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Unjust energy transition: Vignettes from the COPs, climate finance and a coal hotspot

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ABSTRACT

As we move from dependence on fossil fuels towards zero carbon renewables, 'just transition' promises to leave no one behind. This paper has two objectives. First, it traces the trajectory of justice claims in the lead-up to the just transition agenda. Second, it explores unfolding just transition measures in the climate-vulnerable Global South. To pursue the first objective, I adopt a historical and political approach. I demonstrate the contested nature of environmental and climate justice claims that preceded just transition. Typically led by communities dependent on land, water, and the environmental commons for livelihoods and life, place-based struggles pushed against dispossession by developmental, modernist states and business. From the 1990 s, with the growing imprint of the climate crisis, states and businesses have increasingly entered the climate solutions arena. At multilateral climate fora such as the UN COPs, states, along with businesses, and finance and technology firms, hold the mantle of just transition today. In this upscaled context, justice concerns play out around the distribution of climate finance, especially from the traditionally polluting Global North to the South. Pursuant of the second objective of the research, and drawing on interview-based data, the paper traces the largest climate finance partnership between North and South: coal-dependent Indonesia's Just Energy Transition Partnership. In the shaping of Indonesia's JETP, justice is a tagline. The focus is on energy as investment opportunity—for the scheme's international funders, and the recipient country. The trajectory of justice from ground–up environmental and climate justice struggles to multilateral climate fora and high-profile North-South just transition programmes shows elitization and depoliticization. It is no surprise that a South-based Just Energy Transition Partnership is far from bringing everybody along. Contributing to critical climate and energy studies, the paper spans scale, space, and time in its interrogation of the unjust energy transition.

1. Introduction

At the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP28) in Dubai in November–December 2023, 'Climate Justice Now!' banners were hard to miss. This was also the first COP to institute a comprehensive work programme on just energy transition, along with an annual, high-level ministerial roundtable on just transition. Climate justice and just transition are now routinely articulated together, and even used interchangeably. They are, according to one commentator, the "twins of climate action" (Robins, 2023).

As we move to a seeming consensus on climate justice, which is to be achieved through a just energy transition, this paper interrogates the longer-term politics and practice of 'justice' in this ongoing transition. To do so, in Section 2 I trace grounded, everyday contestations around environmental justice, and their conjoining with demands for climate justice in the face of an advancing climate crisis. Section 3 turns to the institutionalization and elitization of climate justice claims. Throughout this investigation spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, the paper delves into the political implications of these various iterations of justice.

Section 4 traces the rise and rise of the just transition agenda, and climate finance, in elite climate politics. Section 5 then turns to the just transition and finance agenda operationalized in the world's single largest climate finance initiative between the Global North and South: the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs). While JETPs have also been signed between the G7 countries and South Africa, Senegal, and Vietnam, I focus on the biggest such initiative: Indonesia's USD 20 billion JETP, agreed in 2022. Indonesia is the world's largest exporter of coal, with its transition to renewables believed to have planetary implications. I investigate how Indonesia's JETP came about, trace the process of instituting practical 'justice' measures in energy transition projects, and comment on the possible effects of these measures.

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The paper's argument is that while environmental and climate justice can be highly political, just transition is being presented as a necessary and urgent given. Despite many critical voices (Newell & Mulvaney, 2013; Swyngedouw & Ernstson, 2018; Kothari & Bajpai, 2023) positing pluriversal rather than universal climate solutions (Escobar, 2018; Kaul et al, 2022), energy transition is forging ahead as the seemingly obvious course of action for humanity in climate-critical times (Swyngedouw, 2010; Alvarez & Coolsaet, 2020). This forging ahead, despite contestation and even with the papering over of contestation, is anti-political. Anti-politics maintains status quo (Ferguson, 1991; Chhotray, 2011). The paper asserts that just transition as it is envisioned today in dominant discourse, and the institutions that further it, are not predicated on questions of distribution, recognition, or even procedure that challenge power structures and are the building blocks of justice. Instead, energy transition which is supposedly just is being delivered by state and business elites, along with their allies, as a top-down, technocratic, financialized process that reinforces dominance.

In carefully tracing the rendering technical (Li, 2007), and rendering consensual, of the just energy transition, the paper shows the legitimating and depoliticizing work that 'justice' is doing in the energy transition. Justice in this case is performative and is shown to be so across scale. Apart from being a critical tracing of contestations around justice in climate-related fora across scale and time—local, global, and national, through the 20th and 21st centuries—the paper makes a significant contribution in centring the South in its argument. Southern perspectives are under-researched in knowledge-formulation around climate change and energy transition (Baka & Vaishnava, 2020; Wang & Lo, 2021; Boateng, Bloomer & Morrissey, 2023). This is despite 6/7ths of humanity residing in the Global South countries of Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Following Sud and Sanchez-Ancochea (2022), the paper does not limit itself to the geographical boundaries of the formerly colonised Southern world. It extends its argument to Souths within the North, formed through slavery, migration, settler colonialism, and extractivism,[1] and made more precarious under climate crises. Given the size of the South, and its historically and politically formed vulnerability to climate change (Ghosh, 2021), a research agenda focused on the South is imperative, even as we acknowledge the universal depredations of the climate crisis. In the following pages, when I generally refer to the South, I mean the Global South or the majority, postcolonial world covering three continents. When required, I will make specific references to Souths within the North.

The paper speaks to the interdisciplinary social sciences of critical climate studies and critical energy studies. In terms of methodology, the paper is based on qualitative research drawing on primary and secondary sources. The initial sections rely on secondary literature and primary documents from the environmental and climate justice movements, with their demands for justice in grounded contexts. At the opposite end, I closely trace primary sources such as reports and policy documents generated by elite, high-profile, international settings where just transition debates have played out. I focus on annual COP gatherings, which are the supreme decision-making body of the multilateral UNFCCC. While COP meetings are a culmination of preparatory events held throughout the year, it is at COP that some of the most prominent resolutions around climate justice, just transition, and climate finance have been declared, including the JETPs.

The latter part of the paper is largely based on primary research, which was conducted in Indonesia over several months in 2022, around the time that the Indonesian JETP was announced at the G20 summit in Bali, and in 2023, when the JETP's Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan (CIPP) was being drafted in the capital, Jakarta. My qualitative research methods centre on interviews with JETP stakeholders. These include: personnel from energy think tanks and civil society organizations participating in, or observing, the JETP process; government representatives; and energy industry executives and consultants with a stake in the JETP. Members of international and multilateral organizations contributing to Indonesia's JETP CIPP have also been interviewed, along with observers from academia, and media and communications professionals. Over 50 interviews inform this paper. Interviews have been triangulated with documents produced by the Government of Indonesia on energy transition, reports from the Indonesian JETP secretariat, and think-tank and media reports on just transition in the country. Data has been anonymized throughout in keeping with ethical norms and to maintain informant confidentiality.

As the title of the paper suggests, I offer vignettes to trace the unjust energy transition. The vastness of the subject does not allow for a comprehensive picture. Instead, the paper constructs an argument using purposive sampling of cases and data. This is in keeping with the fundamentals of qualitative enquiry that bring together description, context, correlation, explanation, and argument, instead of chasing frequencies of occurrence.

2. From the politics of environmental justice to climate justice

In the jurisprudential canon, justice claims mainly pertain to distribution (Rawls, 1971), recognition (Young, 1990; Fraser, 2003), or procedure. Distribution relates to the fair and equal spread of goods and bads in a society, be they resources and opportunities, or costs, risks, and harms. Recognition goes beyond the fact of maldistribution to acknowledge and address the social, political, economic, or other inequalities that may result in injustice. Procedures such as democratic and participatory decision making could facilitate recognition of inequality or unfairness, and help rectify maldistribution (Schlosberg, 2007). The flip side of justice, i.e. injustice, typically results from unfair, unequal institutions, relations, and processes, which accrete over time to become durable structures. Structures of race, patriarchy, caste, class, and capitalism, or the enduring legacies of colonialism and elite capture of the state, may underlie a group's, region's, or country's unequal access to energy, or their under-capacity or incapacity to deal with climate change (Sultana, 2022; Mikulewicz et al, 2023).

