

Special Issue of European Journal of Spatial Development

CALL FOR ABSTRACT

Place-based just transition: exploring the link between policies and practices in Southern Europe

GUEST EDITORS

Federica Rotondo
federica.rotondo@polito.it

Francesca Bragaglia
francesca.bragaglia@polito.it

Luca Tricarico
luca.tricarico@ircres.cnr.it

Matteo Zulaniello
matteo.zulianello@rse-web.it

Brief summary

Federica Rotondo (Politecnico di Torino)

Francesca Bragaglia (Politecnico di Torino)

Luca Tricarico (IRCRES, CNR)

Matteo Zulianello (RSE)

The Special Issue “Place-based Just Transition: exploring the link between policies and practices in Southern Europe” for the [European Journal of Spatial Development](#) derives from the workstream developed during the international conference on Smart and Sustainable Planning for Cities and Regions - SSPCR 2022. At this occasion the editors of this Special Issue organized the special session entitled “The territorial dimension of ESG challenges in energy communities and “just” transition practices”. The conference was hosted at the EURAC Research in Bolzano (Italy) from 18th to 22nd July 2022.

The SI "Place-based Just Transition" intends to critically consider local urban planning and policy practices aimed at addressing, in innovative ways, the socio-ecological and energy transition of cities and territories in Southern Europe. The SI aims to distance itself from mainstream approaches linked to economic-financial dynamics and technical dimensions (e.g. Tricarico, 2021), focusing instead on the social impact dimension of the initiatives and their effects in the places they are implemented (Parkhill et al., 2015). The SI is built on the need to bridge the knowledge gap in connecting these aspects, exploring and systematising the broad spectrum of place-based approaches helpful in achieving a "just" energy transition policies and practices. It also enriches current literature focusing on Southern Europe, which stands understudied compared to the wide-ranging discussion on northern European countries.

The hypothesis to be tested is whether place-based energy transition policies and practices can enhance their impact, supporting processes of social innovation (Bragaglia, 2021), cohesion and inclusion (e.g. energy poverty), where the energy dimension is capable of encouraging eco-welfare approaches and local economic development. As main the objectives and outputs of the special issue, we can acknowledge:

- to shed light on good-practice case studies implemented in different contexts and territorial scales in Southern Europe that highlight the importance of social innovations and place-based solutions as well as how they arise explicitly from the needs of the territories in which they are located.
- supporting new tools and analytical lenses for assessing the social impacts and governing the dynamics of managing and/or allocating the economic and environmental benefits generated by place-based energy transition initiatives, re-constructing the social and economic value chains and distinguishing between specific individuals or actors (individual benefits/impacts) and the definition of the particular territorial scale of impact (collective benefits/impacts);
- providing insights of place-based energy transition policies: identifying legal, policy and organisational profiles, distinguishing the relationships between the different actors triggering the development and management of these projects; (including public actors, local organisations, industry, etc.);

Deadlines

Deadline for abstracts submission

10th of March

Notification to authors for accepted abstracts

20th of March

Deadline for full papers submission 1nd of September

all papers will be double-blind reviewed before publication.

The invitation to submit a paper is not a guarantee that the paper will be published

Review process and full papers publication

depending on journal processing

ABSTRACTS SUBMISSION: INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHORS

- 250 words max
- 3 bibliographic references max
- abstracts proposals to be sent to all editors
federica.rotondo@polito.it
francesca.bragaglia@polito.it
luca.tricarico@ircres.cnr.it
matteo.zulianello@rse-web.it

1. FRAMING THE TOPIC

The attention to the academic environment about "transitions" is relatively recent, and its roots can be retraced in the overall debate surrounding the emergence of the sustainable development paradigm that developed from the end of the-1980s (Waas et al., 2011). When it comes to the connotation of the debate, two generations of studies are identifiable in social sciences. These studies deal with sustainable urban transition from the late '90s until nowadays (Luque-Ayala, 2018; Bulkeley, 2010) and have been accompanied by related urban policy development strands in Europe and beyond (Cotella, 2019).

