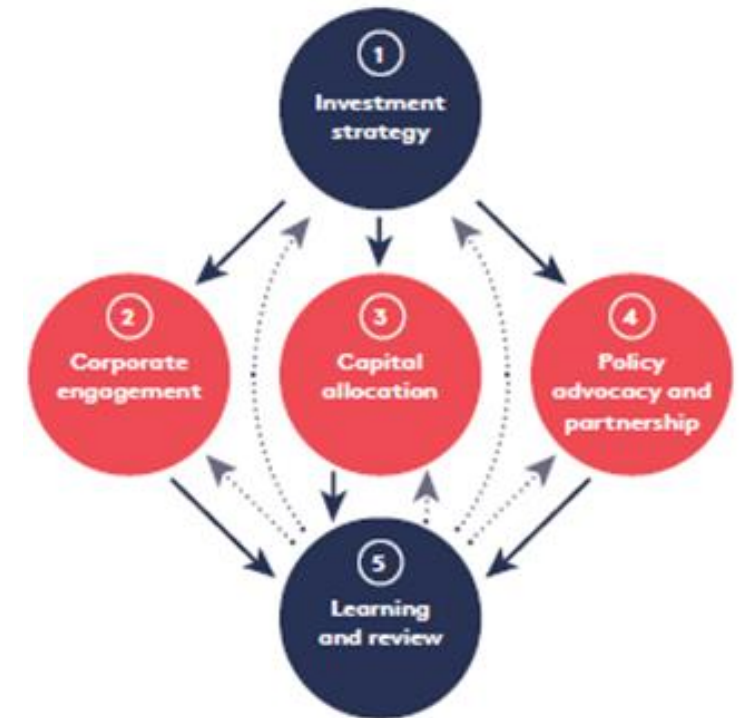


Source: Principles for Responsible Investment (RPI)

The **Inevitable Policy Response (IPR)** is a project which aims to prepare institutional investors for the portfolio risks and opportunities associated with a forecast acceleration of policy responses to climate change.

Highlights a series of **progressive practices for business** as part of the human dimensions of the Just Transition

The **Just Transition** is seen as the smart thing to do as it reduces systemic risk, enhances human capital and strengthens their societal licence to operate.



The JT as a combinational and alliance-based concept

‘A vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. The transition itself must be just and equitable, redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations’

- Should be seen as a **combinational** and **organizing** concept (incorporates GND, GT and GIR) aimed at the multiple intersections of the crisis
- Radical but also **alliance-based** concept capable of different framings and convergences
- The JT has to **crowd-in** the public, private and third sector to gain momentum
- Understanding **different elements of climate justice**, particularly existing harms in Global South and concepts of restoration and reparation
- Importance of **further conceptual understanding of change dynamics** to be applied to different parts of state and civil society in support of **Acceleration**

Accelerationism

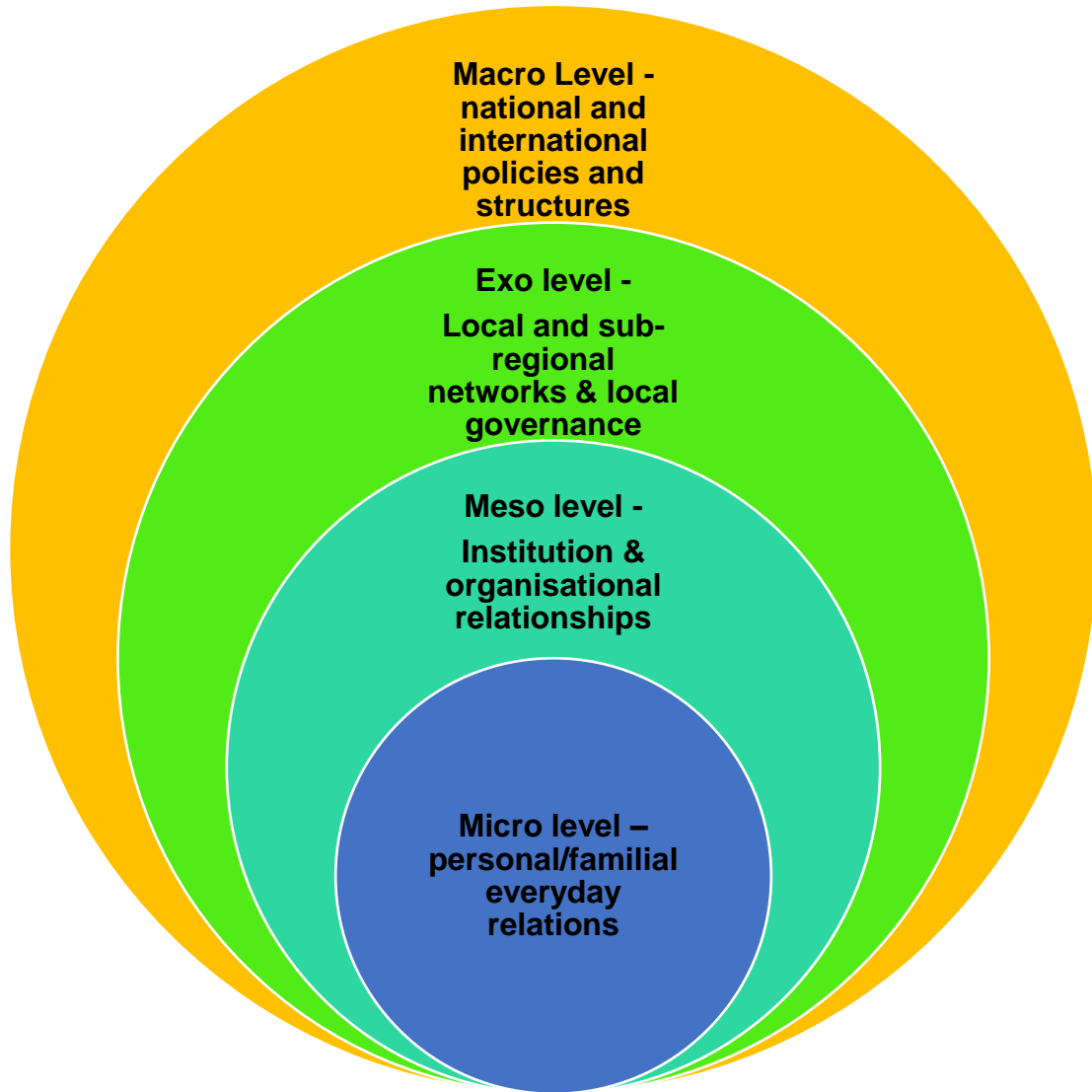
COP26 – fair start but too little too slow - need for Acceleration in scale and velocity of change

