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Just Transitions in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges  
for Resilience and Environmental Justice in  
Resource-Dependent Socio-Ecological Systems

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# Just Transitions

- Climate crisis - urgent need to transition from fossil fuels and stop greenhouse gases immediately (mitigation + Net-Zero) IPCC, 2023
- Global economies must transition to low-carbon economies and societies. This has the potential to affect different communities unevenly, leading to a need for justice in this transition process – Just Transitions. (Ann Eisenberg, 2019)
- Nigeria relies heavily on fossil fuels and woodfuels for economic growth. It also contributes significantly to the production of greenhouse gases in Africa, facilitating climate change and its effects in the continent and globally. Thus, for Nigeria, Just Transition refers to a carefully managed and equitable shift away from fossil fuel dependence towards a more sustainable and diversified economy that ensures social, economic, and environmental justice for all stakeholders involved.





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# Socio-Ecological Resilience

- The ability or capacity of a socio-ecological system to absorb changes and recover from inadvertent shocks and disturbances to such environment and still maintain the identifying elements and uniqueness of that environment.
- Panarchy
- Vulnerability
- Thresholds
- Adaptive capacity

# Environmental Justice

- In Nigeria, it is defined along the lines of:
- Environmental restoration/remediation
- Access to justice.
- Access to resources
- Public participation in environmental decision-making

# Prospects for Just Transitions in Nigeria

- Just Transitions can lead to reduced environmental degradation, preservation of ecosystems, and conservation of biodiversity.
- Transitioning to renewable energy and sustainable industries can diversify the economy and provide long-term stability.
- By promoting community participation and benefits sharing, Just Transitions can enhance social equity and empower marginalized communities thereby improving their well-being, promoting social equity and environmental justice.



## Prospects (contd)

- Resource-dependent economies are often associated with significant environmental degradation, such as deforestation, pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change impacts. Just Transitions advocate for transitioning to more sustainable practices that reduce the environmental footprint of resource extraction and consumption. This includes promoting renewable energy sources, sustainable agriculture, and responsible land and water management to protect ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Economic Diversification and Resilience: Just Transitions encourage economic diversification to reduce the vulnerability of resource-dependent economies to fluctuations in global commodity prices. By transitioning to alternative industries and sectors, socio-ecological systems can enhance their resilience to economic shocks and improve long-term stability.

## Prospects (contd)

- Worker's rights: Just Transitions address labour rights and social protections for workers in extractive industries. It addresses possible job losses and redundancies, and opportunities for reskilling and retraining workers in new industries as part of the transition process.
- Encourages the consideration, enactment and effective implementation of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate-related risks.
- Governance and Accountability: Just Transitions call for strong governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure that the transition is carried out in a transparent and responsible manner. It includes monitoring, reporting, and enforcement to hold government, industries and stakeholders accountable for their actions and commitments.

# Challenges for Implementing Just Transitions in Nigeria

- Implementing "Just Transitions" in a resource-dependent socio-ecological system like Nigeria comes with several challenges. These challenges can be formidable due to the complex interplay of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Some of the key challenges include:
- **Economic Dependency on Resource Revenues:** Nigeria heavily relies on oil and gas revenues, which have long been the mainstay of the economy. Transitioning to alternative industries and reducing dependency on resource revenues can lead to economic disruptions and budgetary challenges.
- **Political Resistance and Vested Interests:** The interests of powerful stakeholders, including multinational corporations and political elites, may resist the shift away from resource dependence due to financial gains and influence over resource extraction.

## Challenges (contd)

- **Financing and Investment:** Implementing Just Transitions requires significant financial investments in sustainable technologies, infrastructure, and capacity building. Securing adequate funding for such projects can be challenging, particularly in an economy where resource revenues are vital to the national budget.
- **Limited Institutional Capacity:** Nigeria's institutions, including environmental protection agencies and regulatory bodies, may lack the capacity and resources to effectively enforce and oversee the implementation of Just Transitions.
- **Technological and Infrastructural Challenges:** Adopting sustainable technologies and practices may require significant upgrades to Nigeria's infrastructure and workforce skills. Lack of access to advanced technology and limited capacity can hinder progress.

## Challenges (contd)

- **Socioeconomic Inequalities:** Nigeria faces significant socioeconomic disparities, with resource-dependent communities often experiencing marginalization and poverty. Implementing Just Transitions requires addressing these inequalities and ensuring that affected communities benefit equitably from the transition.
- **Lack of Public Awareness and Participation:** Limited awareness and understanding of the concepts and benefits of Just Transitions among the general public and affected communities can hamper support and engagement.