The first generation of transition studies is based on an "extractive" model of the energy transition that gives attention to the techno-economic innovation in the substitution of carbon-based systems, policies and practices. They tend to adopt a Socio-Technical Transition (STT), Multi-level Perspective (MLP) and Transition Management (TM) approach as epistemic and conceptual frameworks for understanding and advancing in the transition (Kivimaa et al., 2019; Tricarico, 2018). According to STT and MLP, transitions are non-linear processes shaped by interplay niches intended as the locus for radical innovations, socio-technical regimes of established practices and rules, and exogenous technical landscape. MLP is a hierarchically structured approach where the dynamics and changing interactions among these three analytical levels (niches, regimes and landscape) determine various pathways towards the transition, passing through the stability of existing regimes and changes (Geels, 2007). Critiques to these approaches mainly refer to the underestimation of the agency of actors and their political work in the transition, the overlook of the national scale at the expense of local and regional agencies and the lack of consideration for peculiar urban conditions and the disregarding of any path-dependent logic from a historical perspective (Labussiere and Nadai, 2018). Moreover, mainstream approaches tend to underestimate transition's spatial and territorial dimensions (Rannou et Dumont, 2018).

More recently, acknowledging these critical elements, a second generation of studies started to highlight the need to consider the transition not just as a technical, infrastructural or systemic issue but also inherently characterized by and dependent on a social dimension. In other words, these studies favour of devoting further attention to social variables, governing models and mechanisms, spatial contexts, agency and power (Bulkeley, 2010). In this direction, an increasing number of authors progressively enlarged the scope of their research activity, proposing to reposition the energy transitions as a development process, underlying the role played by its inherent political, geographical and development implications (Glover and Grandberg, 2020). According to this position, each transition is a contingent and politically contested process that implies a multiplicity of systems, agents and scales that relate to each other and give rise to the reconfiguration of social interest, political arrangement and technology. This second generation of studies thus shifts to an "embedded" model of energy transition that considers specific political rationalities, geographical contexts and development pathways as fundamental aspects to be problematized (Luque-Alaya et al., 2018). In particular, some authors underline the need for alternative perspectives and call for further research on the issues of social justice, politics and power and material infrastructure by adopting approaches that look at governance mechanisms "on the ground" (Valkenburg and Cotella, 2016).

2. SPECIAL ISSUE POSITIONING

The present SI positions itself within this second generation of research. Thus, it shifts the attention from achieving a specific set of technical objectives to investigating the dynamics of action and interaction between local conditions, social impacts and governance assets in Southern Europe. This theoretical and practical debate is particularly urgent until now not sufficiently treated.

The term "just transition" has been coined in the late 20th Century by the North American trade union with regard to the tensions (and possible alliances) between the labour movements and the environmental justice movements (Eisenberg, 2019, pp. 285-289). Initially, the concept was mostly linked to the idea that workers and communities most impacted by the energy transition processes should have received support from the State. Over time, the concept itself has been adopted in different fields of learning and geographical contexts, expanding its meaning. Therefore, according to the broader meaning of the term, "just transition" refers more generally to the impacts that energy transitions could generate on vulnerable people, addressing not only workers employed in the oil and gas sector but also a wider range of subjects impacted by the transition (e.g. low-income households or elderly people) (ibidem). Following this logic, the current literature distinguishes different types of justice (McCauley et al. 2013; Lee and Byrne, 2019): distributional justice, which looks at the more or less equitable way in which the costs and benefits of the transitions are distributed and shared (which resources are used? Where environmental benefits are allocated? What are the reasons for the localisation choices?); procedural justice that calls on more or less equitable procedures in energy decision making, whose interests and what issues affect (and are affected by) the transition processes (what interests are at stake? Who participates? Who takes decisions through which kind of engagement process? etc.); recognition justice that looks at the more or less fair representation of all individuals, asking for just and equitable political rights for all (what different types of vulnerability and specific needs? which political rights and threatened? Are there any social groups not represented?). Above all, integrating those different types of justice offer a conceptual and analytical framework to investigate and better understand energy-related practices and policy processes (Lee and Byrne, 2019).