Beyond the esoteric ideas and philosophies of justice, which are not the focus of this paper, history shows us that the route to structural change has typically lain in politics and political struggles for justice. Here, the political is a space of adversariality, where plurality and difference are expressed and contested, often from unequal positions. This adversariality may then be settled, reconciled, negotiated, bargained over, or even left unresolved, through the formal and informal mechanisms of Party and everyday politics (Mouffe, 2005; Kerkvliet, 2009; Sud, 2021). It is through politics that injustice is exposed, contested, and engaged with in big or small ways. This section delves into the grounded politics underlying environmental and climate justice claims in Global South locations. The next section will turn to the upscaling of justice concerns in elite climate and energy transition fora.

Well before just transition became a rallying call internationally, political contestation shaped many movements for environmental justice. These include a range of people's movements for access to land, water, forest commons, clean air, and nature-dependent livelihoods. For instance, village women in India's Himalayan Chipko movement hugged trees granted by the state to commercial loggers in the early 1970s, protecting the forest with their lives (Pathak, 2021). Similarly, the predominantly poor, Black residents of Warren County, North Carolina, agitated for years (1978–82) against a toxic landfill, which trained attention on the link between race and environmental injustice (Burwell & Cole, 2007). For decades, indigenous residents of oil-producing regions like the Niger Delta and Ecuadorian Amazonian basin have

[1] Extractivism refers to activities where the value of the primary products obtained, e.g. minerals or plantation produce, does not include their social or environmental costs. The costs are externalized to residents, with the vast proportion of benefits typically accruing to extracting firms, facilitated by frequently coercive states (Acosta, 2013).

campaigned against collaborations between global oil companies and their governments, which have deprived them of natural resources, dumped pollutants in the air, water, and land, and caused serious health harms (Omotola, 2009; Pellegrini et al, 2020). From their independence struggle in the mid-1940 s to the present, Indonesian forest users, fish-workers, and small agriculturists have fought for access to the forest and for rights over agrarian land, in the face of appropriation by the state and capital for plantation agriculture, logging, mining, infrastructure, and industry (Peluso, Afiff & Fauzi Rachman, 2008).[2]

These environmental struggles—where the environmental and social are deeply intertwined—were necessitated by the 20th-century thrust of industrialization and development, supported by the state. State-led or state-supported heavy industry and mass, scientific agriculture were the hallmarks of modernity, both for the 'developed' Northern world and for the developing, Southern countries of Asia, Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. In the face of lax regulations around pollution, pesticide use, river damming for mass energy production, or deforestation to make way for factories and farms, older users of land, water, and forests fought back for their rights and for justice (Carson, 1962; Dunlap & Mertig, 1991; Pulido, 1996, 2006).

Scholars have differentiated between an environmentalism of the poor, and the environmentalism of the rich (Guha & Martinez Alier, 1997). The former is based in assertions over land, water, forest, and air, linked to health, livelihoods, and survival. This is distinct from, for example, the 20th-century, largely elite, conservation movement across the Global North and South, which tended to compartmentalize nature and wildlife, even from nature-dependent indigenous and forest communities (Kashwan et al, 2021). For the purposes of this argument, my focus is on the struggles of the poor and environmentally dispossessed. It is these struggles for environmental justice that speak viscerally to fundamental, structural questions around distribution, recognition, and procedure linked to access to the environment and to life itself.

Localized, place-based movements of environmental politics and justice are still all around us. They unfold across the globe, especially in marginalized and extracted spaces of the Global South, and Souths within the Global North. Yet a more expansive justice claim is taking over our environmentally precarious, climate-critical present. This is the call for 'climate justice', which is by now ubiquitous, as my reference to 'Climate Justice Now' slogans at a recent COP indicated at the start of this paper. The idea of 'climate justice' may have become part of the furniture of climate conferences. However climate justice as a concept and demand does not have banal origins. It is linked to preceding, and continued, struggles for environmental justice.

As we have seen above, the human–nature relationship is at the heart of struggles for environmental justice. Here, typically, one type of human activity seeks to shape and change the environment, often at the cost of or with opposition from other, less resource-intensive human-environmental complexes. Groups marginalized along axes of caste, class, race, gender, and capitalist and colonial extraction have tended to occupy the latter human-environmental complexes. They are made doubly precarious by climate change (Rice, Long & Levenda, 2022; Khan & Huq, 2023; Stock, 2023). Thus, from the turn of the 21st century, calls for climate justice have been added to those for environmental justice. This is clear in contexts like New Orleans, United States, where the Category 5 Hurricane Katrina in 2005 most affected the socially marginalized who occupied already precarious environments. This was especially so for Black families, and Black women-headed households, who were further discriminated against in post-disaster relief and rehabilitation (Ransby, 2006; McDougall, 2008; Bullard & Wright, 2009).

[2] Twentieth-century environmental politics has precedents in environmental struggles forged around colonial extractivism, and movements of enclosure and land-based dispossession (Thompson, 1963; Neeson, 1993; Atiles-Osoria, 2014; Rangarajan, 2015).

Similarly overlapping vulnerabilities to socio-environmental and climate injustices are evident in communities occupying small islands and low-lying deltaic areas facing sea level rise. This includes the inhabitants of Bangladesh's Char sedimented riverine islands, and their neighbours in India's Sunderbans delta. In the latter, colonial and postcolonial policies have seen socially marginalized groups, predominantly from the Dalit oppressed caste, settled on reclaimed land. These already marginal groups face the increasing furies of nature under climate change, with their agrarian and coastal livelihoods in danger from the advancing sea, salinity ingress, and changed human–animal interactions including with tigers that inhabit the mangrove (Roy, 2020). With climate precarity added to existing social and environmental precarities, these groups ought to be at the forefront of calls for climate justice.

Climate justice claims, often overlapping with those around environmental justice, are being made from the ground up. This can be at sites of climate harms, where distributional, recognitional, or procedural inequities are apparent, such as in post-Katrina New Orleans. At the same time, environmental justice struggles are local. They may be politically aimed at the state or capital, but seek environmental resources like land or water in place. Climate justice claims on the other hand cannot always be localized to place-based contexts where power is exercised and marginalization produced—be it in the Global North or South. Historical polluters, and users with the biggest carbon budgets, tend to be distant from the communities facing climate catastrophes. The calculation of carbon harms, and compensation for these, has thus shifted further up the geographical scale. Climate calculations have typically been done at the scale of the national state, even as the claimants of climate harms may be more local. The upscaling of climate consciousness and climate justice claims, as something to be calculated and deliberated rather than experienced, lived and struggled over, is not accidental, nor without consequence. Tracking this geographic upscaling of climate claims, along with the upscaling of actors intervening in climate questions, tells us a story of the downgrading of justice.

3. The upscaling of climate concerns and the downgrading of justice

The upscaling of climate claims, and their negotiation in the materiality of aggregated atmospheric carbon rather than the specificity of locally experienced nature, is not an accident of history (Swyngedouw, 2010). It can be traced to more statist and capitalist interests entering the climate space. In the following pages, I explore this upscaled space of climate debates and decision making and interrogate its policy and practical effects.

By the 1970s and 1980s, governments could no longer ignore the warnings of scientists that greenhouse gases released by human activities were contributing to global climate change. In addition to national climate action and policy initiated by governments (Andonova, Hale & Roger, 2017), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was set up in 1988 by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) at the behest of the UN General Assembly and its member states. Its brief was to comprehensively review the science of climate change. It was also to advise UNEP and governments on the social and economic impacts of climate change and, importantly, on potential response strategies (IPCC, 2024). The IPCC endorsement of the theory of global warming fed into the UNFCCC.