## Challenges (contd)

- **Environmental Degradation:** The legacy of resource extraction activities, such as oil spills, deforestation, and pollution, poses significant environmental challenges. Rehabilitating degraded ecosystems and addressing existing environmental impacts is essential in the transition process.
- **Governance and Corruption:** Nigeria currently faces governance challenges, including corruption and lack of transparency in the management of resource revenues. Effective governance is critical to ensure that the benefits of Just Transitions reach the intended beneficiaries.

# Addressing the Challenges

- Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, involving strong political will, law and policy, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and effective governance. Collaboration between government, private sector, civil society organizations, and affected communities is essential for the successful implementation of Just Transitions in Nigeria's resource-dependent socio-ecological systems. Additionally, raising public awareness and building support for environmental justice and sustainable development can help overcome resistance and foster a smoother transition towards a more equitable and environmentally sustainable future.

# Facilitating Just Transition in Nigeria: Law and Policy

- Climate Change Act, 2021
  - Laudable piece of legislation – first comprehensive climate change legislation in West Africa. Ministry of Environment to set carbon budgets, Climate Fund, National Council on Climate Change, etc.
  - However, focuses more on the money and admin side of climate change mitigation. Silent on the community aspects and actual African measures. ‘Nature-based solutions’ ... what does it mean?
  - Preamble fails to acknowledge the effects of climate change and the communities affected by it.
- Nationally Determined Contribution – achieving Net Zero by 2060
- Petroleum Industry Act.
- Nigeria Energy Transition Plan

# Proposed Law and Policy Measures for Just Transitions in Nigeria

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Alignment:** Ensure that the legal framework for Just Transitions aligns with Nigeria's commitments under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to environmental protection, climate action, and poverty reduction.
- **Strategic Environmental Assessment:** Strengthen the existing EIA process to meet best practice in environmental justice. Comprehensive assessments of the socio-cultural and economic impacts of Just transition projects and policies.

- **National Just Transitions Policy:** Develop a comprehensive national policy that outlines the vision, objectives, and strategies for achieving Just Transitions in resource-dependent regions. This policy should prioritize social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic diversification.
- **Research and Innovation Support:** Allocate resources for research and innovation in sustainable resource management, renewable energy technologies, and best practices in the industry.
- **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** Conduct public education and awareness campaigns to inform citizens and stakeholders about the benefits and importance of Just Transitions.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Platforms:** Create multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together government, industry, civil society organizations, and affected communities to engage in meaningful dialogue and decision-making.
- **Protecting Workers' Rights:** prioritize the rights and livelihoods of workers in the oil and gas industry. Just Transition laws and policies that would ensure that affected workers are adequately supported through retraining programs, skill development, and social safety nets to facilitate a smooth transition to new employment opportunities in the emerging green sectors.



- **Energy Access and Equity:** improve energy access and equity across the country. Laws and policies that address energy poverty and ensure that the transition to cleaner energy sources does not leave vulnerable communities without access to affordable and reliable energy services.
  
- **Investment in Green Infrastructure:** Nigeria would need to attract investments in green infrastructure and technologies to facilitate the transition. This could involve creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment to incentivize private sector involvement and international cooperation in financing sustainable development projects.





## Decolonising Just Transitions: Ubuntu and Ukama

- Ubuntu – Being human through other people and the environment. To become fully human involves not only caring for other people and connecting to their humanity, but also caring for the environment and the biophysical world (L.L Grange, 2012)
- Ukama – Relatedness to the entire cosmos. The idea that every living thing on earth is connected to each other and to the cosmos. Ukama extends to ties with all people, not only with present generations but also with past and future generations. (L.L Grange, 2012)

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Presented at '*Just Transition and Environmental Justice: Principles, Practice and Implementation Strategies for a Post-Oil Future*',  
University of Bradford, 26 -28 July 2023

