

Just food system transition in the context of climate change: tackling inequalities for sustainability

Call for papers

Just transition is gaining increasing scholarly interest that has arisen from the need to consider social justice in climate policies and in systemic transitions (McCauley and Heffron 2018; Morena et al. 2020). Rather than seeing transition plainly as a socio-technical process with fixed climate goals, we should devote more attention to the social inequalities and tensions that emerge or need to be solved on the way.

We call for papers that examine justice issues in transition towards more sustainable food systems.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation in food not only necessitates the development of more sustainable and resource-efficient production methods and technologies, but also the tackling of food waste and the changing of diets (Foley et al. 2011; Springmann et al., 2018). Thus, climate impacts cannot be reduced by simply applying technological solutions in production alone. Cultural values and social practices related to eating need to be considered as well.

Research on food justice has painstakingly shown how our current food systems suffer from deep injustices (e.g., Gilson and Kenehan 2019; Glennie and Alkon 2018; Gottlieb and Joshi 2013). Global food systems have not been able to secure a good nutrition for all, neither a fair distribution of income. While inequalities in livelihoods and nutrition are known to differ significantly across the food systems and between the regions, we still lack understanding on how these disparities link with climate action and sustainability concerns. In just transition, these **distributive matters** require further scholarly attention. For example, how to support the shifts to sustainable diets whilst considering differences in eating practices between various socio-economic groups and across regional culinary traditions and production systems.

Justice questions in food system transition are not reducible to distributive matters only. As transition concerns actions both in the fields and at the dinner tables, cultural values and social practices guiding our various food related activities need to be recognized (Kortetmäki 2019; Loo 2019; Schlosberg 2007). Just transition research needs to ask how to support the capabilities of diverse food system actors, particularly those in the most vulnerable position, to participate in sustainability transition on their own terms. The question concerns also capabilities and equal possibilities to innovate across the food chain and to gain a fair share from the innovations (Timmermann 2019). The insights from capabilities approaches (Schlosberg et al. 2017) and social practice theories (Kaljonen et al. 2019; Huttunen and Oosterveer 2017) can offer fruitful avenues for considering **recognitive justice** as a part of just transition. Food system transition highlights also the recognition of non-human animals, who for now, have been largely invisible in just transition research (Morris et al. 2021).

Just transition is closely linked to **fair procedures in decision-making and participation**. This is what environmental and food justice scholarship has taught us for long (Schlosberg 2007; Gilson and Kenenhan 2019). Food system governance is characterized by a unique interplay between public and private measures and civic actions. How procedural justice can be guaranteed in these different spheres of governance merits further empirical scrutiny. The interconnections between different sectors also call for theoretical reasoning, since in justice theory states and public governance are considered as basic forums for enacting justice and safeguarding democratic and fair decision-making. Furthermore, the procedures for restoration and compensation require further attention (McCauley and Heffron, 2018). What kind of policy instruments are useful and appropriate for compensating or alleviating the harmful impacts of climate change and its mitigation, and when and where should compensation be applied? Further investigation is needed to clarify whether **restorative justice** is a separate dimension of justice or one element in achieving distributive, recognitive and procedural justice in transition.

Food systems function globally and locally at the same time. In just transition, we need to consider impacts that occur both near and far. Justice demands that the rights to food, livelihood opportunities and prospects for distant communities and future generations are respected. But how to balance the tensions between the competing demands? Tensions become especially apparent in trade relations, which calls for novel procedures (Boillat et al., 2020). Incorporation of spatial and temporal dimension into just transition framework is crucial for **global and cosmopolitan justice** (McCauley et al. 2019).

In this thematic call, we open justice questions in food system transition into empirical, theoretical, and normative scrutiny. We seek for empirical contributions that investigate the arising justice issues in various food system contexts, scales and regions.

The contributions may draw from the classical distinction between distributive, recognitive and procedural justice. We want to, however, challenge the scholars to think about how climate change mitigation and adaptation in food system calls for rethinking these dimensions and their mutual relations. What issues emerge as important and do we need to widen our analytical repertoire to novel fronts? Furthermore, which justice questions are specific to food system transition and how could their elaboration help to widen the consideration of justice in sustainability transitions more generally?

The thematic call is linked to [Just food project](#), which examines how to tackle inequalities on our way to low-carbon, sustainable, and healthy food systems. With this thematic call we want to extend the discussion of just food system transition to different contexts and regions around the world and to demonstrate various ways by which inter- and transdisciplinary research can contribute to the understanding of just transition.

If you are interested in participating to the thematic call, please send your abstract (max 250 words) to Minna Kaljonen (firstname.lastname@syke.fi) by 31 March 2021. The authors are then invited to present their first draft of articles in a joint a virtual seminar in June 2021. We collect the contributions together for a Special Issue to be proposed for [Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions](#) (or alternatively to Agriculture and Human Values, Environmental Politics).

Indicative timetable

31 March 2021	Deadline for submission of abstracts
9 April 2021	Acceptance of submissions based on the abstracts
April–June 2021	Proposal for a Special Issue to Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions (or alternatively Agriculture and Human Values, Environmental Politics)
3 & 8 June 2021	Just food system transition, virtual seminar, with keynotes (1 st day) and presentation of first draft of articles (2 nd day)
Oct–Nov 2021	Submission of articles
Oct 2021–Jan 2022	Peer review
Spring 2022	Publication

More information

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