Stakeholder perspectives on engaging with South Africa's Just Transition

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Overview

- Purpose of the report
- Key findings
- Recommendations

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*A **just transition** "shift towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society and ecologically sustainable economies and societies which contribute toward the creation of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty" (Republic of South Africa, 2022:5).*

*"major economic, social, and environmental **decisions required for a just transition require social partners to forge a consensus around the transition**" (PCC, 2022:25)."*…Leave no one behind

- **Purpose:** Understand the views and experiences of social partners of engaging with the just transition, inform how to iterate and strengthen
- Engaged social partners, government, PCC through **interviews and focus groups** (Ermelo and Motherwell) and with the literature

Key findings

Interpretations of just transitions

"The just transition is about more than just changing technology, it includes thinking about **livelihoods, health,** and the effect of the pace and scale of decommissioning on **economic development**."

"We have to reduce **greenhouse gas** levels to mitigate global warming while **simultaneously** addressing **unemployment and inequality**."

"The just transition must primarily address **developmental objectives**."

"The just transition must include a focus on **community ownership models** and **tangible grassroots-level solutions** for people."

"**Energy security** and achieving **universal energy access** are key to the just transition."

"The just transition is about **renewable energy**: "We've got to invest in renewables.""

Social partner perspectives on just transition engagement processes

- **Fast paced, top-down, technical approach** was criticised
- **Two way engagement** was the expectation but not always met, inadequate reciprocity, and clarity of purpose, time for feedback

*"I think that also people are a bit sick of being listened to, and then there's no consequence, and they can't see **what the impact of them spending their time** might be."*

- **Barriers to accessibility:** time, physical distance, terminology
- **Resources & Capacities** determine the depth and quality of engagements and participation/exclusion of actors

Building trust and addressing mistrust

"*through collaborative exploration of options in this space...**through concrete experimentation**...the buy-in comes from this process.*"

Building consensus and addressing contestation

*"There's an assumption that we **already know the answer** and we just need to **convince them** that they must accept it".*

Consensus ⟷ **Contestation**

Sources of consensus & contestation:

- The **need** for a just transition
- **What** the just transition will consist of
- **How** a just transition will be achieved

- Divergent **values**
- Robustness **of data**
- Competing **interests**

Building consensus and addressing contestation

*"the problem with social compact is its often **lowest common denominator** - what can everyone agree to?"*

- **Allowing for contestation** can uncover solutions

"I wish we would start to, you know, really allow people to allow there to be conflict… you can allow conflict through differences of opinion… get those out in the open".