# Obstacles to realising justice in the transition to a transnational circular economy in the post-oil era

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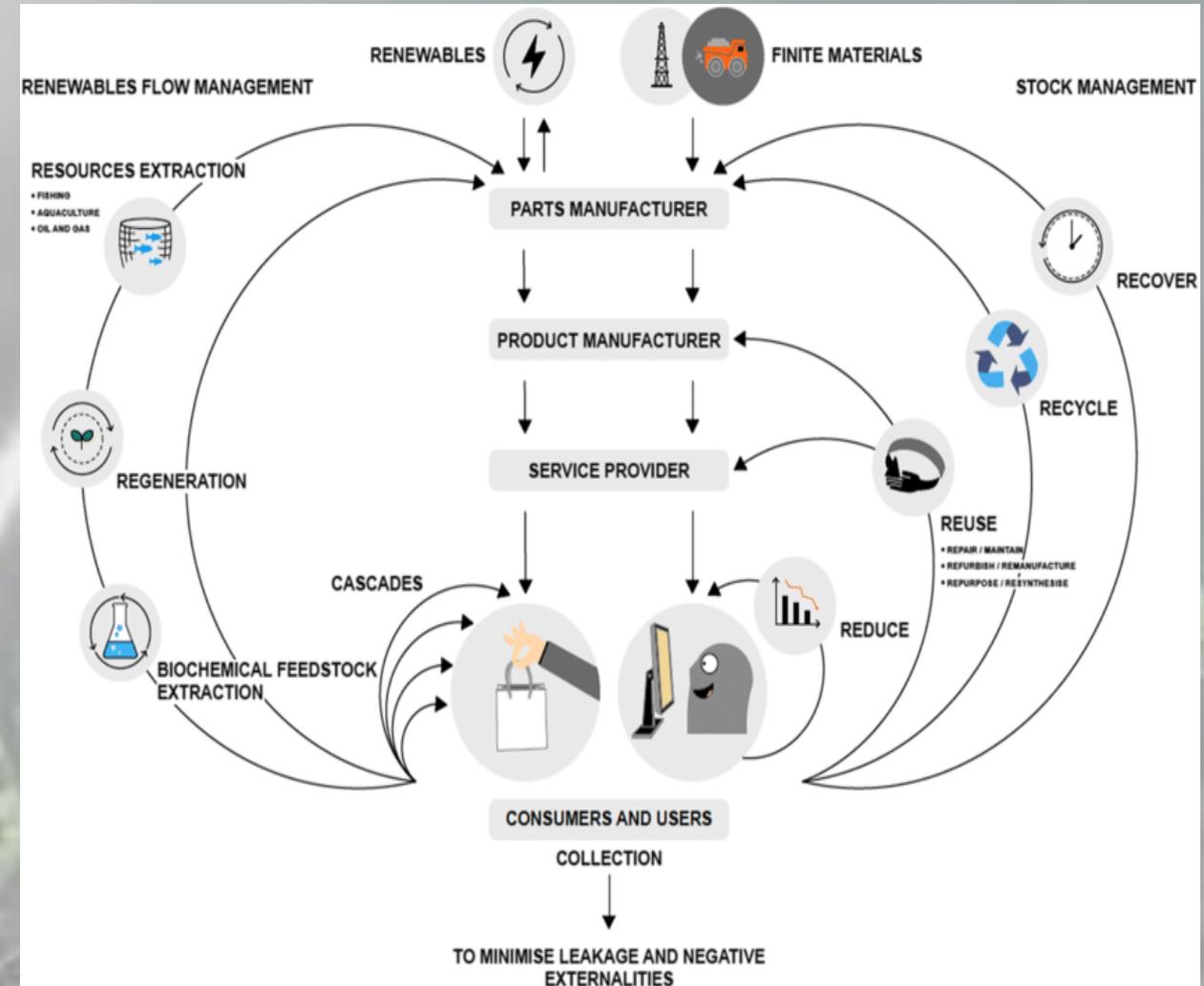
**Transitioning from a fossil fuel to a material-based economy: justice matters**

# Circular Economy Objectives

- Minimisation of resource use
- Prevent waste generation
- Reuse
- Remanufacture
- Recycle and:
- Recover(for energy)

For the aim of sustainable development (environmental quality + social equity + economic prosperity (NB: not growth))

