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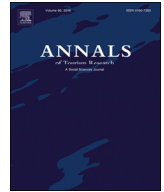
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Research Note

Climate change and tourism transition: From cosmopolitan to local justice

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Introduction

We have now reached a juncture that requires us to move from questioning 'if' to 'how' the tourism transition to net zero should occur. As we consider the how, we also must ask how the transition to a post carbon economy will address social inequalities, job losses, poverty, and tensions that emerge in the process for those that already suffer from the impacts of climate change. The Kyoto Protocol, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Paris Agreement (PA) have all been criticised for not effectively addressing climate justice (Jourdan & Wertin, 2020; von Lucke, 2021). Similarly, an emphasis on technological solutions to achieve net zero does little to address existing inequalities, nor does it recognise the complexity of tourism transition (Higham et al., 2022). Admittedly, justice has not been at the centre of tourism transition research and policies.

UN COP26 acknowledged the impacts of a net zero transition on diverse social groups; a 'just transition' was outlined in the Silesia Declaration in Poland (COP24) (UKCOP26, 2021) and the Glasgow Declaration recognised the risks associated with net-zero for a just and inclusive tourism transition (UNWTO, 2021). Similarly, the International Labour Organisation, together with the European Commission, emphasised the importance of the issue through the 'Just Transition Pavilion' (ILO, 2022). However, the focus is largely on "unequal impacts of climate change on vulnerable destinations/peoples" (Scott & Gössling, 2022a, p. 206) and not the justice issues that will emerge in the net-zero transition process. In addition, justice claims and definitions are culturally biased and therefore it is impossible to agree on a single definition of universal political justice. Examples can be seen when global initiatives such as 100 Resilience Cities (100RS) included environmental justice notions but superficially engaged with the

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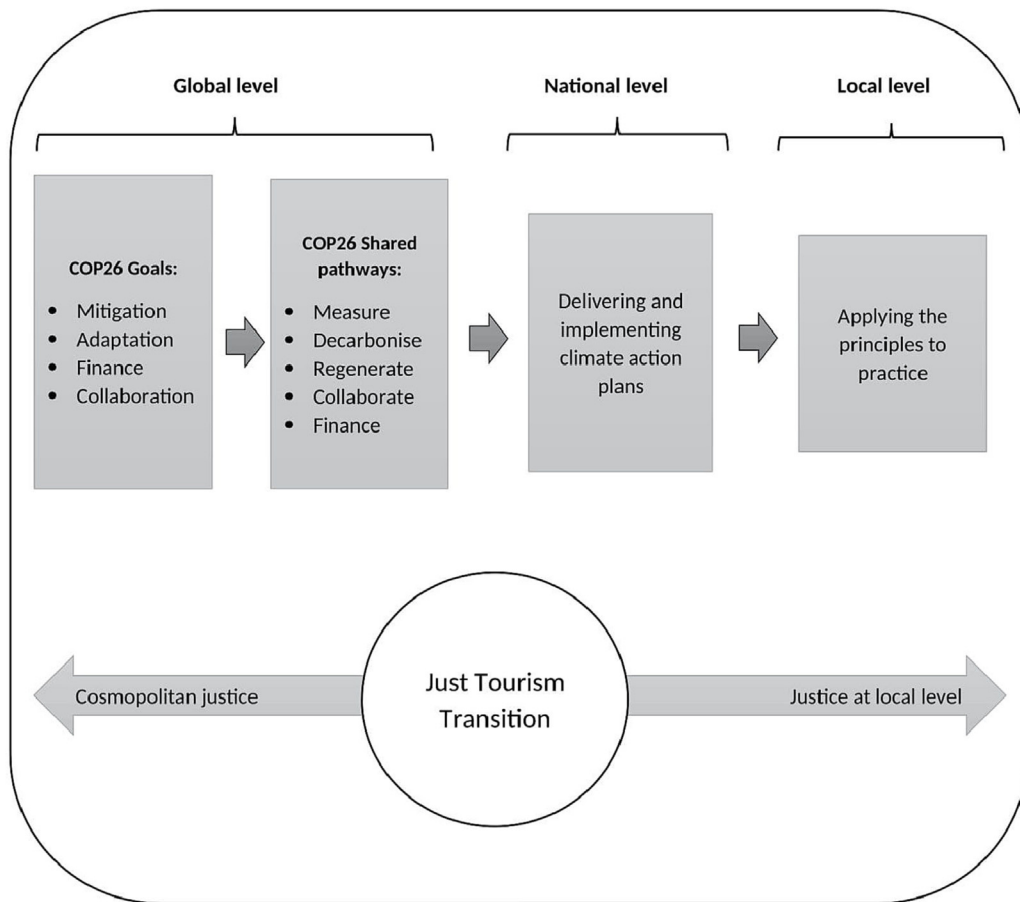


Fig. 1. Just tourism transition to net zero emissions.

justice and equity criteria at the national or city level (Fitzgibbons & Mitchell, 2019). Considering questions of justice in tourism transition is therefore of particular importance when global initiatives will determine pathways, policies, and practices at the national and local levels over the coming decades.

