



Designing a Just Energy Transition: Accurate problem definition

Defining a “just” energy transition

- A Just Energy Transition (JET) comprises a transition journey and a transition destination, with the aim of ensuring justice and equity in both
- A “successful” JET requires detailed, comprehensive and accurate problem solving: what is it exactly that the JET is aiming to address?
- In terms of the transition journey – it is how to ensure that the negative impact of coal power plant and mine closure on communities is minimised
- To date, the overwhelming focus has been on (formal) employment in coal value chains, and the impact on local economies
- This is necessary, but far from sufficient. It is based on the assumption that these are the main (only) ways in which power plant and mine closure will impact negatively
- The reality is much more complex, but remains invisible in current policymaking models



Policymaking is problem solving

- All policymaking represents an attempt to solve a problem identified by the state: in terms of the JET journey the problem is how to minimise the impact on communities of coal phase out
- Current problem solving processes spend limited time on detailed problem definition and scoping, and local communities are not widely consulted at this point
- Our research has found that this lack of co-production right from the start of the policy making process results in poor problem definition.
- Just one example of an ‘invisible’ problem is the provision of services and assets by Eskom and coal mines (particularly under the SLPs)



Services and assets provided by the coal sector

- Our initial research has found that communities in Emalahleni and Steve Tshwete benefit to a considerable degree from a wide range of services and community assets. These directly impact quality of life and standards of living
- In addition (particularly in Emalahleni) a wide range of municipal services are either being provided directly, or are supported. The withdrawal of this support would significantly undermine municipal service delivery.
- Reduced quality of municipal services directly impacts quality of life and the local economic base on which the post-coal economy will be built

Research method

- Our goal is to support more effective policymaking by demonstrating the benefits of co-production as a problem-solving process.
- Co-production requires broad-based community involvement from the beginning of the policymaking process, not as an afterthought
- The methodological problem is how to achieve the benefits of co-production without physically having to have every person in the room, all the time
- We have conceptualised the co-production challenge as primarily being about expanding the space of what is considered credible policy-making evidence
- Our research methods have surfaced the issue of assets and services (and others) in a relatively short space of time



Next steps

- In respect of the services and assets provided by mines and power stations, a detailed inventory of these is required. That detailed inventory then needs to be incorporated into JET plans for Mpumalanga
- We have started work on this, but the assistance of coal mining companies in filling in many missing details would be invaluable.
- Our research also shows that coal mining companies enjoy a significantly higher level of trust than the state: this implies that they could play an important role in co-production