The UNFCCC, which is the framework governing the global response to climate change, was ratified at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992 by over 150 countries and today has 198 country signatories. The UNFCCC notes that "the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries, that per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low and that the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs". The UNFCCC acknowledges "the global nature of climate change", requiring

"the widest possible cooperation by all countries", while emphasizing the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" and countries' "respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions" (United Nations, 1992).

Among the countries signing up to the UNFCCC was the United States, the world's largest historical polluter and economy. The language of 'developed' and 'developing' countries adopted at the UNFCCC COPs approximates to the Global North and South deployed in this paper. When directly quoting climate negotiations and documents, I retain their language of developed and developing countries. My analysis continues using North and South as a larger historical and political construct, of which development is a part.

At the third COP at Kyoto, Japan, in 1997, the Kyoto Protocol tabled a set of legally binding commitments around tackling climate change. The Kyoto Protocol was negotiated by 200 countries. Most importantly, the Protocol delineated the Annex I countries, also referred to as developed country parties. Under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries were responsible for reducing their overall emissions of greenhouse gases by at least five per cent below 1990 levels in the commitment period 2008–12 (United Nations, 1997). Forty-three countries of North America and Europe, and Japan, New Zealand and Australia were categorized as Annex I countries. These included the economies of Eastern Europe and Russia transitioning to capitalist systems, although they were to have some flexibility in meeting emissions reduction targets.

In making common but differentiated responsibilities for climate change mitigation legally binding, the Kyoto Protocol has been regarded as a progressive document. Yet the Protocol was waylaid by US and, later, Canadian withdrawal from it. In 1997, the US Senate unanimously passed the Byrd-Hegel resolution objecting to the Protocol's emissions restrictions placed on Annex 1 countries. The objection related to the 129 'developing country parties'—including large emerging economies like China, India, and Brazil—being exempt. Instead, the US resolution called for "global action" on climate change, seeing exemptions as "environmentally flawed". Further, the Senate strongly believed that the "disparity of treatment" between countries, and "the level of required emission reductions, could result in serious harm to the United States economy, including significant job loss, trade disadvantages, increased energy and consumer costs". The Senate thus resolved to not be a signatory to *any* protocol or agreement within the UNFCCC framework which would not place emissions reduction commitments on developing countries or which would threaten the US economy (Byrd-Hagel Resolution, 1998).

The US withdrawal from the Kyoto agreement, and its effective jeopardizing of progressive, historically and economically differentiated legislation, is not an aberration. The United States is the world's largest user of oil. Fossil fuel interests and linked lobby groups have an outsize influence in US politics. In the 1980s and 1990s, as the scientific evidence for the need for concerted climate action was growing, millions of dollars were being spent to sway politicians and to introduce climate change scepticism in public discourse in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom (McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Lawrence, Pegg & Evans, 2019).

Apart from political derailment, the Kyoto Protocol was framed within a regime of growth, for a climate crisis created by capitalist growth (Moore, 2016; Satgar, 2018). The "need to maintain strong and sustainable economic growth" is also repeated across the UNFCCC Rio document (United Nations, 1992: 12). Taking this forward, the Kyoto Protocol emphasizes the "enhancement of energy efficiency in relevant sectors of the national economy". This could be achieved with "new and renewable forms of energy, of carbon dioxide sequestration technologies and of advanced and innovative environmentally sound technologies" (United Nations, 1997: Article 2). The pursuit of sustainable development that does not compromise national growth is also embedded in subsequent global measures including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet there has been much critical questioning of the idea that growth and development can be sustained without breaching planetary boundaries (Rochette, 2002; Herrera-Rodriguez, 2013; Lautensach & Lautensach, 2013; Hope, 2021).

While sustainable development fronted by the state and, increasingly, by business is at the core of the Rio and Kyoto declarations, justice finds no mention.[3] This does not mean justice disappeared from the COP agenda entirely. Post-Kyoto, as common but differentiated responsibility as a justiciable measure began to recede, developing countries —the Global South—renewed calls for climate justice. When the word 'justice' does make a rare appearance in the copious documentation emanating from COP meetings, the petitioner is typically a state in the Global South. However, such remonstrations incorporate little sense of the politics and structural inequalities that produce injustice, including in-country, at the hands of the state itself.

To elaborate, at the COP immediately after Kyoto, COP4 in Buenos Aires, the Head of Government of the City, Fernando de la Rúa, made a welcome address. He underlined the significance of this COP being held in the Southern hemisphere. He reminded the meeting of the guiding principle of the UNFCCC, on "common but differentiated responsibilities", while emphasizing the importance of countries "not compromising their legitimate development objectives", and "reducing emissions of greenhouse gases". He spoke about "the involvement of the private sector and the transfer of modern technologies" being vital, while underlining that decisions taken at the meeting, which would affect all humanity, must be made with a "sense of equity and justice" (de la Rúa, in UN, 1999, Agenda Item 1(d)).

From an upscaling of climate justice claims at the start of the UNFCCC process, with the state becoming the main repository of such demands, by the 2000 s we witness a descaling. That is, everyone, everywhere is to be involved in tackling climate change, without much sense of subjects and objects in these actions and the scales—local, national, or global—at which they are to operate. Universalization and descaling point to a loss of geography (Hope, 2021), with the victims of resource extractivism and capitalist accumulation over time being pushed out of the picture. The lack of geography, and of defined perpetrator and victim, i.e. the universalization and amorphization of the climate problem, is de-politicizing.

Even as the subjects of climate action are universalized and amorphized at multilateral climate fora like the COPs, the state remains the front line for climate claim making. However, without justiciable and historically corrective climate payments from traditional polluters, from the turn of the century the Southern state has been reduced to a justice petitioner, rather than a rightful justice claimant. Again, the shift from rightful, reparative claimant to beneficiary of voluntary transfers, e.g. loans and grants for irreparable loss and damage or 'just' energy transitions, is a process of depoliticization. We witness the pleading–petitioning in COP proceedings. For instance, in Lima in 2014—the COP preceding Paris 2015—the Lima Call for Climate Action "*urges*

[3] This is a shift from, for example, the first major UN multilateral climate conference at Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. That conference had representation from 113 member states of the UN General Assembly and led to the establishment of the UN Environment Programme. The Stockholm Declaration repeatedly speaks to inter-generational, inter-spatial, and inter-country justice. Its engagement with justice is structural, such as in its pointing to apartheid and racial injustice as barriers to environmental justice. The needs of developing countries are addressed throughout, including in the provision of "financial and technological assistance as a supplement to… domestic efforts" (Principle 9); reference to better terms of trade for primary commodity producers (Principle 10); and the imperative for "environmental policies of all States" to "not adversely affect the present or future development potential of developing countries" (Principle 11). The Stockholm Declaration may be considered idealistic. It was also largely insulated from the economic pressures and lobbies that subsequent, higher-stakes processes at Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Paris may have faced. However, the Stockholm declaration sets out a multilateral vision that has been consciously set aside in more recent decades (UN, 1972).

developed country Parties to provide and mobilize enhanced financial support to developing country Parties for ambitious mitigation and adaptation actions, especially to Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change" (UN, 2014: Point 4, emphasis in original).

The intensive, extractivist, carbon-fuelled model of development, established during the industrial revolution in Europe and adopted by modernizing states and economies across the world by the 20th century, rooted the climate crisis. It is this climate crisis that, by the end of the 20th century, states (and their private sector partners, technocrats, and others) were starting to address. Despite the contradictions of the state as perpetrator of unjust environmental harms locally, and claimant of climate justice internationally, it is important to note the multi-dimensionality of the state as an entity (Nettl, 1968; Abrams, 1988; Jayal, 2001; Sud, 2012).