Tourism transition to net zero emissions: global and local perspectives

A whole systems lens reveals the interconnectedness and interdependency of different sectors and nations, and the unintended flow-on consequences of net zero transitions. An example can be seen in the global food production that is responsible for one-quarter of the world's anthropogenic GHG emissions (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). Transition to a low-carbon food system requires a major dietary change by the population to reduce consumption of animal-based food (Kaljonen et al., 2021). Yet this will affect vulnerable distant food producers and farmers who are already facing the negative impacts of climate change in their own country. Similarly, the flight shaming movement encouraging people to stop or significantly reduce air travel will drastically impact many tourism dependent communities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and long-haul developing country destinations (Jourdan & Wertin, 2020). Therefore, the global low carbon transition policies are unlikely to be the magic elixir that will produce a socially just transition. In addition, the majority of transition studies and policies suffer from a positive result bias (Antal et al., 2020) neglecting the social justice issues of environmental governance or climate change mitigation and adaptation actions (Rastegar, 2022). It should also be noted that far too little is known about the impacts of transition on underrepresented and vulnerable groups in tourism communities, particularly when tourism research to date has done little to prepare the sector for the net-zero transition (Scott & Gössling, 2022b).

Moving from a global scale focusing on international relations and institutions to local levels and contexts involving complex relationship, power structures, and agents is a challenging task. For example, while the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) are accepted as the global agenda for environmental governance, many national and local institutions face political power asymmetries in achieving these goals and therefore fail to address socioecological injustice (Rastegar, 2020). Examples of conflicts can be seen when transition agendas for carbon neutrality set at the global and national levels contradict with

communities' interests (Lo, 2021). Such top-down non-participatory approaches have once again resulted in ignoring local knowledge and values, creating distributional injustice, and exacerbating ongoing poverty issues.

Similarly, the urgency for climate action can contradict justice procedural rules as ensuring inclusive decision-making can slow down the process. This has already been seen in the lack of participation and resulting conflicts in calculating emissions and responsibilities of the states, creating a form of 'environmental colonialism' (San Martín & Wood, 2022). The root of these problems can be found in modern western thinking of mechanistic paradigms or even environmental justice that primarily focuses on distributive notions of justice. Such thinking is found to be associated with a) reductionist views that ignore the multidimensionality and interdependency of ecological and social phenomena, b) global cognitive injustice or monopolies of knowledge produced by the North, and c) anthropocentric perspectives or domination of humans over nonhumans (Pope et al., 2021).

While collaboration is included as a shared pathway in tourism climate actions (UNWTO, 2021), there is no evidence or guidelines as to how this will actually contribute to delivering climate action plans. Indeed long term partnerships among stakeholders to guide practitioners has already been identified as missing in climate action efforts (Loehr, 2020). Further, achieving net zero goals requires major technological innovation, social transitions, and radical changes in policy which are unlikely to happen in every destination within the set timeframe. Acknowledging these complexities in low carbon or sustainability transitions, the involvement of all actors at the individual, group and system level, and their willingness for behaviour change, are required for a just transition in the move towards net-zero societies.

Why do we need a 'just tourism transition'?

In the process of transitioning away from fossil fuels, injustice will emerge. To ensure prosperity and wellbeing within a tourism transition framework, it is critical for policymakers and practitioners at global, national, and local levels to broaden their thinking beyond technology-based transitions to include social justice issues. While most adaptation and mitigation strategies focus on more visible economic impacts, climate change negatively affects local communities, their culture, sense of place and identity. Therefore, going through the tourism decarbonisation process requires greater attention to social issues at the destination level (Gössling & Higham, 2020) rather than wealth distribution. Given this, we argue tourism transition should begin with the notions of recognition and procedural justice, not only in research but also in practice. Such an agenda will be fundamental to advance the tourism transition dialogue at local, national, and global levels (Fig. 1). Therefore, within this justice framing, sustainability transition must ensure the fair distribution of costs and benefits, recognising who is affected and how (recognition justice). This is essential to ensure meaningful participation (procedural justice) and address distributive injustice. Therefore, recognition is a precondition for both procedural and distributive justice in a just transition.

Justice at the global level (cosmopolitan justice) should promote policies that encompasses diverse forms of knowledge, values, concerns, and perspectives to address the climate emergency. Without collective knowledge and support, climate action and practice will remain fragmented. Local and Indigenous communities possess knowledge and demonstrate resilience, while scientific knowledge can increase awareness of adaptation and mitigation strategies. Similarly, climate actions such as COP26 and the Tourism Shared Pathways (UNWTO, 2021) initiated at the global level are anticipated to facilitate the transfer of funds, technology and support to the most vulnerable communities, not only to combat climate change but to also enable the transition process. One example is securing a 'loss and damage' fund in the COP27 summit (UN, 2022) to support the victims of climate disasters. Yet the question remains as to who should provide the required finance or how such climate agreements can be implemented in practice.

The concept of a just transition proposed here is closely linked to climate justice which requires not only addressing the impacts of climate change but also avoid creating new issues for vulnerable groups (restorative justice). In climate justice, mechanisms such as Polluter Pays, Fair Division, or the Basic Right models have been introduced for climate action plans and/or to punish the offender. However, a tourism transition should move beyond simply responding to harms by focusing on preventive actions for affected individuals/communities. How this occurs in practice will be critical and correlate to how tourism dependent communities are affected.

Conclusion

This research note aims to highlight questions of justice that are less obvious in discussions of the tourism transition to a zero-carbon economy. We suggest that an epistemic shift is critical in addressing the challenges tourism transition will face over the coming decades. Facing climate change crisis, tourism transition requires a global perspective to acknowledge our interdependency with an understanding of multiple realities of the world for local actions. A net-zero society holds the potential to promote a just and sustainable tourism future. However, a just sustainability transition is necessary to ensure that climate actions are not reinforcing a status quo of domination in which the privileged groups are the main beneficiaries, but to transfer control to community-based organisations to ensure sustainable but also a fair, inclusive and just tourism transition.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103565>.

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Lisa Ruhanen's research areas include sustainable tourism destination policy and planning, climate change and Indigenous tourism.

Raymond Rastegar's research focuses on sustainable tourism development in developing countries with specific interest in local community livelihood, participation, empowerment, and environmental conservation.