Beyond tipping points: risks, equity and the ethics of intervention Laura M. Pereira 1, 2, Steven R. Smith 3, 4, Lauren Gifford 5, Peter Newell 6, Ben Smith 7, Sebastian Villasante 8, Therezah Achieng 3, Azucena Castro 2, 9, Sara M. Constantino 10. Tom Powell, 3, Ashish Ghadiali 3, Coleen Vogel 1, Caroline Zimm 11 1 Global Change Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa 2 Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden 3 GSI, University of Exeter, UK 4 CUSP, University of Surrey, UK 5 University of Arizona, USA 6 University of Sussex, UK 7 Department of English, University of Exeter, UK & <u>EqualSea Lab-CRETUS</u>, University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain Stanford University, Stanford, USA 10 Northeastern University, USA 11 International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis, Vienna, Austria Correspondence to: Laura M Pereira (laura.pereira@wits.ac.za)

Abstract

Earth system tipping points pose existential threats to current and future generations, both human and non-human, with those least responsible for causing them being at greatest risk. Positive social tipping points (which we shorten to positive tipping points, or PTPs), are often deliberate interventions into human systems with the potential to rapidly address some of these challenges. However, the desire to intervene should neither increase risks nor perpetuate unjust or inequitable outcomes through the creation of sacrifice zones. In this paper, we argue that considerations of what needs to change, who is being asked to change and where the change or its impacts will be felt and by whom, are fundamental questions that require a level of reflexivity and systemic understanding in decision-making. All actors have a role to play in ensuring that justice, equity and ethics are carefully considered before any intervention.

Enabling positive tipping points for radical transformations could benefit from more diverse perspectives to open up solutions, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised voices. We conclude that taking a cautious approach to positive tipping interventions and stepping back to explore all options, not just those appearing to offer a quick fix, could lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes.

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Earth system tipping points pose existential threats requiring urgent action. However, this imperative should neither increase risks nor perpetuate injustices. We argue that considerations of what needs to change, who is asked to change and where the impacts will be felt and by whom, are fundamental questions that need to be addressed in decision-making. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring that justice and equity are incorporated into actions towards a more sustainable future.

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1. Introduction

The world is facing a series of era-defining, existential threats including climate change, biodiversity loss, increased inequality and poverty. In response to these critical challenges, there have been calls for transformative change (IPBES, 2019). Some of these interventions are proposed as potentially normative 'positive' social tipping points, which we shorten to positive tipping points (PTPs). PTPs are defined as changes to a system which become self-perpetuating beyond a threshold, and which lead to substantial, often abrupt impacts that are predominantly beneficial to humans and the natural systems we rely on (McKay et al., 2022; Milkoreit et al., 2018). As we argue, 'positive' is a value judgement: not all the changes associated with PTPs are universally welcome; difficult decisions and trade-offs need to be made as we weigh up anticipated harms versus benefits. Nevertheless, we argue that we have a collective duty to bring about "intentional transformation towards global sustainability" (Lenton et al., 2022; 2), and this is clearly a normative enterprise. The moral 'force' in our usage of the 'positive' descriptor is based on the science of Earth system boundaries and the ethics of Earth system justice (Gupta et al., 2023a; Rockström et al., 2023).

However, undertaking or operationalizing such transformations and attempting to orient complex systems onto more sustainable and socially just trajectories, is messy and complicated (Pereira et al., 2020). As history shows, there are dark sides of transformations with unintended consequences, distributional impacts, and the potential for vested interests to co-opt or reap the benefits of such processes (Blythe et al., 2018). It is necessary to be cautious when approaching the idea of using PTPs and to be very clear what transformations are intended, whom they benefit, and whom they may harm.

Any moment of societal change will inevitably generate winners and losers (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003), and this should also be taken into account in the identification and operationalisation of PTPs where change potentially needs to be both rapid and radical. Indeed, in this context, the language of positive tipping needs to be exercised with caution since the very definition of a PTP, as a point towards an 'idealised' future, is likely to be experienced by many as a polarising event and can have differential welfare impacts on different subsets of the population (Ehret et al., 2022). For example, while some welcome a tipping point in the new renewable energy economy (IEA, 2022; Systemiq, 2023; IRENA, 2022), others working in the fossil fuel and related industries may fear the loss of their livelihoods and communities.