Moreover, the territorial dimension of the energy transition is increasingly becoming a priority in addressing significant social, economic, environmental and geopolitical changes. And to encourage polycentric local governance of energy systems and decentralisation (Moroni & Tricarico, 2018; Rotondo et al., 2022). In particular, the climate and energy issues raise several questions about the governance of place-based approaches to guide just and sustainable transition processes for all. By place-based, we, therefore, mean those approaches that are able to leverage endogenous innovations and are therefore closely linked to the territories in which they are located, both in terms of needs and solutions.

In Europe, as in the rest of the world, the discourse on energy transition has become ubiquitous in public debate on top of the European agenda and of its member states. The importance of implementing policies to combat climate change and increase renewable energy sources has been discussed for several years (Matthews and Baker, 2021). Although aimed at sustainable objectives, the previous seasons of energy policies have often promoted technical and economic-oriented initiatives and projects. De-territorialised energy production models emerged during those years,

far from the landscape vocations of the territories and therefore often contested by local communities (Altavilla, 2016). On the contrary, these considerations should be contextualised within a broader meaning of the concept of sustainability, being aware that intertwined environmental, social and governance factors are becoming increasingly important for public decision-makers, businesses and local communities, with diverse interpretations depending on the stakes and resources of different actors.

3. RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

The 2007 global economic crisis and the recent COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated the dynamics mentioned above. In addition, the new geopolitical condition that followed the war in Ukraine further highlights the need for profound reflection on energy issues for many European countries and risks increasing inequality and energy poverty if not addressed.

Thus, energy transition – and, more specifically, ‘just’ transition – is now increasingly evident both in need for economic recovery policies and strategic guidelines for scientific research at the European and national scales. In this sense, it is worth mentioning some of the most relevant European policies and programmes that frame the proliferation of new just transition experiences:

- this ‘new deal’ of the energy transition is, for instance, evident in the NextGenerationEU programme and in the strategic missions of some countries such as Italy (ref. PNRR ecological, energy and digital transition, fight against inequalities, rebalancing of territorial development and gender equality). Similarly, it is evident in the European Mechanism for a Just Transition, a framework of instruments in the 2021-27 programming period (55 MLD) aimed at addressing the socio-economic effects of transition by focusing on the regions, industries and workers that will have to face the most pressing challenges;
- the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 includes the Just Transition Fund (JTF) as a financial instrument. The fund, of about 17.5 billion, aims to mitigate the socio-economic costs deriving from the drive towards a zero-carbon economy in two directions: diversification of economic activity and adaptation of people to an evolving labour market. However, the support must be requested by the State, Region or Local administration concerned. Furthermore, to access this support, Member States must propose territorial transition plans consistent with the national energy and climate plans for 2030. In this, the Commission provides targeted support to the Member States, which in collaboration with the nation, the region, or local administration concerned, are responsible for drawing up and fine-tuning the plans. The support for the drafting of the plans also takes place through the creation of the Just Transition Platform, created in June 2020, to provide information and useful knowledge (legislation updates, financing opportunities et al.);
- in the Horizon 2021-27 programme, a specific programme was launched (Cluster 5, Destination 2) on fostering a just transition in Europe to better understand the social implications of climate transition, including its distributional repercussions. On the one hand, a focus on effective policy interventions, co-created with target groups and based on high-quality policy advice. On the other hand, more social support for transition policies and

programmes is based on more significant and meaningful involvement of those most affected by marginalisation.