Even as it was extractivist and developmental, the 20th-century state could also be a welfare state that alleviated poverty and brought about pro-people environmental legislation and practices in notable cases, often in response to popular pressure (Kashwan, 2017; Routledge, Cumbers & Derickson, 2018). Climate politics, including from below, could have worked with and on this more aspired-for state, in a reparative framing of climate justice. That is, had richer Northern countries been legally compelled to make justiciable, tax-like payments to Southern countries, in many Southern contexts this would have left a largely elected and therefore accountable, if flawed, institution in charge of climate action.

What we have instead, in the current phase of climate action, is universal technicalization and financialization of the climate agenda. Propelling this technicalization and financialization of climate solutions is the cult-ish pursuit of a 'just transition'.

4. Conditional, financialized, 'just' transition

As indicated above, justice had receded from the multilateral, global climate agenda through the COP process. The word is largely absent from COP proceedings in any meaningful sense, at least till 2015. The Paris COP21 in 2015 is considered "historic" (UN, 2015a). In a nod to all parties, while holding none to account, the Paris Agreement notes climate change as a "common concern of humankind", while "acknowledging the specific needs and concerns of developing countr [ies]" (UN, 2015b). The Agreement hinges on a system of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for tackling climate change. Here, *all* countries propose their contributions to address climate change, as opposed to having these set for specific historic polluters, as at Kyoto. There is no clear mechanism for accountability regarding the meeting of NDCs, though the Paris Agreement commits to five-yearly stocktakes.[4]

On the question of justice, the Paris Agreement—similarly to the COPs immediately preceding it—continues urging (not compelling) developed countries to "enhance the provision of finance… to enable… action by developing country Parties" (UN, 2015b). Interestingly, as is also apparent in preceding COPs, developing countries are increasingly split into categories like 'least developed countries', 'small island developing States', and, most problematically, the entire continent of Africa. At negotiations around the Kyoto Protocol, historical polluters legitimately pointed to the heterogeneity of developing countries. Splitting the South into small island developing states and such like speaks to that issue, but homogenizing all of Africa—with highly diverse countries with different trajectories of politics and economy—does not. Politically speaking, this splintering of the South in keystone compacts such as the Paris Agreement undermines the South's bargaining ability and goes against the potential for collective politics.

As states, especially Southern states, are selectively heterogenized in the COP process, a wider range of actors has been formally invited into the COP framework as non-Party stakeholders. As we have seen from the start of the COP process, economic lobbies have been able to influence the COPs and various state actors within them. Around the Paris process, and gathering pace after it, non-Party stakeholders have been "mobilized" for "stronger and more ambitious climate action" (UN, 2015b). In formal terms, the Paris Agreement includes non-Party stakeholders such as "civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities, local communities and indigenous peoples" (UN, 2015b).

After the COP process largely ignored grassroots action around environmental and climate justice, which has often been led by indigenous communities, the 2015 COP was finally recognizing "the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change" (UN, 2015b). However, indigenous peoples' organizations are not the non-Party stakeholders central to global climate discussions today. These organizations have continued to rally outside the COP process, and in grassroots movements, as they are often critical of the COPs' takeover by the larger forces of the state and capital (Bali Principles of Climate Justice, International Climate Justice Network, 2002; The People's COP, 2022).

The non-Party stakeholders who have seen a rise in influence on the national, multilateral, and global stage are private technology and energy companies, financial institutions, and related consultancy organizations. Alongside the increasing prominence of these actors, renewable energy has taken centre stage in the climate agenda. Crucially, support from the Global North to South is now reimagined in this emergent idiom of finance and technology flows, mobilized for the enablement of energy transition. The Paris Agreement thus identifies "the urgent need to enhance the provision of finance, technology and capacity-building support by developed country Parties, in a predictable manner, to… developing country Parties". It asserts "the need to promote universal access to sustainable energy in developing countries, in particular in Africa, through the enhanced deployment of renewable energy" (UN, 2015b).

Reflecting the changed nature of North–South climate finance between the Kyoto and Paris Agreements, we see a shift from obligatory payments for historical wrongs to conditional, non-mandated, non-transparent payments. For instance, the Paris Agreement "recognises the importance of adequate and predictable financial resources, including for results-based payments, as appropriate, for the implementation of policy approaches and positive incentives for reducing emissions" (UN, 2015b). The implication here is of developed countries and multilateral brokers being watchdogs that release climate finance to the Global South on its meeting of certain conditions and policy paths, e.g. around emissions reductions and renewables transition. This is reminiscent of the 'tied aid' that the Global South has been subjected to, and been critical of, for decades (Osei, 2003; Jambadu, Monstadt & Pilo, 2024).

It is in this context of targeted and conditional finance that the Paris Agreement made the now famous—and famously unfulfilled—commitment of "a new collective quantified goal from a floor of USD 100 billion per year" from developed country Parties to developing country Parties (Clark, 2023). The JETPs are one of the most prominent outcomes of this famed, non-justiciable USD 100 billion climate aid package from Global North to South. As we will see, even the money committed to specific

[4] What we know from the first such global stocktake, initiated at the Dubai COP28 in 2023, is grim. There is no penalty for parties overshooting their stated obligations, which are most prominently in the area of carbon emissions (UN, 2023a). There are calls to urgent action in the Dubai stocktake. Yet, commentators have repeatedly warned that even if parties meet their stated NDC obligations by 2030 (though they are on course to overshoot), the earth is set to warm by 2.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. This is despite the stated Paris Agreement goal of "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C" (UN, 2015b; Hua-Ke Chi and Jagnani, 2023). Furthermore, the UN's 2023 Emissions Gap Report shows countries' current policies pointing to a more likely temperature rise of 3 degrees Celsius (UNEP, 2023).

JETPs has not been received and has a tortuous path to realization.

Voluntarily proffered, conditional, top-down finance as represented by the emerging landscape of climate payments can hardly be read through a frame of justice, be it distributive, recognitional, or procedural. At most, the 'justice' in play here is performative. It is this performance of justice that has become etched in the multilateral climate regime, with Southern countries too having to put up annual performances as they demand to see the climate cash already promised to them and as they urge for an expansion of this perpetually unrealized pot. Climate justice as performance reached a sad extreme at COP26 when a minister from the small island state of Tuvalu made an online representation to delegates watching in Glasgow while standing knee-deep in sea water (Guardian, 2021).

Tied to the evolving model of conditional climate finance is a regime of technology "for the implementation of mitigation and adaptation actions" under the Paris Agreement (Article 10). In this general quest for tech-based solutions to the climate crisis is an emphasis on technology development, transfer, and demonstration, with the latter two considered of particular importance to developing countries. Furthermore, the Agreement takes "full account of the specific needs and special situations of the least developed countries with regard to funding and transfer of technologies" (UN, 2015b). Interestingly, the JETPs which resulted from the momentum built at Paris and beyond are not targeted at finance and technology for an energy transition in the least developed countries, as the Paris Agreement urges. Instead, the JETPs target emerging economies. This is because the finance that is to drive technologized climate solutions seeks profit-making arenas. Emerging economies like South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam, which are JETP recipients, provide this fertile ground for landing and growing capital more than other contexts.

It is in the context of a finance and technology turn, encouraged by voluntary, non-justiciable aid transfers from Northern countries and profit-seeking investments from private firms, that we need to read the formalized entry of 'justice' in the language of the Paris Agreement, and in COPs thereafter. 'Justice' makes an appearance in the non-binding agreement documentation of COP21 in Paris, after lengthy discussions of NDCs, finance, and technology. The Parties to the Agreement take "into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities". They then note "the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems… and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and noting the importance for some of the concept of "climate justice", when taking action to address climate change" (UN, 2015b).