Can be at micro, meso, and/or macro levels



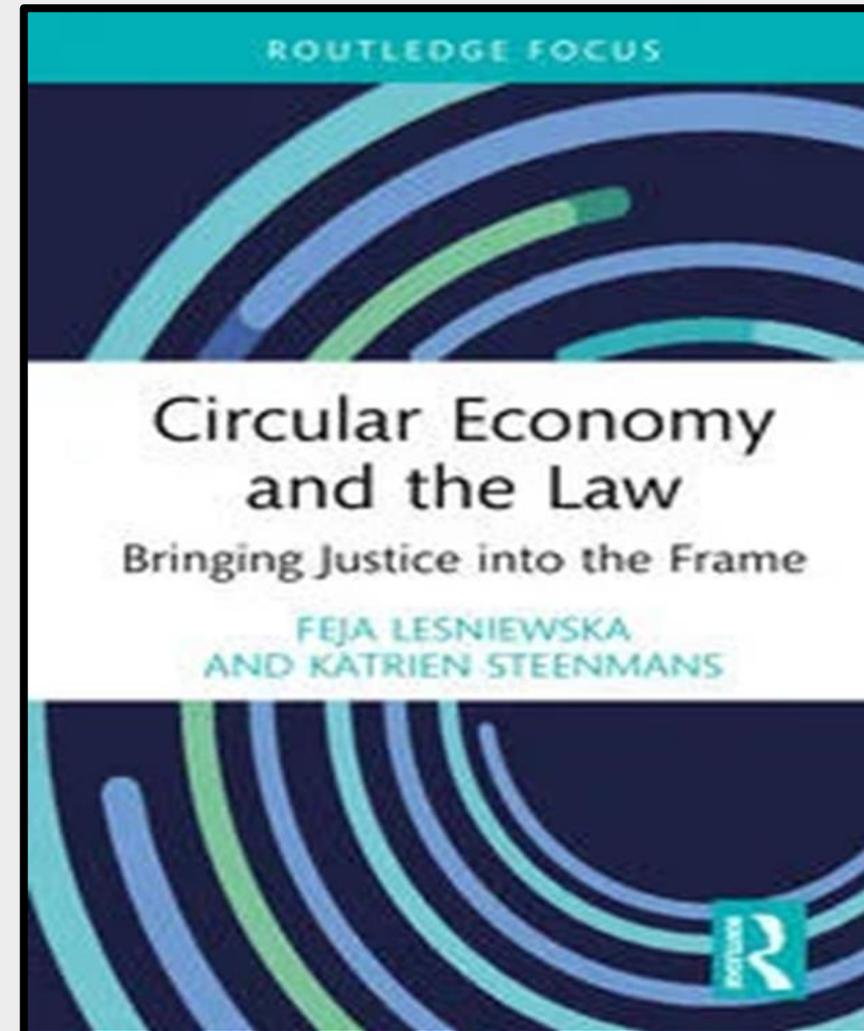
# Circular Economy and Law: systems view



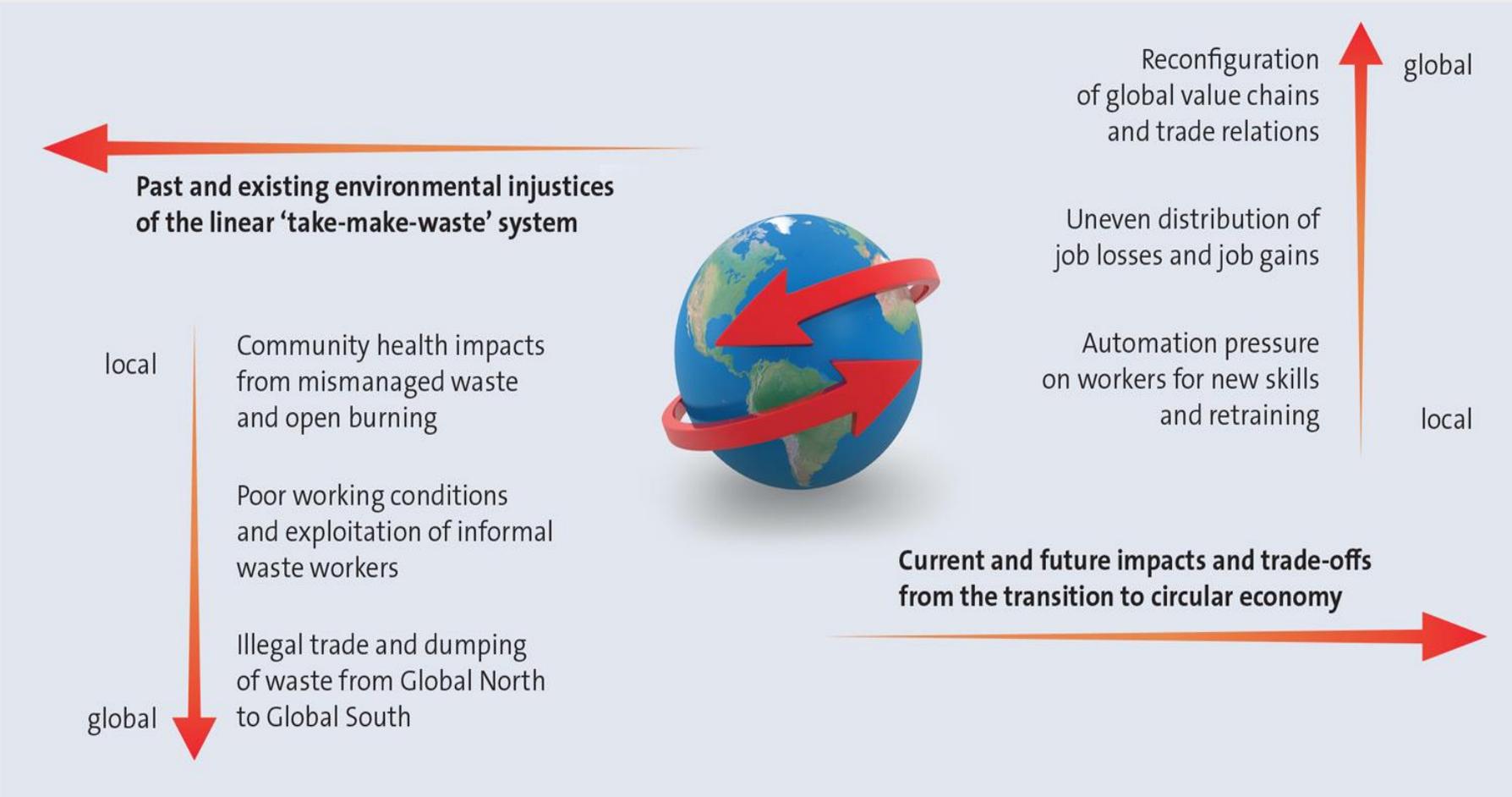
# Four fundamental limitations to existing laws and the circular economy