The special issue (SI) "Place-based Just Transitions: exploring the link between policies and practices in southern Europe" aims to critically understand energy transition policies and practices. In line with the strategic guidelines on economic recovery policies and the European and national plans for scientific research, this SI intends to consider whether place-based energy policies and practices can become the vehicle for a just transition (Steele et al., 2012). In this context, the 'just transition' should be capable of supporting processes of cohesion and social inclusion, encouraging the experimentation of eco-welfare approaches and local economic development in Southern Europe.

4. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION

The SI is focused on the intertwined environmental, social and governance dimensions of the local energy transition through the observation analysis of different practices (e.g. energy communities, collectively owned renewable energy plants, self-consumption schemes, community-based energy efficiency projects, local policy to tackle energy poverty, local sustainable mobility solutions) in South European contexts. The objective of the special issue is twofold. On the one hand, to provide a picture of these initiatives in terms of involved actors, legal and institutional frameworks, funding schemes, experimental participatory methodologies, local governance dynamics, innovative organisational design, impact evaluation tools and measurement. On the other hand, to identify possible socio-technical integrated approaches that can be used to support policy transfer to areas with different socio-economic needs and conditions.

We are open to critical, creative, normative and interpretative reflections with an engaged focus on the environmental, social and, governance dimensions of local energy transition policies and practices. Among the latter, we expect contributions aimed at mapping or analysing initiatives (e.g. energy communities, collectively owned renewable plants, self-consumption schemes, community-based energy efficiency projects) from different areas in Southern Europe.

References

- Altavilla, E., 2016. The Photovoltaic Giant: Lights and Shadows of Energy Planning in Apulia. *Scienze Regionali* 3, 93-103. <https://doi.org/10.3280/SCRE2016-003006>
- Bragaglia, F. (2021). Social innovation as a 'magic concept' for policy-makers and its implications for urban governance. *Planning Theory*, 20(2), 102-120.
- Bulkeley, H., 2010, Cities and the Governing of Climate Change. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.*, 35, pp. 229-253.
- Cotella, G. (2019). The urban dimension of EU cohesion policy. In Medeiros E. (ed.) *Territorial Cohesion* (pp. 133-151). Springer, Cham. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-03386-6_7
- D'Alessandro, S., Luzzati, T., & Morroni, M. (2010). Energy transition towards economic and environmental sustainability: feasible paths and policy implications. *Journal of cleaner production*, 18(4), 291-298.
- Eisenberg, A. 2019. 'Just Transitions'. *Southern California Law Review* 92 (2): 273-330.
- Geels, F. W., & Schot, J. 2007. Typology of sociotechnical transition pathways. *Research Policy*, 36(3), 399-417. DOI:10.1016/j.respol.2007.01.003
- Glover, L., & Granberg, M., 2020. *The politics of adapting to climate change*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hodson, M., Marvin, S., 2012. Mediating Low-Carbon Urban Transitions? Forms of Organization, Knowledge and Action. *European Planning Studies* 20, pp. 421-439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2012.651804>
- Horne, R., Moloney, S., 2019. Urban low carbon transitions: institution-building and prospects for interventions in social practice. *European Planning Studies* 27, pp. 336-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2018.1472745>
- Kivimaa, P., Hyysalo, S., Boon, W., Klerkx, L., Martiskainen, M., Schot, J., 2019. Passing the baton: How intermediaries advance sustainability transitions in different phases. *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 31, pp. 110-125. DOI: 10.1016/j.eist.2019.01.001
- Labussiere O., Nadaï A. 2018. Spatialities of the energy transition: Intensive sites making earth matter? *Energy Research & Social Science*, Elsevier, 36, pp.120-128. DOI: 10.1016/j.erss.2017.11.006 .
- Lee, J., & Byrne, J. 2019. Expanding the Conceptual and Analytical Basis of Energy Justice: Beyond the Three-Tenet Framework. *Frontiers in Energy Research*, 7, 99. DOI: 10.3389/fenrg.2019.00099
- Luque-Ayala, A., Marvin, S., Bulkeley, H., 2018. *Rethinking Urban Transitions: Politics in the Energy City*; Routledge: Abingdon, UK.