We can read some significance into this nod to justice at the tapering end of the Paris documentation. However, the words "for some" when referring to the importance of climate justice are telling. Reading deeply into global climate agreements tells us that even when the word 'climate justice' makes an appearance, it is not really about just and equitable distribution, recognition, or procedure for those most adversely impacted by climate change. The core agenda has pivoted to the making of profit in a climate critical context. Green transition, embellished as a 'just' green transition, offers the best opportunity for realizing this profit-seeking agenda.

Thus, in the Glasgow Climate Pact (UN, 2021), after an obligatory nod to climate justice that is of "importance for some", much more space is devoted to just transition. The latter seems to have been elevated to the practical, do-able, and, importantly, encashable twin to the more pious 'climate justice'. Thus, the Glasgow Pact "calls upon Parties to accelerate the development, deployment and dissemination of technologies, and the adoption of policies, to transition towards low-emission energy systems… while providing targeted support to the poorest and most vulnerable in line with national circumstances and recognizing the need for support towards a just transition". In this shared goal of humanity, the Pact also "recognizes that enhanced support for developing country Parties will allow for higher ambition in their actions" (UN, 2021: IV: 32, 36, 39).

In the rising din of energy transition, which should be 'just' in an ideal world, developed country Parties continue to be "urged" "to provide enhanced support, including through financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building, to assist developing country Parties". The Glasgow Climate Pact also "emphasizes the need to mobilize climate finance from all sources to reach the level needed to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, including significantly increasing support for developing country Parties, beyond USD 100 billion per year". Simultaneously, the Pact "notes with deep regret that the goal of developed country Parties to mobilize jointly 100 billion per year by 2020 in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation has not yet been met" (UN, 2021: V: 40, 43, 45).

In light of performative, perpetual peddling for climate payments as justice between Global North and South, at Glasgow and at the COPs immediately preceding and succeeding it, newer fronts for climate finance have opened up. One of these is for irretrievable loss and damage due to climate change which cannot be mitigated or adapted to. Initial calls for a loss and damage fund were made at the pre-Paris COP at Warsaw and repeated at many subsequent meetings. At COP28 in Dubai, on the first day, the COP President—under pressure for also being the head of a large fossil fuel company—made the grand announcement of operationalizing a Loss and Damage Fund. By the end of the COP, this had commitments worth USD 792 million, from 19 countries. As we have come to expect, the fund's initial norms outline the allocation of funds guided by available evidence, with a base amount allocated to least developed countries and small island developing states. Justice as performance, and conditions and pledges outpacing action, mark the initiation of the Loss and Damage Fund.

Frontlining the UAE Consensus of COP28 is the by-now legitimizing trope of just transition. The Foreword to the Consensus document declares: "The COP28 Action Agenda, centred on fast-tracking a just and orderly energy transition, fixing climate finance, focusing on people, nature, lives and livelihoods, and fostering inclusivity, provided a new path to make a difference". This includes a "transition away from fossil fuels" and the tripling of renewables by 2030. These commitments are underlined in the Just Transition Work Programme and in the assertion that for developing countries "finance and technology are prerequisites for a just energy transition" (UN, 2023b). As I have argued, just transition now acts as a front for the agendas of finance and technology.

That finance, and technology propped up by finance, drive climate decision making should not come as a surprise. From the mid-2000 s and building momentum in the lead-up to Paris 2015, high-profile reports had pointed to the costs of climate change. For instance, the Stern Review (Stern, 2006) commissioned by the UK government had made clear that "the benefits of strong and early action far outweigh the economic costs of not acting". A low-carbon global economy featured centrally in this call to action, with a key role for private business and finance. Similar momentum was built through the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, instituted by several Northern governments including the United Kingdom and Sweden. An observer of this growing momentum around business and finance with its focus on the do-able and profitable energy transition tells us that leading global corporations are convinced that strong climate policy is in the interests of business. He estimates that green and renewable energy policy would create a global market in low-carbon and environmental goods and services, worth USD 5.5 trillion by the time of the Paris Agreement, growing at three per cent a year (Jacobs, 2016).

Having empirically traced the ever-growing role of finance in elite climate politics, and before I turn to the world's largest North–South climate finance initiative, it would be appropriate to take a conceptual pause and ask what explains the continued rise of finance in the climate agenda. It is important to point out that the dominance of finance is relevant not just to the climate context but also to the shaping of the global political economy generally. As the imprint of markets has expanded under globalization, domestic and international financial

transactions have risen exponentially. Epstein (2005) terms this the financialization of the economy, which is "the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of domestic and international economies" from around the last quarter of the 20th century. Observers indicate the expanding financial activity not just of traditional finance actors like banks but also of non-financial firms in, for example, construction and infrastructure. The latter increasingly undertake financial and linked service activities compared with those in the realm of production. For many, financialization stretches well beyond the economy, and encapsulates the increasing role of finance also in our circuits of sociality, civic life, health, and care (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017).

Financialization represents the current stage of capitalism. Within this, scholars are pointing to the financialized energy transition agenda ushering in the latest phase of financialized capitalism (Bracking, 2019; Bridge et al, 2019; Castree & Christophers, 2015). Here, the investment of money to make more money dominates business logic, with businesses working in tandem with facilitative, entrepreneurial states. Bankability of the investment, value to shareholders, and protection from risk, especially in Southern contexts, become paramount (Matthaus & Mehling, 2020; Choi & Laxton, 2023). As finance investments move enthusiastically into the climate space for the realization of (economic) value, states and multilateral institutions like development banks set about guaranteeing the investment for capital (Baker, 2015; Knuth, 2018).

Energy transition, which had moved on from core justice agendas as the previous sections have shown, is now shifting to become primarily a financial product for global capital. Investment for profit and for safeguarding capital, rather than investment for production or for tackling the climate crisis in an equitable and just manner, is the primary motive of the financialized climate solutions space. It is with this background in mind that we can understand the sheer number of financial players in energy transition, and the fantastical figures around realizing this transition. When the JETP, which I turn to next, was first announced at the Glasgow COP in 2021, it was to draw on the USD 100 billion a year promise made by Northern countries as part of the Paris Agreement.

$100 billion a year in climate finance to Southern countries initially seemed quite substantial. We know that that figure has never been realized, with Northern countries accused of shifting existing budgets around, including for development aid, and showcasing that instead as climate finance (Gabbatiss, 2024). But even as USD 100 billion remains largely unfulfilled, including in disbursement via the JETPs, we have new grandiose figures for energy transition-focused climate finance. Estimates for a singular, financialized path to energy transition now reach trillions of dollars (Ghosh & Harihar, 2021; Franz & McNelly, 2024). Even as larger and larger sums are proposed for energy transition, it will be instructive to look at the fate of one such climate finance-backed, energy transition initiative. In order not to lose sight of the aims of this paper and indeed of the 'just' in just transition, it will be crucial to stay focused on the fate of justice in the Just Energy Transition Partnerships. At the same time, it is clear from the start that the JETPs, fronted by states in the Global North and South, overtly push the interests of finance and businesses, both on the lending and receiving side.

5. The Just Energy Transition Partnerships

The JETPs were announced with fanfare at COP26: an opportunity to leapfrog from coal to clean energy (Kramer, 2022). They were considered an innovative model of climate finance, aimed at coal-dependent emerging economies. The first JETP was declared at the Glasgow COP, between the governments of South Africa and France, Germany, the United Kingdom, USA, and the EU—together known as the International Partners Group (IPG). The IPG undertook to mobilize USD 8.5 billion over the initial three to five years to advance the JETP. The JETP was envisioned as a key vehicle to support South Africa's commitment to decarbonizing its coal-dependent economy and its transition to cleaner energy sources. This transition was to be achieved in keeping with the country's domestic policies and its internationally declared NDCs. A Just Energy Transition Investment Plan was to be declared to the IPG within a year of the announcement of the partnership (Gov.uk, 2022a).