- (1) unclear boundaries and scale;
- (1) oversimplification of goals;
- (2) sidelining of justice dimensions;
- (3) reinforcement of the status quo, and;
- (4) unintended consequences.

Source: Steenmans, K., & Lesniewska, F. (2023). Limitations of the circular economy concept in law and policy. *Frontiers in Sustainability*, 4, 1154059.



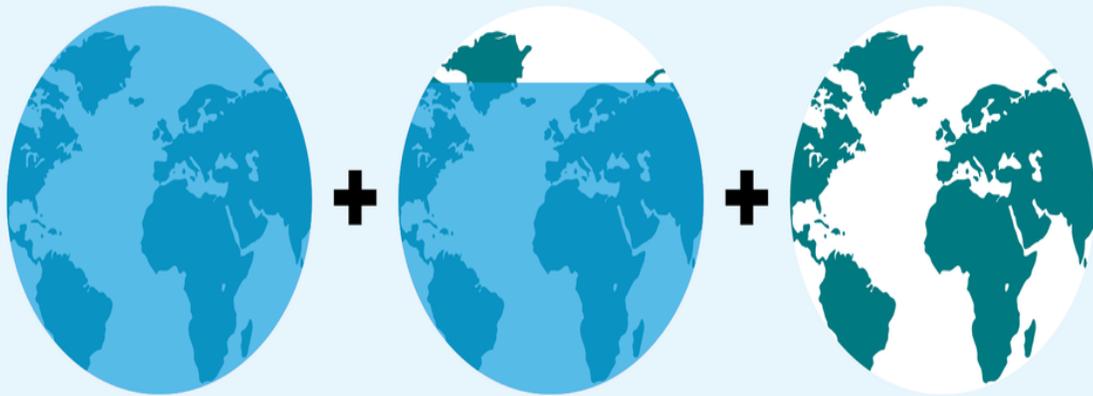
# Embedded injustice in past, current and (potential) future global economic systems



Source: Schroeder, P., & Barrie, J. (2022). Is going circular just? Environmental justice and just transition—key elements for an inclusive circular economy. *Field Actions Science Reports. The journal of field actions*, (Special Issue 24), 20-25.