Pollution, habitat destruction and poor working conditions in the expansion of cobalt and lithium mining for battery production, driven by rapidly increasing production of electric vehicles, may create problems as well as opportunities for a different set of communities.

An approach to governance that centres principles of equity and justice (Okereke and Dooley, 2010), will recognise that tipping points, whether conceived primarily as positive or negative, will leave segments of the population behind without the engagement of complementary redistribution mechanisms that can help mitigate against the worst impacts of change (Rammelt et al., 2023). This paper is not proposing how to govern tipping points broadly, but rather focuses on the very specific governance issue of equity and justice. When identifying or

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triggering a tipping point through an intervention, it is necessary to ask: What kind of trade-offs are necessary and what sacrifice zones are being created? Who ends up occupying these sacrifice zones? What forms of vulnerability are exposed by change? Who is left behind? And how can a comprehensive understanding of justice be included in a rigorous way when examining PTPs. Here, we understand sacrifice zones as extractive zones created by the advancement of coordinated forms of capitalism that see those territories and the communities inhabiting them as commodifiable (Gómez-Barris, 2017).

1.1. Climate Justice in Light of Tipping Points

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Recent UNFCCC climate summits have seen increasing calls from climate justice campaigners and representatives of the Global South for a recognition of uneven historical and ongoing responsibility for climate change, currently articulated in calls for 'loss and damage' and elsewhere for reparations (Huq et al., 2013; Constantino et al., 2023). These calls are supported by the work of climate historians, decolonial critics and authors who assert that we cannot hope to advance climate action if we do not address systems of capitalism and colonialism that have created the current crisis and still shape intergovernmental responses to it Bhambra and Newell, 2022; Ghosh, 2022; Yusoff, 2018; Sultana, 2022). The future-focus of much scientific, political and popular, discourse around climate change can create a disconnect with the past, occluding the fact that climate change and its associated crises 'are deeply rooted in history' (Ghosh 2022, 158). In this context, there is a danger that the language of tipping points – small perturbations that trigger large, irreversible responses (Lenton, 2011) - could reinforce a discourse that abstracts climate change from past inequities. The notion of tipping points that are rooted in a biophysical framing, which assumes some 'threshold' and 'set of shocks' that tips a system over, ignores the grinding every-day realities of life that many of the poor and most vulnerable endure as an interconnected set of social, economic and environmental crises. (Nixon, 2013). These vulnerabilities will only be compounded with the increased risks, given climate change and other changing biophysical pressures (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2000).

Moreover, a focus on preventing tipping points can distract attention from the deep structural imbalances of capital and asymmetric power that drive precarity and lead to increased vulnerability to the impacts of tipping events in poorer nations (Roberts and Parks, 2006). The urgency that accompanies the notion of tipping points can overshadow the slow process of rebuilding trust and relationships that have been broken through past harms, referred to by Kyle Whyte as "relational tipping points" (Whyte, 2020). For many Indigenous peoples and local communities who have faced the existential crisis of colonialism and who are now at the forefront of the climate crisis (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019), relational tipping points may have already been breached (Whyte, 2021, 2020). The process of rebuilding consent, trust, accountability, and reciprocity—qualities of relationships necessary to avoid further injustices—require time and commitment (Whyte, 2020). Attempts to avoid tipping points through geoengineering, for example, could merely pass on costs and irreversible effects onto future generations (Biermann et al., 2022), while contemporary drives to reach technological tipping points, such as the push towards electric vehicles, can produce new vulnerabilities for communities with homes rich in

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rare earth minerals (Calvão et al., 2021). Hence without due care, attempts to address tipping points can perpetuate spatial and temporal injustices (Sovacool et al., 2022).