Following the JETP with South Africa, at the G20 summit in Bali in 2022 a high-profile announcement was made about a JETP with Indonesia. On the donor side of Indonesia's JETP are co-leads USA[5] and Japan, along with Canada, Denmark, the EU, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, and the United Kingdom. Their initial commitment was of USD 10 billion over a three-to-five-year period. It is not clear how much of this would be loans, and under what conditions, and how much would be grant funding. Matching the public funds would be a further USD 10 billion in private investments, facilitated by the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ).

GFANZ, also announced at the Glasgow COP, is envisioned as the world's largest coalition of financial institutions working towards a net-zero transition by mobilizing private capital. The initial GFANZ working group for the Indonesian JETP was to include Bank of America, Citi, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, Macquarie, MUFG, and Standard Chartered. They would work with JETP partners to "remove barriers" to private finance for energy transition in Indonesia, and "help crowd in private finance to scale" (GFANZ 2022). Major figures from the G7 finance and business sectors, including the former governor of the Bank of England and the CEO of the Bank of America, are on the GFANZ board, indicating the finance power behind just transition. After the Indonesian JETP, two further JETPs have been announced for Vietnam (USD 15.5 billion, 2022), and Senegal (Euro 2.5 billion, 2023).

I have followed the buzz around the Indonesian JETP in the international press and in press releases from Northern, IPG partners. At the G20 summit in Bali, the JETP was announced, tellingly, during the Partnership for global infrastructure and investment (PGII) side event. Following this announcement, one of the IPG partners, the United Kingdom, declared that it "stands ready to support delivery of the partnership… this country-led partnership will help Indonesia pursue an accelerated just energy transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable sources… this transition will not only deliver enhanced climate action, but will help support economic growth, new skilled jobs, reduced pollution, and a resilient, prosperous future for Indonesians" (Gov.uk, 2022b). Soon after, the US Ambassador to Indonesia asserted: "The JETP Secretariat [is] led entirely by Indonesians… foremost, this initiative and its financial mechanisms will be just and fair… Indonesia's ownership of its energy transition is a key component to achieving its goals… to ensure maximum accountability and transparency, the JETP is designed to include civil society organizations and independent subject matter experts so that a wide array of Indonesian perspectives can be considered in every step of the JETP process" (Kim, 2023)

International statements around the JETP emphasize its credentials of Justice (vaguely defined) and its country-led approach which is presented as pointing to a true Partnership between Northern donors, Southern donee countries, and publics within the donee countries, who are to be consulted throughout the process. This Just Partnership is expected to usher in a far-reaching energy transition, which will benefit economy, society, and environment. It is instructive to move from grandstanding press releases and public policy documents to the institutional spaces that are meant to plan and implement the JETP. Here, it is Energy Transition as investment and capital accumulation opportunity that dominates the discourse, with Justice and Partnership barely in the frame.

Looking at the key institutional space of the Jakarta-based JETP Secretariat is illuminating. The Secretariat was set up soon after the

[5] President Trump withdrew the US from the Paris Agreement upon assuming office in January 2025. Withdrawal from the Indonesian JETP is part of this package. From February 2025, Japan and Germany are co-leads of the JETP. As the paper goes on to show, this changes little on the ground.

official JETP announcement. Its Chair was appointed by, reports to, and draws his salary from Indonesia's Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment. There are several ministries under this Coordinating Ministry, including the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Investment, and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The JETP Secretariat is hosted by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. However, my initial enquiries into the JETP process revealed uncertainty about the rest of the institutional mechanism. As one observer from Indonesian civil society, who was approached to join the JETP Secretariat put it, "there is no money".[6] They added that the Northern donors need to see a Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan (CIPP) before releasing any funds. But to draw up the CIPP, the Secretariat needs to function. This was, aptly described, as a "chicken and egg situation", one in which "justice cannot be a priority".[7] In this context, the JETP Secretariat has quickly become dependent on international organizations for funding. To start preparing its CIPP, the Secretariat established four working groups (WGs): on finance, technology, policy, and justice. It then accepted funding from big international organizations for each of the WGs. The International Energy Agency funded the Technical WG, the World Bank funded the Policy WG, the Asian Development Bank supported the Finance WG, and the UN Development Programme headed the Justice WG.

In terms of hiring personnel, it is these large funders and the government via the JETP secretariat which "tightly controlled" who was let into the institution.[8] For instance, for the Justice WG, of the multiple names from Indonesian civil society that were proposed, only one made the cut. This is the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law (ICEL). Besides ICEL, Justice WG members are all from international organizations: World Bank, Asian Development Bank, International Labour Organization, and Germany's main development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Clearly, in the formulation of the JETP's CIPP, we see a country-led approach only in small part. Top personnel, including the Chair, are Indonesian. The role of the Ministry of Investment is evident in key decisions. Beyond this, the stamp of international organizations, including those that directly report to Northern governments, is obvious.

The JETP CIPP, released for public consultation in November 2023, tells us that "the JETP Secretariat also worked closely with non-government stakeholders, including business associations, trade unions, civil society organizations, and environmental think tanks. Throughout the CIPP drafting process, the JETP Secretariat and working groups conducted more than 300 meetings inviting all these stakeholders during the preparation of CIPP" (JETP, 2023). Yet grassroots civil society and community groups fighting displacement for incoming renewables projects that I interviewed in small Indonesian islands had not come across the JETP, nor the concept of 'just transition' (Sud, 2023). Drawing on older traditions of environmental and climate justice—built from the grassroots and staking a claim to justice as a share of the environmental commons—these groups were pushing back against state- and capital-led takeovers of their land, coast, and sea for solar projects.

In the capital Jakarta, more urbane civil society activists were sceptical of the JETP process, pointing to it being "highly selective" in whom it called upon for consultations.[9] Moreover, when the CIPP was uploaded online for public consultation, it was in English. A Bahasa draft was released only four working days before the consultation was set to close, which merely increased the scepticism of observers in environmental civil society and think tanks towards the process (Friends of the Earth, 2023). It is true that the JETP CIPP, which had to be passed by the Government of Indonesia, IPG and GFANZ before being released for public consultation, is a working document. It can have further iterations. However, at this stage, this is a country elite-led process, with dominant elites in Northern governments, international finance, and multilateral organizations calling the shots.

Alongside serious questions around the participatory and partnership aspect of the JETP, we can examine its initial engagement with justice. The word Justice headlines the JETP and is flagged by its foreign donors. Yet what does justice mean in a country-level 'just' energy transition mechanism? As we have witnessed in the words of individuals involved with Indonesia's JETP, existential factors have pushed justice to the side-lines. It has not been a priority area in the formulation of the CIPP. Critical observers of the JETP have noted: "JETP is about justice to investors who provide money to Indonesia. Social justice aspects are not going to be in the Investment Plan. What about communities? Coal dependent communities are not being considered."[10] For another observer whose organization is involved in the formulation of the JETP CIPP, the discussion on justice in the JETP was "like a checklist… it's like what we have in ESG [Environmental, Social and Governance] systems in corporates—check you've done X and Y. There is little interaction with communities or civil society to see what justice means to them." They added that powerful funders within the JETP WGs had made clear that the cost of workers displaced by coal plant shutdowns would not be borne by the JETP. Paraphrasing internal discussions, my informant noted: "Things like reskilling are already being done, or should be done by the government. We will not do it."[11]

Fundamental questions about what justice means, and for whom, are being asked of Indonesia's JETP—both within and outside its institutional spaces. My informants suggest that even within the Justice WG, initial debate was about whom 'justice' in the JETP was aimed at. "Was it eco-centric justice, or anthropocentric justice?" Furthermore, how far would the justice mechanism go? Would justice in the JETP have a "restorative element", compensating for longer-term environmental damage, for example at coal mining sites?[12] These fundamental questions around what justice might mean for a just energy transition are important but they feel like an attempt to reinvent the wheel. With justice having become a performative catch-all on the international stage where the JETPs have been conceived, it is now left to in-country JETP managers to go back to the drawing board. Moreover, even the core debates about 'justice as what, and for whom' which may be taking place within well-meaning spaces of just transition programmes dissipate into little as these programmes take practical shape.

