

A new narrative for a just transition?

15 May 2024

11.30-13.45

Event Report: Launch of the Policy Study “A Positive Narrative for a Just Transition. An approach to a more people-centred communication.”

Introduction

In recent years, climate policy has seen significant advancements. The [European Green Deal](#) initiated by Frans Timmermans and the [Paris Agreement](#) are notable milestones, alongside the 2019 [FEPS event on climate justice](#) in New York. However, these policies have faced [backlash](#), accusing climate policies to play against the social and economic ambitions of the EU.

On 15 May 2024, FEPS and Solidar organized an event to launch the Policy Study "[A Positive Narrative for a Just Transition](#)" to address these challenges and discuss positive narratives for a just transition.

Presentation: A Positive Narrative for a Just Transition

The presentation highlighted the importance of crafting a positive narrative for a just transition, first addressing psychological obstacles to climate communication. For instance, the perceived non-linearity and lack of immediate consequences of climate change often hinder effective communication.

The presentation emphasized showcasing the immediate effects of the climate crisis and positive climate actions to counteract these barriers. It was stated that 70% of EU citizens live in urbanized areas, which creates a disconnect between people and the land that sustains them. To bridge this gap, reinforcing territorial rootedness and focusing on local actions were suggested. Crisis fatigue, resulting from constant exposure to negative or unsettling information, was identified as another hurdle. Therefore, creating a positive narrative for the just transition and envisioning a desirable near future were deemed crucial.

Key Messages and Examples

The presentation provided several key messages and examples to support the positive narrative:

1. *Effective Messengers*: Nurses, for example, who are trusted figures concerned with health, can be effective multipliers for messages about, e.g. the link between health and climate, due to their wide reach.
2. *Communication Strategies based on emotions that connect people with their every day struggles*: Progressives need to create aspirational messages of hope, using a tone of empathy and understanding – instead of only relying on facts and science. The concept of “justice” alone will not suffice as a frame. Everyone is concerned, it’s not something we do for vulnerable groups only, it’s something we do for everyone, for all of us. New narratives for just transition should move away from focusing only on miners to a whole-of-society approach that provides a better quality of life for all.
3. *Immediate Benefits*: Highlight that the effects of a just green transition can already have positive immediate , such as how cycling can improve daily life on an individual level and collectively through better air.
4. *Community Involvement*: Examples like Wuppertal, a German city that subscribed to the “energy community” concept, where citizens directly benefit from investments in renewable energy, and '[Banlieues Climat](#)' demonstrated that just transition does not have to be top-down. Citizens can be concrete actors in the transition.
5. *Global Perspective*: A just transition in the Global North must not indiscriminately exploit the Global South – for raw materials for instance. The transition needs to aim for global equity.
6. *Press and media*: Beyond social media, print media and local community efforts can effectively communicate the just transition message in creative ways.

Positive Communication Framework

A positive communication framework was proposed, focusing on several key areas and highlighting examples of good practices

- **Inequalities and discrimination**: A just transition empowers marginalised communities and puts them in the driver's seat.
- **Decent work**: A just transition can create jobs that are clean and decent, reducing inequalities and makes a better life accessible to all.
- **Education, training and lifelong learning**: A just transition is founded on adequately funded and inclusive education and training systems.
- **Economy & Welfare**: A just transition means moving towards sustainable economies and forging a new social contract rooted in wellbeing and dedicated to serving both people and the planet.

- Energy for buildings and mobility: A just transition delivers renewable, affordable, accessible and secure energy for all, effectively tackling energy and transport poverty.
- Democratic participation: In the face of the climate emergency, people can rediscover their role as active citizens and help shape the green transition.
- Health: What is good for the planet is also good for people.
- Territorial and international justice: Climate action can improve the lives of people all over the world.

Discussion and Strategies

The discussion session explored how to enable people to become messengers for a just green transition. It was acknowledged that creating new narratives is essential, particularly ones that present realistic alternatives to traditional jobs, especially in regions with conventional energy production hubs.

Key strategies discussed included:

- *Simplifying Messages*: Creating clear, hopeful messages like "Yes, we can," focusing on short-term benefits such as better public transport and cheaper energy costs.
- *Local Trust*: Engaging local communities with familiar messengers to build trust toward the just transition.
- *Economic Narrative*: Linking just transition to economic benefits, as the cost of living is a main concern among Europeans.
- *Right Timing*: Ensuring messages arrive at the right time and resonate with grassroots movements and society.
- *Connecting Stakeholders*: Promoting collaboration between policymakers, civil society, and think tanks.
- *Cultural Roots*: Creating narratives rooted in tradition and culture, while addressing the democratic deficit in effective climate action implementation.

Conclusion

The event provided valuable insights into the importance of positive and inclusive narratives for a just transition. By addressing psychological barriers, leveraging trusted messengers, and highlighting immediate benefits, the event laid the groundwork for more effective climate communication. The strategies and frameworks discussed will be instrumental in shaping future policies and initiatives, ensuring that the transition to a sustainable economy is fair and inclusive for all.

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