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RESEARCH INSIGHTS

A PLACE-BASED APPROACH TO MEASURING A JUST TRANSITION: EVIDENCE FROM THE NORTH-EAST OF SCOTLAND

AUTHORS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition to sustainable energy systems necessitates not only technological but also societal transformations. For countries shifting away from fossil fuel production, Just Transition has become a central concept for planning and action. With many countries adopting Just Transition platforms, its operationalisation and measurement pose challenges, largely stemming from a lack of proven methodologies and complexity of social, economic and environmental data, as well as the diversity of stakeholder perspectives and narratives on contested futures. In this paper, we critically review the existing approaches for measuring Just Transition, challenges in indicator selection, implementation, and assessment. This paper presents a novel approach to developing principles for method and indicator selection for place-based measurement of Just Transition. We explore theoretical frameworks guiding indicator selection and the implications of different conceptualisations of Just Transition. We explore a case study of North East of Scotland (Aberdeen and its wider region) hosting the UK's oil and gas industry to illustrate how participatory research can be used to develop a place-based approach to transition measurement, emphasising the importance of community engagement and multi-stakeholder dialogue. Our findings underscore the importance of holistic, context-specific approaches to measuring Just Transition that evaluate jobs and skills, poverty and wellbeing, community revitalisation and participatory democracy.



KEYWORDS

- Just transition
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Indicators
- Community empowerment
- Energy transition

RESEARCH RELEVANCE

- This paper investigates a place-based view of Just Transition (JT) where local stakeholders such as workers, business, government, third-sector and community groups are key to understanding what JT means
- The paper offers a methodological blueprint about how to engage local stakeholders and generate a set of JT measures relevant for a local context.
- A case study of the North-east of Scotland proposes a set of JT indicators around jobs and skills, poverty and wellbeing, community empowerment and participatory democracy.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Shapovalova, D., Bender, K. A., Bone, J., & Potts, T. (2025). A place-based approach to measuring a just transition: Evidence from the north-east of Scotland. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 127, Article 104236.
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"Just Transition policy priorities can only have legitimacy if they have been developed with wide engagement to ensure that a variety of perspectives were considered."

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