The Just Transition Framework reads as a smooth and impressive consensus—possibly bearing the stamp of international consulting organizations that have had a part in polishing Indonesia's JETP CIPP. The Framework invokes "three foundational concepts that underpin the definition of just transition for Indonesia: (i) human rights, (ii) gender equality and empowerment, and (iii) accountability […] These foundations form the basis for two pillars that constitute the second level of the framework… (1) Leave No One Behind… and (2) Sustainability and Resilience […] The two pillars feed into a set of just transition standards that form the third and final level of the framework…." (JETP, 2023: 111). The nine standards are set out in Fig. 1.

Having introduced the reader to impressive foundational concepts, pillars, and standards that will be used to bring about justice in Indonesia's just energy transition, the JETP policy document washes its hands of needing to institutionalize most of these foundations, pillars, and standards. The CIPP Just Transition chapter lists a range of existing national laws and regulations that already cover all but the last Standard. The document helpfully adds that "lenders (both multilateral development banks… and the private sector) to energy projects in Indonesia often voluntarily adopt additional safeguards that go beyond legal requirements from GoI, and these lenders can mandate

[6] International energy think-tank lead, based in Jakarta, 13 June 2023.
[7] Ibid.
[8] JETP WG member, Jakarta, 20 August 2023.
[9] Energy NGO head, Jakarta, 18 August 2023.
[10] Climate NGO lead, Jakarta, 22 August 2023.
[11] International energy NGO lead, Jakarta, 15 August 2023.
[12] JETP WG member, Jakarta, 20 August 2023.

implementation of these safeguards on projects that they finance" (JETP, 2023: 113). Therefore, Standard 9 is the only part of the Just Transition framework that is "additional over existing safeguards" (JETP, 2023: 113).

In short, justice, which is interpreted in the language of human rights, gender equality, accountability, leaving no one behind, and sustainability and resilience in the JETP CIPP, is already being operationalized in Indonesia through the actions of the government and private investors. Justice in this case is not a politically contested right but a series of standards and safeguards delivered, or to be delivered, by the state and capital. In this expansive interpretation of justice, the JETP assumes that 'standards' pertaining to, for example, labour and working conditions, biodiversity conservation, or displacement and resettlement are already being taken care of. It then stakes a claim to one additional standard of economic diversification and transformation, which will become relevant to the Indonesian context as energy transition proceeds.[13]

How is the additional standard—Standard 9 on economic diversification during just transition—to be put into practice? The CIPP suggests that "deploying the JT framework enables users to analyze and manage the social, economic, and environmental impacts from energy transition investments" (JETP, 2023: 115). Implementation of the JT Framework will occur in two stages: (i) the assessment stage, and (ii) the intervention stage. Assessment involves identifying the multiple impacts of an energy transition project and developing actions to manage these impacts. This is to be done at the project level. The intervention stage can be at project level, as well as at sub-national and national level. At project level, the expectation is for the analysis made at assessment stage to be turned into an actionable plan and put into practice.

At sub-national and national level, the JETP suggests public intervention taking the form of "new policies" or the "expansion of government programs that relate to the just transition" (JETP, 2023: 115). The impression a reader may receive when going through the document is that of well-meaning vagueness, which commits neither private players nor government agencies involved in Just Transition projects to anything. This is underlined on every page of the JETP CIPP, which makes the following disclaimer: "The CIPP is a strategy document that the Government of Indonesia will use as a basis for power sector planning and policymaking as part of the JETP process. It does not constitute a legally binding document" (JETP, 2023: 1-305).

The restricted, non-committal Just Transition framework in a flagship Just Energy Transition Partnership is not speaking to communities that will invariably be affected by, or already are being affected by, energy transition. This includes retrenched coal workers, and those displaced from land and livelihoods by incoming new and renewable energy projects. The JETP starts with the assumption that the needs of these stakeholders in the energy transition are being taken care of via some other agency, whether private or public. This is a classic exercise in deflection. It is not meant to engage with or deliver on the distributive, recognitional or procedural fundamentals of justice. Caginess from funders and energy investors, with little or no commitment to climate justice and a just transition, is further confirmed by JT WG members. Investors tell us that "a Company already has to do ESG certification, which costs USD 150,000. Now for Just Transition certification, do we have to have further costs? Who will make these [energy] investments, apply for loans with these costs?"[14]

In this context of preserving, rather than questioning or dislodging the distribution, recognition, or procedure around how goods and bads in society are allocated, the Just Transition Framework has been reduced to a powerless, non-committal checklist. Even then, in an overarching financialized, capitalist frame of energy transition, which seeks investments for new and renewable energy projects, JT-as-checklist is still an inconvenience. With the JETP more an idea than an actuality at this point, we cannot say whether JT as inconvenience will have to be gone through, or performed, at the side-lines of green energy projects, or whether even the checklist will be put aside.

While Justice in the JETP is very likely to be set aside or reduced to a checklist, the JETP as finance mechanism has its uses. One of the first interventions being discussed with JETP, or JETP-like funding from the Asian Development Bank's Energy Transition Mechanism, is the early closure of the Cirebon coal-fired power plant in Java, Indonesia (Asian Development Bank, 2022). Importantly, the largest stake in Cirebon is of Japan's Marubeni Corp (32.5 per cent), with other partners being from South Korea (Komipo 27.5 per cent and Samtan 20 per cent). Indonesia's politically connected Indika Energy has a stake of 20 per cent in Cirebon Power (Friends of the Earth, 2022). Japan is the lead funder of the JETP. Japan is also the lead funder of ADB's Energy Transition Mechanism. If Cirebon, or Cirebon-like projects, are the first beneficiaries of energy transition schemes in Indonesia, global climate finance is foremost supporting large corporations. This includes large corporations from countries with a direct, vested interest in the shaping of international energy transition and finance schemes. Downstream workers, or those dependent on mining linked to the power plants, are not in the calculations of these 'just' transition programmes. This underlines warnings from the critical literature, as also from my Indonesian interlocutors noted in the preceding pages, that mechanisms like the JETP will bring benefits to investors more than to anyone else.

The JETP as investment opportunity is on the radar of international funders, and Indonesian government and business elites. According to knowledgeable observers, the latter see the JETP as an opportunity for mutual "growth and investment" for donor and donee country. This mutually beneficial opportunity for profit making could also "catalyze energy transition".[15] According to a senior energy policymaker from Indonesia, "the IPG are picky about types of renewable energy… if they want to help us, help us in all areas, like geothermal energy. But they have their own commercial interests to push. It is always like that."[16] On the occasion of a visit to the United States, where he prodded the IPG on its delay in releasing JETP funds, the then Indonesian President Joko Widodo was open about the influence of the commercial interests of the United States and its partners. He spoke of Indonesia's willingness to take these interests into account as Indonesia implemented its energy transition. Referring to the critical mineral nickel, which is essential for electric vehicles and for renewables battery production, he asserted: "There are still other markets, but we want the US market" (Widodo, in the Financial Times, 7 November 2023).

Indonesia is the world's biggest producer of nickel, with current mining and refining in the country dominated by Chinese firms. Even as Indonesia works with Northern countries through the JETP, it has kept its options open with China. As a senior policy official stated openly, "China moves through the Belt and Road Initiative [BRI]… any kind of infrastructure, they give financial support. America does LNG: long negotiation [laughs]. China put money in, real quick."[17] Another think-tank observer is more upfront about the China–US competition over Indonesia's resources, playing out in the guise of these countries funding or aiding Indonesia's energy transition. "China and the US are doing

[13] Here it is important to point to research by Indonesian scholars and activists, which is critical of recent governments that have consistently diluted labour and environmental safeguards in order to attract investment (Wardana, 2021; Safitri, Akbar and Yacub, 2024). Of course, for a tick-box exercise of marking standards en route to energy transition, such critiques are irrelevant. The ostensible existence of a governmentally regulated safeguard apparently frees potential renewables investors from having to consider such inconveniences as labour rights and biodiversity conservation.