# Resource consumption inequity

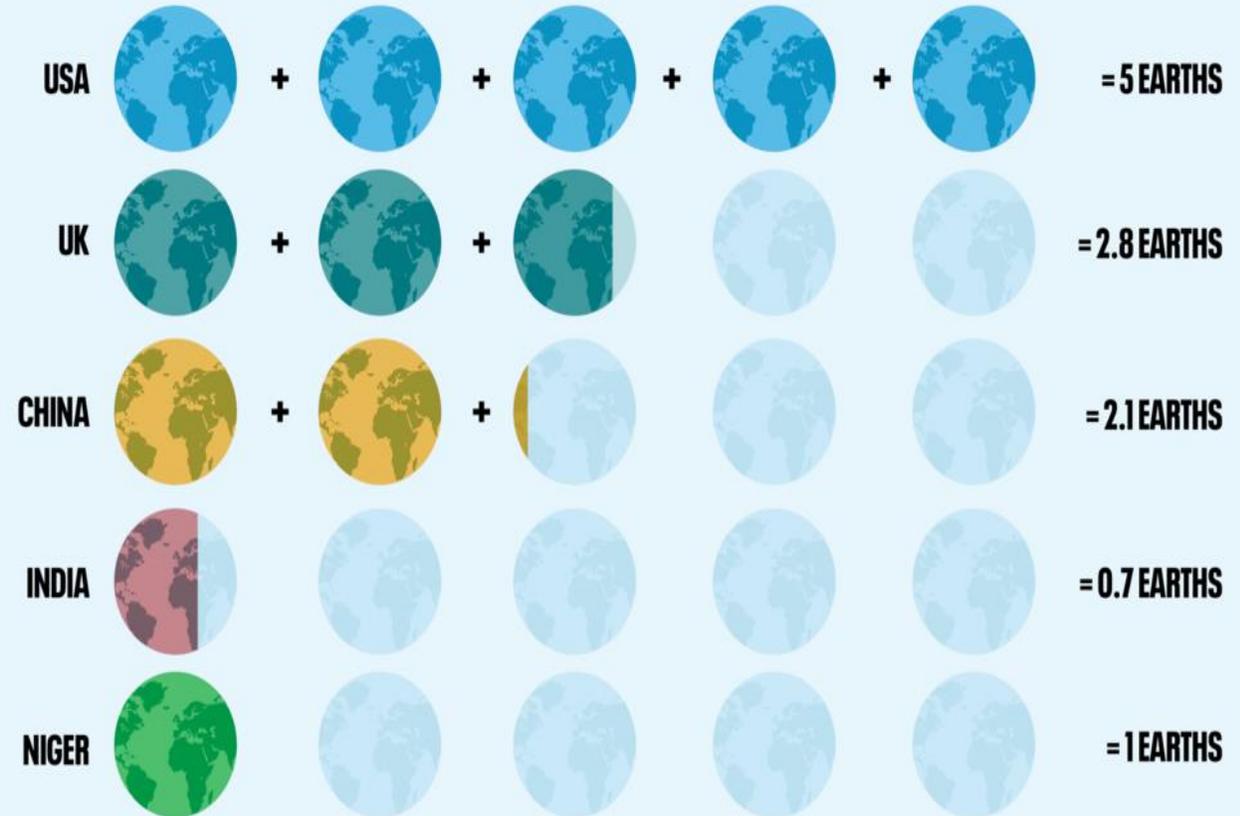
**WE ARE CURRENTLY USING UP THE RENEWABLE RESOURCES OF 1.7 EARTHS – UNLESS THINGS CHANGE, WE’LL NEED THREE BY 2050**



Source: Global Footprint Network

## **CONSUMPTION OF EARTH’S RESOURCES:**

Number of Earths needed if everyone used renewable resources at the same rate as these individual countries.



