



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

Registration number, Östersjöstiftelsen: 21-PD2-0004

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Project title: Just energy transitions for whom? Exploring the concept of recognition-based justice in the case of the coal phase-out in Poland

1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

First, the results of the analysis demonstrate that diverse actors in Poland and specifically in the Silesian Voivodeship understand just transitions in relation to planned hard coal phase-out in three different ways. The three identified visions of just transitions include understandings of just transitions as (a) social justice for labour in the coal-mining industry and related businesses, (b) a just transformation of the region and (c) an opportunity for systemic change. The relations between these three visions are rather complex. On the one hand, they share some similarities and can be seen as embedded in each other, e.g., all three visions include the ideas that energy transitions will have considerable effects on coal miners and there is a shared view about the importance of processes of transitions organized in dialogue with stakeholders and well-designed plans for transition (important to note though that the accents are set differently in these visions). On the other hand, visions differ in terms of how temporal and material aspects of transitions are addressed (when hard coal phase-out should and will happen and what kind of energy systems are preferable). It is noteworthy that visions of just transitions to an extent can be related to diverse socio-technical imaginaries of energy futures in Poland. The results can be interpreted considering the previous research about just transitions that underlines the role of coalitions of stakeholders created based on a shared vision about a just transitions for successfully implementing transitions in practice. While matters related to procedural justice and inclusion in decision-making over energy transitions may serve as a ground for building a coalition, other aspects may hinder it. The results demonstrate the political nature of just transitions and that it is important to have public discussions about different interpretations of just transitions.

The second important result of the project is a conceptual discussion and suggestions for re-interpretation of justice as recognition in energy justice literature, based on the review of philosophical and political theories of recognition and inspired by the discussions of



environmental justice concept. Recognition-based justice while conceptualized as one of the three tenets of energy justice (the other two are distributional and procedural dimensions of justice) has been studied to a lesser extent than the other two tenets. While Fraser's theory of recognition (recognition as equal standing without cultural domination, disrespect, and non-recognition) has been used in energy justice literature often, other conceptualizations of recognition related to deeper inclusion, self-esteem, respect for identity and culture and the absence of violence (distilled from Young, Honneth and Taylor's theories of recognition and inclusion) deserve greater attention as they can provide relevant analytical frameworks for analyzing socio-cultural dimensions of injustices in energy transitions (there are though several studies that have already used Honneth's theory of recognition).

The third important result of the project is the analysis of the social groups that are less heard or present in the discussions and discourses of just energy transitions and hard coal phase-out. The empirical analysis identifies women working in coal mining industries, women who are partners of coal miners, coal consumers, workers in coal-related businesses, workers in small and medium-sized local businesses, local communities, and society in general as groups that are less heard or visible in the discussions. As these groups may also be affected by hard coal phase-out, their interests and needs should be considered in planning and implementation of just energy transitions.

2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

The project makes empirical and theoretical contribution to the research about just transitions, energy justice literature and literature about energy politics in Poland. While much research about just transitions has concentrated on conceptual discussions about just transitions (Wang & Lo, 2021), the empirical studies of politics of just transitions are still an emerging field of studies. This project contributes to this literature by conducting an empirical study and analyzing visions of just transitions in Poland and specifically in the Silesian Voivodeship. While the conceptual literature about just transitions conceives of just transitions in two different ways, this project demonstrates three visions in the studied context, raising the question of how the third vision can be interpreted and what it means for the conceptual discussion of just transitions. The project also makes an empirical contribution to the energy justice studies by identifying groups that are less heard or visible in discussions in just energy transitions in the studied case. The main theoretical contribution of the project is problematization and discussion of recognition-based justice and



identification of several conceptualizations of recognition, based on political and philosophical theories of recognition, that can be relevant for analysis of (in)justices in the context of energy transitions. The project also attempts to elaborate the concept of intersectional energy justice based on integrating the energy justice concept and intersectionality thinking (work in progress/ the third article from the project).

3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

The project contributes to the studies of energy politics in Poland by focusing specifically on the case of just energy transitions and planned hard coal phase-out. The project contributes to the studies of energy (in)justices in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. The project demonstrates that the studied context is characterized by specific political, social, cultural, and historical factors that may matter for interpretations and implementation of just transitions. Considering that these factors may be to an extent shared by other countries in the region of Central and Eastern Europe, the results of this project may be useful in analyses of just transitions in other countries of the region.

4. New research questions that the project has led to

The project has led to several research questions that can be explored in future research. How conflict and consensus between different visions, narratives, imaginaries of just transitions can be addressed? It is also crucial to study how visions are implemented in practice. While the previous studies argue that transitions are often state-led (Newell & Simms, 2021), the analysis of visions of just transitions in the studied context demonstrates that public authorities at national, regional and local levels may have different interpretations of just transitions, raising the question about how just transitions are governed across multiple levels. Another question is how power relations are affected and potentially re-configured in just energy transitions. It is of great importance to analyze also how citizens that live in places where coal-mining industries play an important role conceive of justice in energy transitions and hard coal phase-out.

References:

- Newell, P., & Simms, A. (2021). How Did We Do That? Histories and Political Economies of Rapid and Just Transitions. *New Political Economy*, 26(6), 907-922.
- Wang, X., & Lo, K. (2021). Just transition: A conceptual review *Energy Research & Social Science* 82, 102291.



5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

Peer-reviewed articles (with open access):

Tarasova, E. (2024). Multiple just transitions? A study of how a just transition is envisioned in Poland. *Energy Policy*, Vol. 194, 114322

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2024.114322>

Tarasova, E. (2024). Rethinking justice as recognition in energy transitions and planned coal phase-out in Poland. *Journal of Energy Research & Social Science*, Vol. 112, 103507

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103507>

Tarasova, E. (under review). Exploring intersectional energy justice based on the case of planned hard coal phaseout in the Silesian Voivodeship in Poland (re-submitted after it got “revise & resubmit” status)

Participation in conferences and workshops:

Tarasova, E. (2023). Exploring the concept of recognition-based justice in the case of coal phase-out in Poland. ESA RN12 mid-term and Energy and society Network 6th international joint conference, Trento, Italy, 6-8 September 2023

Tarasova, E. (2023). On multi-level governance of just transitions in the European context. The GreenDeal-NET Workshop on the European Green Deal and Democracy, ICSTE, Lisbon, 27-28 June 2023 (remote participation)

Tarasova, E. (2023). Intersectional analysis of just transition in Poland. EAN/FAN Workshop: Renewable Energy & Post-Carbon Futures, Lisbon, 15-17 June 2023 (remote participation)

Tarasova, E. (2023). Just transition for whom? The case of coal phase-out in Poland. Nordic STS Conference, Oslo, 7-9 June 2023

Tarasova, E. (2022). Imaginaries of just energy transitions in the Silesian Voivodeship in Poland. International conference organized by The Research Centre for Public Policy and Regulatory Governance at University of Silesia in Katowice with the theme “From the grassroots to policy and back: Putting just transition to practice”, 28 October, 2022

Tarasova, E. (2022). Analyzing policies of just energy transitions: The case of coal phase-out in Poland, SWEPSA Conference, Örebro University, 28-30 September, 2022

Tarasova, E. (2022). Imagining just (and inclusive) transitions: The case of declared coal mining phase-out in Poland. NESS Workshop on Just Transition and the Role of the State, NESS conference, Gothenburg, 7-9 June, 2022

Tarasova, E. (2022). Representations of just energy transitions in Poland, at the conference “The politics of environmental knowledge. Shaping environments through research, art, and activism in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond” organized by Centre for East European and Baltic Studies, Södertörn University, 23-24 May, 2022