McCauley, D., Heffron, R., Stephan, H., & Jenkins, K., 2013. Advancing Energy Justice: The triumvirate of tenets. *International Energy Law Review*, 32, 107-110.

Magnani, N., & Carrosio, G., 2021. *Understanding the Energy Transition: Civil Society, Territory and Inequality in Italy*. Springer Nature.

Matthews, T., & Baker, D. 2021. Advancing responses to climate change through improved interplay between planning theory and practice. *International Planning Studies*, 26(1), 28-41.

Moroni, S., & Tricarico, L., 2018. Distributed energy production in a polycentric scenario: policy reforms and community management. *Journal of environmental planning and management*, 61(11), 1973-1993.

Parkhill, K. A., Shirani, F., Butler, C., Henwood, K. L., Groves, C., & Pidgeon, N. F., 2015. 'We are a community [but] that takes a certain amount of energy': Exploring shared visions, social action, and resilience in place-based community-led energy initiatives. *Environmental science & policy*, 53, 60-69.

Rannou S. And Dumont M., 2018. *Vers un urbanisme orienté énergie ? La transition énergétique face aux épreuves de sa territorialisation dans une ville moyenne*, Riurba 2018/Numéro 5. <http://www.riurba.review/Revue/vers-un-urbanisme-oriente-energie-la-transition-energetique-face-aux-epreuves-de-sa-territorialisation-dans-une-ville-moyenne/>

Rotondo, F., Cotella, G., Lami, I.M., 2022, *Neighborhood energy community: norms, actors and policies. The case of Pilastro-Roveri*, *New Metropolitan Perspectives*, 482, *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, Springer.

Steele, W., MacCallum, D., Byrne, J., & Houston, D., 2012. Planning the climate-just city. *International Planning Studies*, 17(1), 67-83.

Tricarico, L., 2018. Community energy enterprises in the distributed energy geography: A review of issues and potential approaches. *International Journal of Sustainable Energy Planning and Management*, 18, 81-94.

Tricarico, L., 2021. Is community earning enough? Reflections on engagement processes and drivers in two Italian energy communities. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 72, 101899.

Valkenburg, G., Cotella, G., 2016. Governance of energy transitions: About inclusion and closure in complex sociotechnical problems. *Energy Sustain. Soc.*, 6, 20.

Waas, T.; Hugé, J.; Verbruggen, A.; Wright, T., 2011. *Sustainable Development: A Bird's Eye View*. *Sustainability* 3, pp. 1637-1661.

About guest editors

Federica Rotondo: PhD candidate at Politecnico of Turin within the Interuniversity Department of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning. She holds a Double Master's degree in Urban Planning and Policy Design at Politecnico di Milano and in Science and Techniques of Urban Environment at École Centrale de Nantes. She has been involved in national and international research projects on energy renovation, public housing and urban policies.

Francesca Bragaglia: PhD in Urban and Regional Development and Research Fellow at the Politecnico di Torino. Her research interests are mainly focused on social innovation in territorial and urban policies and practices and on the topic of co-production. On these topics, she has published a number of international scientific articles.

Luca Tricarico: fixed term researcher at CNR, Institute for Sustainable Economic Growth (IRCRES) and research fellow at Luiss Guido Carli, team member of the 2020 PRIN grant on "Open Social Innovation for the next generation of place-based Public Governance". Adjunct professor in Economics of Strategy at Luiss Business School. His research interests include the organizational and policy implications of social innovation and territorial/regional economic development.

Matteo Zulianello: researcher of the RSE group "Active networks, distribution and demand management", he is deputy head of the system research project on energy communities and collective self-consumption. In the past he has dealt as consultant with sustainability" policy both in the corporate field and in public administrations.