In this paper we discuss considerations of ethics, equity and justice in relation to the complex interconnection of biophysical and social, 'positive' and 'negative' tipping points. The destabilizing of critical Earth systems is already contributing to adverse effects on human well-being and global ecosystems on which it depends, and will continue to worsen (Rockström et al., 2009). Crossing biophysical and social tipping points will exacerbate current injustices and inequities as access to water, food, energy and infrastructure will be uneven, strained, and increasingly politicised (Rammelt et al., 2023), leading to greater potential harms on future generations by triggering potentially irreversible processes. It is thus necessary to approach PTPs with due precaution and humility in our understanding of how complex social-ecological processes unfold- as such we refer to the need for an ethics of intervention that centres considerations of equity and justice as central tenets.

1.2. Discourse matters

Within the framework of tipping points, it is crucial to remember that all human and more than human 'actors' are, in Donna Haraway's words, 'situated... in complicated histories' (Haraway, 2016), which inform complex and plural visions for the future. The IPCC AR6 report urges immediate action and deep emissions reductions in this decade whilst also calling for climate resilient development that prioritises risk reduction, equity and justice (IPCC, 2023). In seeking to build a majority of people in favour of stronger, faster action, it is vital that values-inclusive forms of discourse are identified to 'create a sense of collective responsibility and action' (Wiedmann et al., 2020) and which avoid alienating the actors needed to form this coalition. Even processes to decolonise understandings of time, including seeing it as linear, must be fostered so that we do not exacerbate problems as we act with urgency to find near-term solutions to the climate emergency like large-scale renewable energy infrastructures that can sometimes infringe on human and nature's rights (Whyte, 2021).

At the same time, the extreme difficulty and tradeoffs inherent in achieving a safe and just operating space for life on Earth need to be understood (Gupta et al., 2023a). A discourse that reconciles the need to meet the internationally agreed +1.5°C rise in average global atmospheric temperature, alongside the need to address over-consumption and inequalities within and between nations, can no longer rely on the dominant narratives of efficiency gains and gradual decoupling (Hickel and Kallis, 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2020; Steinberger et al., 2020; Constantino and Weber, 2021; Lamb et al., 2020). A growing understanding of tipping points in the Anthropocene 'cancels the peaceful and reassuring project of sustainable development' (Bonneuil and Fressoz, 2016: 29). We have entered what Bruno Latour calls 'the new climatic regime' (Latour, 2018) in which the geophysical framework that we have always taken for granted, the ground on which our history, politics and economics have played out, has become destabilized. An ethical community of nations that respects the Earth's biophysical limits and minimum social foundations for human flourishing must recognise that the only viable solutions are ones that prioritise strong sustainability and sufficiency for all (Haberl, 2015;

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<u>Trebeck and Williams, 2019)</u> informed, for example, by the principles of 'doughnut economics' (<u>Raworth, 2017</u>) and notions of safe and just boundaries (<u>Gupta et al., 2023a</u>). This places differential responsibilities on different groups of people as we seek to navigate towards more just, equitable and sustainable futures.

1.3. What do we mean by equity and justice?

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When considering climate justice, it is useful to be precise about which area or domain is investigated—climate impacts, mitigation efforts, adaptation or decent living standards. There are dilemmas and trade-offs across attempts to address recognition, procedural, distributional, reparative, and inter- and intragenerational aspects of justice simultaneously, clarity on the scope, both in terms of space and time, is important. Additionally, many different terms and concepts used interchangeably across disciplines, cultures and individuals, create a risk for misunderstandings and also misinterpretation of research findings (Newell et al., 2021). As we go about shaping just transitions, it is important to find a common ground (Stevis and Felli, 2020; Zimm et al., in press).

Gupta et al. (2023) propose an integrated "Earth system justice" framework to approach these questions and understand how to reduce risks from crossing tipping points while ensuring wellbeing for all and an equitable distribution of nature's benefits, risks and related responsibilities. Earth system justice is conceptualised through multiple approaches and understandings of justice including, but not limited to, intragenerational, intergenerational justice and interspecies justice. Intragenerational justice refers to the relationships between humans right now and includes justice between states and among people across scales. Intergenerational justice examines relationships across generations, such as the legacy of greenhouse gas emissions or ecosystem destruction by current and past generations on youth and future people, and assumes that natural resources and environmental quality should be shared across generations Tremmel, 2009). In this context, interspecies justice refers to considering the rights of nature and other species to coexist on the planet. It draws on a rights of nature discourse (Harden-Davies et al., 2020) that also counters the idea of human exceptionalism as a lens for thinking through development impacts (Srinivasan and Kasturirangan, 2016). Drawing on these frameworks can help us to assess the uneven impacts of nearing earth system tipping points, but also the differential responsibility for efforts to avoid tipping points and the distributional and procedural aspects of positive tipping dynamics.