Source: Global Footprint Network, 2018

# Responsible Circular Consumption?

## Luxury Circular Consumption

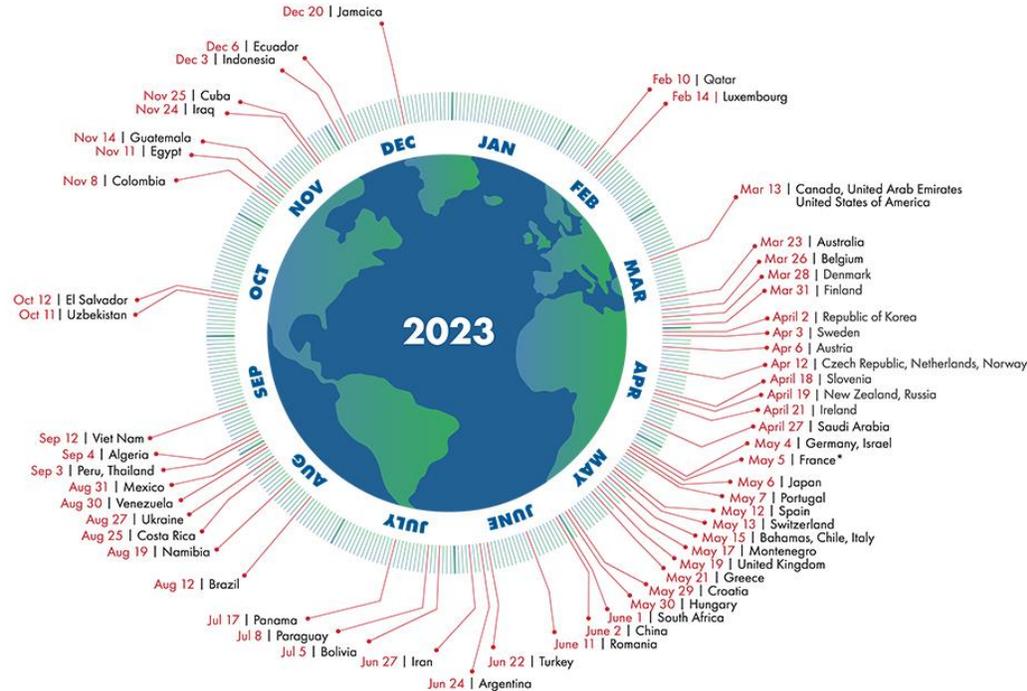


## Survival circular consumption

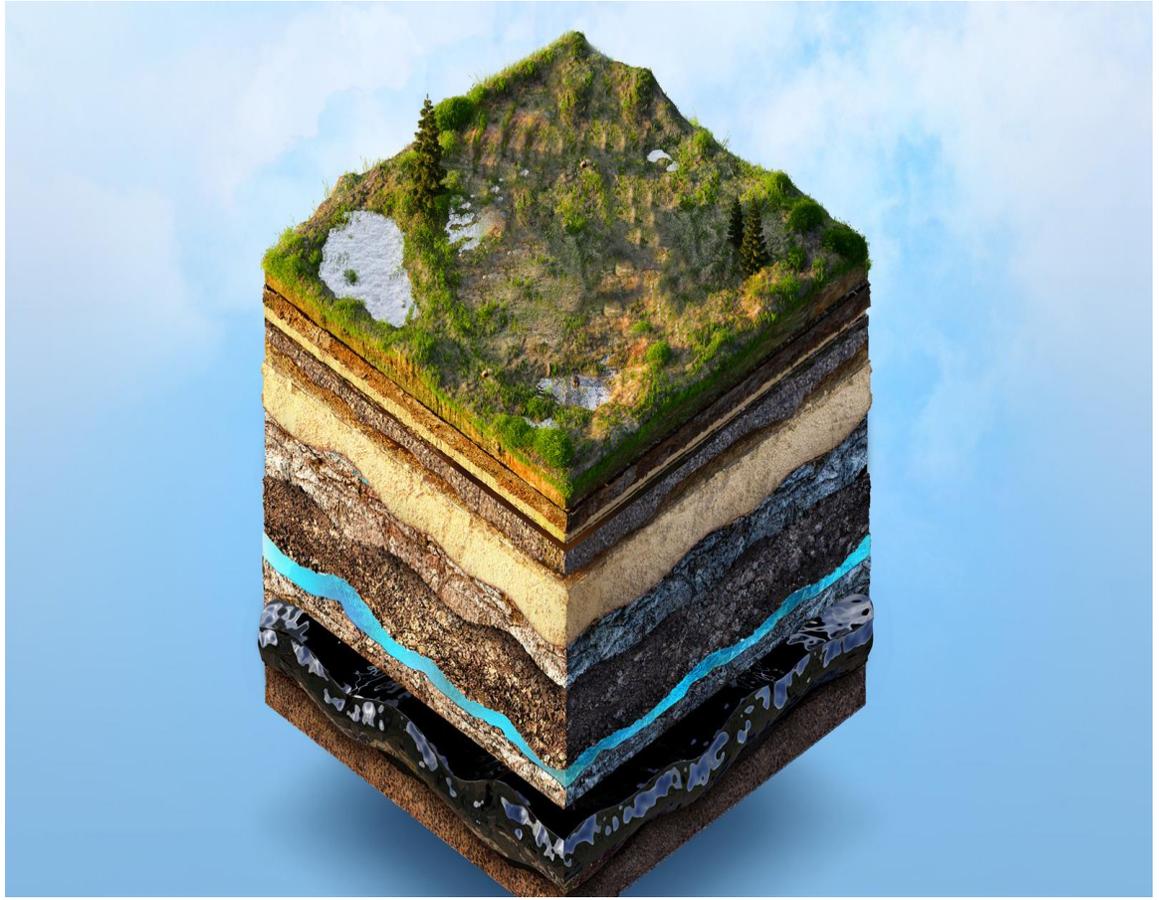


# Country Overshoot Days 2023

When would Earth Overshoot Day land if the world's population lived like...

