

Chapter Title: INTRODUCTION

Book Title: Changing environment, just transition and job creation

Book Subtitle: perspectives from the south

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Published by: CLACSO. (2018)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvn96f9v.3>

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INTRODUCTION

The world in which we currently live is characterised by a multiplicity of challenges that we must face with urgency if we want to avoid future catastrophes. Those challenges, because of the globalisation of systems, have also become global challenges, and need global responses. One of the most important of those challenges faced by the current global community remains the environmental crisis, and more specifically the climate crisis also known as global warming. Most scientists, non-sovereign actors and policy makers are convinced that the salvation of our world definitely depends on urgent and strong actions aimed at reducing the emission of Greenhouse gases and therefore limiting climate change (Mitigation). Moreover, such actions should put in place mechanisms and policies aimed at reducing the impacts of the already occurred climate change on environmental, human and socio-political systems (Adaptation). Beyond this challenge of global concern, there is also the global challenge of unemployment enhanced by the financial and economic crisis as well as the lack of alternative employment policies in a changing environment. These two challenges are important threats not only to the world security, but above all to the sustainable development in general and development in the global South in particular. In an era in which restructuring world and national economies is becoming unavoidable, we have to learn

from past experiences. “There is a concern that significant periods of economic restructuring in the past have often happened in a chaotic fashion leaving ordinary workers, their families and communities to bear the brunt of the transition to new ways of producing wealth” (Olsen, 2010). Because of that important and fundamental concern, it is nowadays more important than ever to think alternative development mechanisms that will be more integrative and that “will promote sustainable development which is socially just, environmentally friendly, and economically efficient, while emphasising on governance and management changes to better service decent lives of millions of people” (Olsen, 2010). It is in this context that the concept of a “Just transition to a low-carbon economy” emerged in the international climate change arena, as an important component in the official position of Argentina during the negotiations in 2006. Since then, such concept has taken a great importance in the global debates on climate change fighting mechanisms, and appears to be the best way of integrating workers in the global fight, since just transition comes as an attempt to find ways to address the unfairness of expecting working people to bear the brunt of the adjustment that results from the disappearance of unsustainable jobs (Canadian Labour Congress, 2000). Coming to the specific case of South Africa, we have to mention that the transition to a low carbon or green economy has massive implications for labour. In fact, as Cock (2007) states it, “historically the labour movement in South Africa has neglected environmental issues, and this is largely because of a widespread understanding that environmental protection threatened jobs”. That is what makes the One Million Climate Jobs Campaign more than important and useful. In fact, the One Million Climate Jobs Campaign appears to be a mechanism initiative that aims at a just transition to a low-carbon economy in South Africa, through research, networking and advocacy for the creation of green jobs that will satisfy both the welfare of people and the fight against climate change, in the South African context. It comes as an alternative to the neo-liberal form of production, where development was pursued at the expense of the environment and the human beings, and it proposes a new approach of human-nature relations based on mutual benefits. Its specificity lies in the fact that, by its very nature, it aims at simultaneously articulating the three elements of a just and fair transition: ecological sustainability, social justice and State intervention. Basically, it aims at fighting for a transition to a low-carbon economy that will require a paradigm shift in industrial policy, provision for sectors sensitive to changes in energy prices, building up new climate-friendly industries in order to sustain employment and investment. In short, it fights for provision to be made for transition

from emissions-intensive sectors to low or zero carbon development without delay. In fact, if we want to survive the current changing environments, “we must start planning now if we are to have a just transition to a low carbon economy” (TUC and Allan, 2008: 41).