- **Infrastructure for broad-based consensus** is lacking

*"You need to build the **infrastructure for ongoing democratic participation** … making sure that people … whatever level of formal training and formal education they have, are as well capacitated [and] as capable as possible of clearly articulating their needs, weighing up those needs against what can be done, and charting a path forward."*
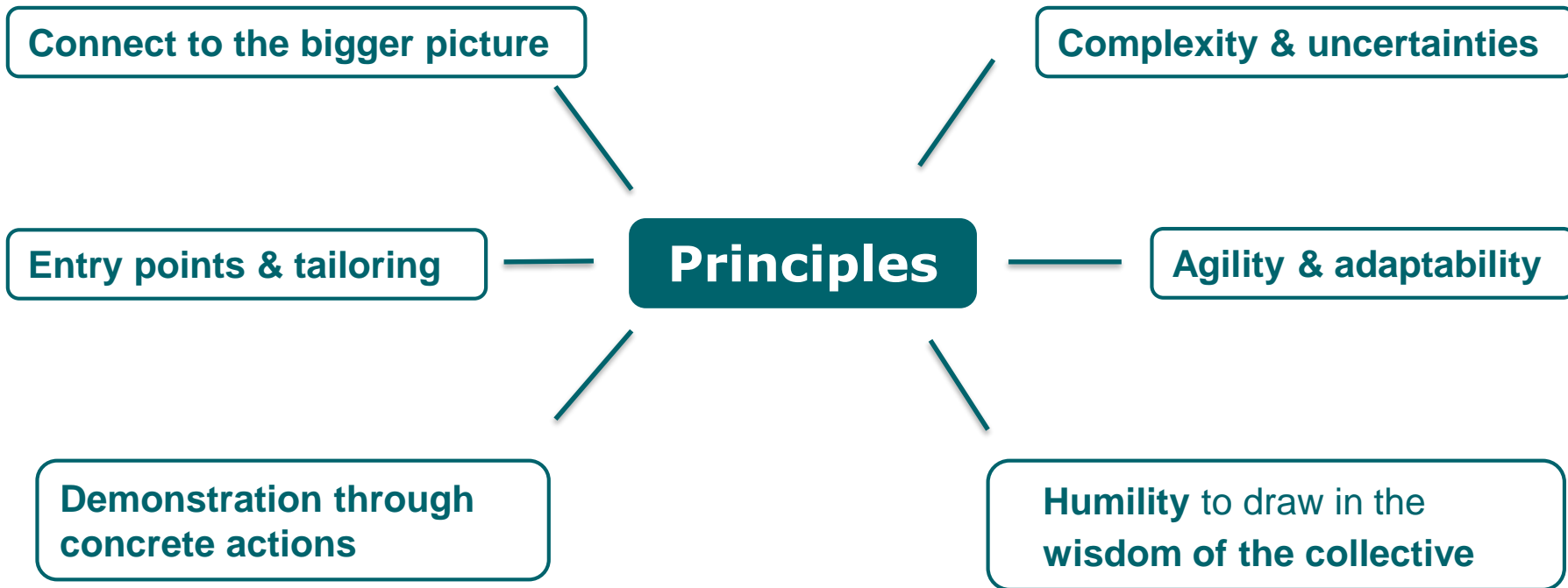
PCC Secretariat reflections

- **Role:** consult widely, share information, create awareness, translator to broker social consensus
- **Tailor the messages** from research **towards the needs** of the public and policymakers, to enable a robust and **meaningful conversation** about the evidence
- **Engagements held, confronted** with capacity and financial constraints, objective not always clear, ad hoc, and how to handle feedback
- **Technical focus** of sessions foregrounds technical knowledge, marginalises other forms of knowledge
- Need to strengthen **multi-level governance**
- Need the **active participation** of government and all social partners
- Never going to have **perfect consensus** but still **need to act**

Recommendations

1. Commit to a set of guiding principles

Connect to the bigger picture

Complexity & uncertainties

Entry points & tailoring

Principles

Agility & adaptability

Demonstration through concrete actions

Humility to draw in the **wisdom of the collective**

2. Practice robust engagement

Accessibility of a process:
- process design;
- frequency, temporal nature of engagements;
- format & location

Participation of actors is based on:

knowledge capacities resources

interests values priorities

2. Practice robust engagement

Ingredients for future engagements

- Create **hospitable environments** to address power imbalances
- **Transparency** to manage expectations, engage with inputs, and allow for unexpected outcomes
- Split into **information** session & a **feedback** session
- **Long term,** deep engagement must go hand in hand with **urgent action** driven by **learning by doing**
- Develop a **database** to support outreach

3. Take steps to build trust & address mistrust

- Identify **knowledge gaps, how** to address sticking points & build broad-based support,
- Knowledge must be communicated in **ways that are relevant** by those **embedded** in communities (**what & who**)
- **Boundary work** important for communicating enabling **flow and use of knowledge**, **translators of relevance**
- **Use what exists:** Local just transition forums for awareness raising, education, coordination, Whatsapp groups, pamphlets, posters, sports clubs, religious communities
- **Monitoring and evaluation** tools for transparency & accountability

4. Build consensus and take contestation seriously

- **Thorny issues** must be tackled to bring about scale and speed of change…**transparency is a good antidote for contestation**
- **Shifting the location of consensus** to greater ambition, transformation and implementation, move away from **lowest common denominator**
- Effective **process design & knowledge** production, use & communication
- To build diverse coalitions for action, create momentum for change need **compelling storylines and genuine alternatives**
- Demonstrating how **immediate, concrete losses** will be managed and **future gains** will be harnessed

Thank you

A European Union Climate Dialogues Project

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