[14] WG member, Jakarta, 20 August 2023.

[15] NGO energy policy lead, Jakarta, interviewed online, 21 March 2023.

[16] Interviewed in Jakarta, 22 August 2023.

[17] Policymaker, Jakarta, 22 August 2023.

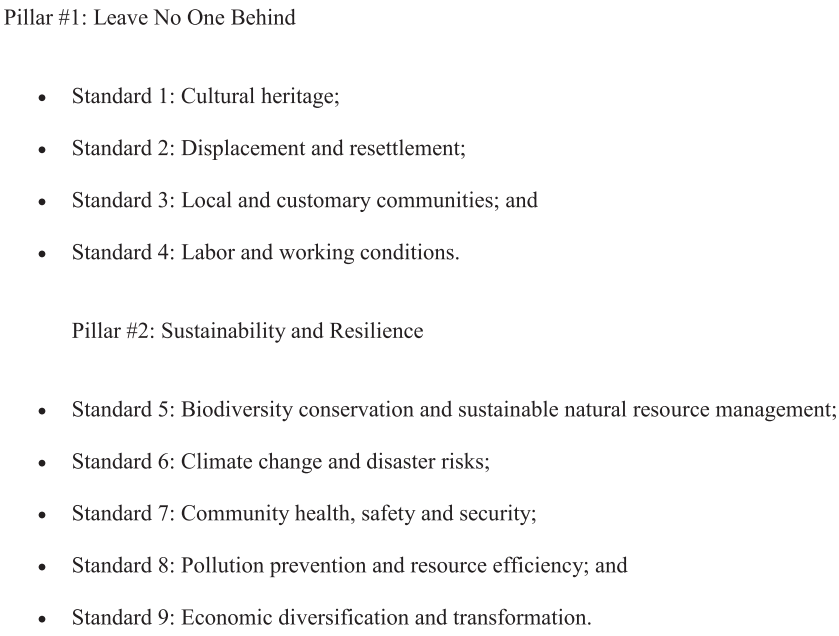

Fig. 1. The Foundational Pillars of Indonesia's Just Transition Framework.
Source: JETP, 2023, 112.

neo-colonialism over energy in Indonesia… America wants control here and there, including in the South China Sea, over our nickel. China is saying if you play this game, we play it better… JETP is peanuts in all this. Most of it is loan, 20 billion dollars over 5 years? Sorry, fuck off guys. 20 billion sounds huge, and G7 and Indonesia needed a big announcement at Bali G20, so JETP came about with a bang. But every year we spend over 30 billion dollars on fuel subsidies. 20 billion is nothing."[18]

In Jakarta's JETP set-up, in its Coordinating Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Investment, and among Indonesia's Northern partners and their competitors such as China, there is intense jockeying over the contours of the energy transition. As this section has demonstrated, this jockeying is over investment in a capitalist, profitable energy transition. If it lives up to its funding promises, the JETP might be a small investment vehicle that both states and capital from North and South can get on board with, as they seek out bigger business opportunities in the energy transition space. The JETP, in this case, will be a foot in the door for financialized capital promoted by Northern countries, with China countering this with its own investments and incentives, for example through the BRI, or funding via the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Climate finance as a means to "crowd in" further investments, as the JETP-linked GFANZ puts it (GFANZ, 2022), is a logical, accompanying step to international deliberations on the climate crisis, such as high-profile COP meetings explored in this paper. In national climate solutions, much like solutions being debated on the international stage, a consensus is being built around reducing carbon with the help of finance and technology. Justice, in international deliberations and in their downstream national avatars, is a smokescreen.

6. Conclusion

At a panel on safeguarding justice in the JETPs held at COP28 in Dubai, the head of Indonesia's JETP Secretariat pointed to the highly "technical" nature of the CIPP document, which even he had not read fully. He also admitted that "we have to accept, there are not so many power for Just Transition yet, in our bag…" [*sic*].[19] As this paper has demonstrated, the technicalized, financialized illegibility of energy transition is not a coincidence. It is part of the capitalist elitization of climate solutions. This elitization is deliberately anti-political. The ability to question and contest the inequitable distribution, recognition, and procedures that foster injustice in our environmental, climate, and energy systems has been systematically undermined in the multilateral climate system from which the JETPs originate. The JETP in Indonesia, downstream from this multilateral climate system, is not meant to have power to make meaningful societal change. At most, it is meant to further the dominance of the already powerful.

The smokescreen of justice in Indonesia's Just Energy Transition Partnership, and in multilateral calls for climate justice and just transition more broadly, is the result of a systematic undermining of justice as a politically contested claim over environmental resources. After documenting communities in the South, and Souths within the North struggling throughout the 20th century against state and capital for access to land, water, clean air, and access to the commons on which their lives and livelihoods depend, the paper traced an upscaling of justice to carbon and financial calculations deliberated at multilateral climate fora from the 1990 s. In this upscaled context, the Southern state has somewhat ironically become climate justice claimant. Contestation has been around which Southern states are a rightful claimant of climate justice, with financial investments from industrialized, traditionally polluting Northern states forming the means of justice delivery.

Justice as international and national-scale reparations may have had potential, especially when tied in with downstream, popular politics around climate change and the environment. However, instead of being connected to populations and communities facing the worst effects of climate change, a business-, finance-, and technology-determined agenda of justice has been institutionalized in dominant international and national climate spaces today. This justice is to be realized by reducing atmospheric carbon and by assisting Southern countries as they attempt this carbon reduction. Justice today is a conjoined twin of

[18] Energy think-tank employee, Jakarta, 17 August 2023.

[19] Head, Indonesia JETP Secretariat, at COP28 Side Event 'Safeguarding the "Just" in Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETP) in South Africa & Indonesia', 3 December 2023, Dubai and online.

transition; the 'just transition' of energy systems will shift humans from dependence on non-renewable energy sources to renewable ones. Transition to green energy, pushed by Northern and Southern states and made possible by the efforts of international finance, business, and technology, is expected to be just and take everyone along. Yet, as the paper has critically traced, the trajectory of justice claims in the environmental and climate context is one of elitization. This trajectory has been about shaking off, rather than bringing along.

Energy transition as not bringing everyone along highlights the world's biggest North-South climate justice partnership programme: the JETPs. That the Indonesian JETP, as shown in this paper, is understood as an investment scheme for making profit on energy transition projects is thus not surprising. At the COP28 forum, mentioned above, where the head of the Indonesian JETP was bemoaning a largely technical scheme with not much power to act, other stakeholders were more outspoken. A consultant, whose large firm is involved in energy transition projects all over the world, questioned the utility of justice in the ongoing energy transition. Articulating the view of others in the room, he asked, "we have always had transitions. Have we always compensated for them?" To this question, he received smiles and nods from others in the room.

Before this consultant spoke, an Indonesian civil society leader had expressed concerns about the JETP that she had heard in Indonesia. These concerns were on the lines of "when horses were replaced by cars, were the horse owners compensated?"[20] At another forum on Climate Justice at the same COP, a consultant and business advisor had commented on the urgency and scale of energy transition, which would simply not allow all justice concerns to be taken on board.[21] Having depoliticized and financialized justice to be a twin of energy transition, we now stand at a point when even justice as smokescreen risks dropping away. State, business, finance, and tech elites across North and South are likely to continue forging partnerships in this sans-pretence, sans-justice energy transition as business opportunity. This, in essence, is our ongoing, unjust energy transition.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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