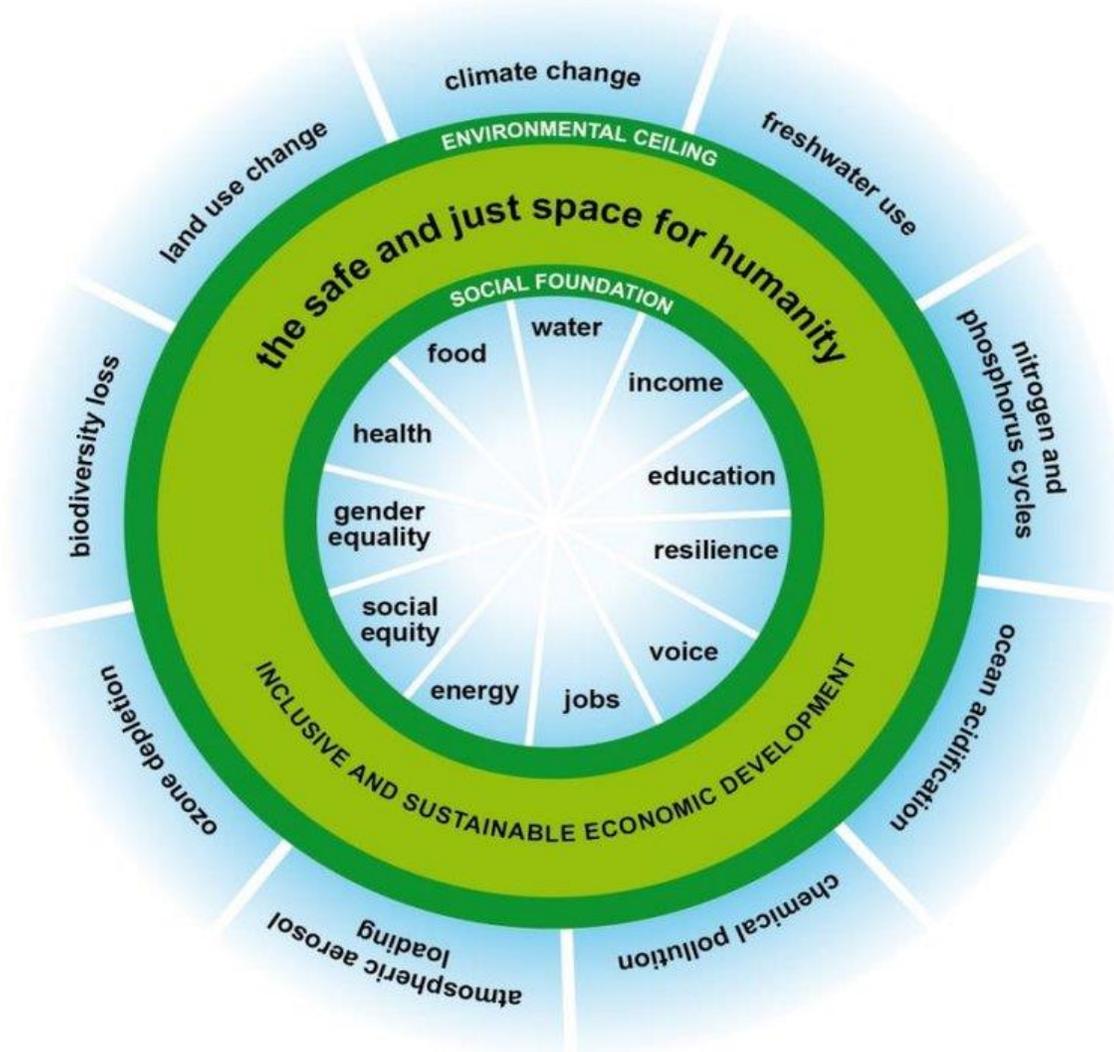


For a full list of countries, visit [overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days](https://overshootday.org/country-overshoot-days).  
 \*French Overshoot Day based on nowcasted data. See [overshootday.org/france](https://overshootday.org/france).  
 Source: National Footprint and Biocapacity Accounts, 2022 Edition  
[data.footprintnetwork.org](https://data.footprintnetwork.org)



# Material use and Earth overshoot

# A just global (circular) economy within planetary boundaries



*“outdated theories have permitted a world in which extreme poverty persists while the wealth of the super-rich grows year on year. And its blind spots have led to policies that are degrading the living world on a scale that threatens all of our futures.”* Kate Raworth, 2019

# Conclusions

- Circular economy concept is linked with a transition to net zero;
- How a circular economy is realised has spatio-temporal implications across material value chain;
- Urgent need to focus on justice (distributional, recognition and procedural) dimensions of transitioning to a circular economy;
- Need to adopt a post-fossil fuel consumer economy that is based on responsible consumption within planetary boundaries that is fair and just across the globe;
- Major challenges to achieving change due to disruption: geo-political; climate change/ecological and technological/ digital.



# Thank you

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