Three versions of Acceleration – Reject V1, interest in V2 and elaborate V3

- Version 1. **Techno-capitalist accelerationism** - capitalist speed can generate a global transition towards technological singularity – uncontrollable advance of AI/ML (e.g. Nick Land, 2011)
- Version 2. **Left accelerationism** - Moving technological evolution beyond capitalist constraints with maximal mastery over society and its environment (e.g. Williams and Srnicek, 2013)
- Version 3. **Social ecosystem acceleration** – the synergy of ideas and actions of different layers of society and wider global community and connective factors towards the Just Transition goal

Part 3. A social ecosystem model of the Just Transition to support Acceleration

1. JT multi-level social ecosystem



Micro – JT everyday actions and culture shift – towards a JT ‘good sense’

Meso - JT Organisations – civic anchor institutions
+ civil society organisations

Exo – beyond institutions – the JT local, city and sub-regional landscape of networks and local governance

Macro – JT national, global policies, frameworks and strategic activity

2. JT ecosystem – five connective forces

- *Vision, culture, learning* – unifying processes to connect the different levels – paradigm shift in thinking
- *The role of JT ‘intellectuals’* – bridging actors - individual and collective
- *Global awareness and connectivity* – links with those in the climate front line
- *Socialised advanced technologies* – new contributions of artificial intelligence and machine learning
- *Time* – concepts of ecosystem evolution and acceleration

3. 45-degree politics of the JT: relationships of knowledge and power



Summarising the dynamics of the JT Social Ecosystem

- **Building from the middle** – the key role of middle range meso and exo terrains
- Creating **JT organisations** in the ecosystem middle range
- Constructing **collaborative horizontalities** – alliances of formal organisations and ‘radical civil society’ activism in new networks and democratic innovations local, national and global
- Key connective & mediating role of **JT intellectuals** – from education, trade unions, local government and civil society organisations – working horizontally and vertically (up and down the ecosystem)
- Connecting **collaborative horizontalities & facilitating verticalities** – policy mediation and actions from above and below

***Part 4. The contribution of Further and
Higher Education in an accelerated
Just Transition***

The JT as an inclusive educative project: key principles

- **Inclusion-focus** – supporting agency amongst the most vulnerable and greater democratization in goal setting and decision-making
- **Connective** – key roles for educative organisations in the middle range
- **Collaborative and democratic** – alliance-building activity across the terrains
- **Highly innovative** – going beyond existing boundaries, a paradigm shift in thinking about goals and processes

Areas of JT activity for FHE: expanding the Scottish JT education agenda

1. **Expanding the scope of activity** – relating working, living and learning to support the JT
2. **Beyond the academic/vocational divide** – JT general education + JT vocational activity – new unity
3. **Rethinking skills and LLL** – expanding the concept of skills – caring and empathy – green skills, skills utilisation, skills escalators and citizen pathways for lifelong learning
4. **Becoming JT organisations** – civic anchor institutions and beyond
5. **Building local JT networks** – reaching out to social partners and climate activists
6. **Supporting democratic participation** – notably citizens assemblies
7. **Learning from non-educational contexts**, magnifying and supporting radical civil society
8. **Nurturing JT intellectuals** - connecting the different levels of JT social ecosystem
9. **Developing the Organic Intellect** – combining connective specialisation and shared general intellect – new knowledge and research for the JT
10. Support development of **socialised assistive new technologies** – as part of JT ecosystem
11. **Influencing JT macro policy** - demanding a ‘facilitating vertical’
12. **Acting locally and connecting globally** – quantum leap in thinking about the scope of collaboration

For consideration - action points to establish the JT in FHE

- **Mission review** to become a JT organisation – commitment to the Green Transition and global climate justice
- **Establishing JT criteria** for institutional and network development
- **Review of curriculum and provision** leading to JT innovation plan
- Establishing a **JT research culture**
- **Building local JT networks** and reaching out to new and existing social partners
- Supporting remade and **inclusive local labour markets**
- Contributing to a **Phase 1 local/sub-regional JT plan**
- **Developing human and intellectual capacity** to forge the transition
- Connecting with government and **influencing policy**

Making a compelling vision a rapid reality – some key questions

1. How do we respond to COP26?
2. What other ways can the Just Transition be conceptualised?
3. How do we think about middle range roles – institutions and networks?
4. What are the immediate tasks for FHE in the UK in relation to accelerating the Just Transition?
5. How do we create an inclusive global dimension at the centre of the Just Transition process?