

GREEN TRANSITIONS? JUST TRANSITIONS? LESSONS FROM THE USA

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This paper will offer a systematic examination of green transition strategies by US unions employing two research questions. First, to what degree are labour unions striving to become agents and authors of green transition (and to what degree are they casting themselves as subjects, thus reinforcing the country's neoliberal capitalism?) Second, to what degree and what kinds of just transition strategies are labour unions proposing?

The paper adopts a critical sociotechnical transitions approach (STT). The STT approach allows for a systematic investigation of transitional scenarios, recognizing that transitions may go in a variety of ways, depending on political coalitions and variable institutional resources. The first part of the paper, therefore, outlines the key institutional arrangements at the level of the US political economy and industrial relations that variably enable and (largely) constrain US labour unions. In the second part I offer a systematic overview of green transition proposals by labour unions, arraying them from those that are more instrumental and market based to those that are more socio-ecological and transformative. In the third part I focus on select just transition strategies proposed by US labour unions (whether they use the term or not) in order to better differentiate between proactive and reactive strategies, on one hand, and more or less socio-ecologically just strategies on the other.

The paper is based on a long term and extensive collaborative project, part of the Adapting Canadian Work and Workplaces to Climate Change project. An integral part of this long-term project (2014-2021) is to systematically place the efforts of Canadian labour unions in an international context, starting with the USA (Dimitris Stevis) and Europe (Fred Steward). These studies draw upon the public record as well as significant participant observation and interviews with key union environmentalists.