Within the domains mentioned above, one can discriminate between different forms (or dimensions) of justice, i.e., distributive (or equity across different populations), procedural (how decision or research processes are designed, who is involved), or reparative (e.g. recognition of wrongs, restoration where possible, and compensation for negative impacts and past injustices) (Byskov and Hyams, 2022). Such justice approaches also include recognition and epistemic justice, which consider the value of multiple knowledge systems, especially local, Indigenous, and unrecognised, misrecognized or marginalised groups (de Sousa Santos, 2008). Finally, 'intersectional' justice that includes multiple and overlapping social identities and categories underpinning inequality, underrepresentation, marginalisation, and the capacity to respond (j.e.

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gender, race, age, class, health) must be considered in the context of earth system justice (Gupta et al., 2023b). These different forms of justice are not mutually exclusive: procedural justice may be used to arrive at restoration or compensatory payments, which can be assessed through the lens of distributive justice.

Changes related to <u>Earth</u> and social system tipping can be analysed <u>with reference to</u> all these justice considerations to design forward looking actions that avoid negative impacts. Especially in cross-disciplinary discussions and exchanges between different actors, having shared understanding of the nuance and need for contextual framing of challenges will enable and speed up implementation. It is key to highlight that what is perceived as fair is subjective and highly context specific and may change over time <u>(Caney, 2012)</u>. In the context of addressing negative biophysical tipping points by attempting to enable positive tipping, an Earth system justice approach is critical to ensure past injustices are not perpetuated in the name of staying within planetary boundaries.

2. Blind Spots of intervention

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<u>Treaty</u> negotiators have sometimes <u>ignored</u> or <u>dismissed</u> normative dimensions of climate policy and the possibility of unintended social consequences <u>(Okereke and Dooley, 2010; Klinsky et al., 2017)</u>. However, all actors in the process – from scientists to world leaders – <u>must</u> avoid today's solutions becoming tomorrow's harms. This is especially true when considering interventions designed to trigger exponential rates of positive social change, or quick 'fixes' such as geo-engineering <u>(Sovacool, 2021)</u>. An equally exponential increase in unintended negative consequences is also possible. It is thus imperative that all actors take responsibility to <u>acknowledge</u> potential risks <u>and centre questions of justice</u>, when referencing <u>PTPs</u> as solutions to the ongoing climate and other social-ecological crises.

2.1. Risks and Unintended consequences of interventions for climate impact mitigation and adaptation.

Interventions for climate impact mitigation and adaptation can have unintended consequences, broadly addressed as maladaptation. "Aside from wasting time and money, maladaptation is a process through which people become even more vulnerable to climate change," Schipper, suggests (Schipper, 2020: 409). A good example of risks associated with the quest for PTPs for climate impact mitigation is the transformation to a renewable energy economy that is driving the growing demand for batteries, solar panels, and other digital devices, all of which require mining of lithium, cobalt and other rare earth minerals (Dutta et al., 2016). While this creates economic benefits for mining communities, it can also produce negative ecological, economic and social impacts in the near, medium and long-term (Hernandez and Newell, 2022; Manzetti and Mariasiu, 2015). A recent study finds that if today's demand for Electric Vehicles is projected to 2050, the lithium requirements for the US market alone would triple the amount of lithium currently produced for the global market (Rionfrancos et al., 2023). However, the authors also find that lithium demand could be reduced by 92% in 2050 relative to the most lithium-intensive scenarios by decreasing car dependency (e.g. through increasing public transit or

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biking), limiting the size of EV batteries, and creating a robust recycling system (Rionfrancos et al., 2023). Within this context, the industrial mining sector has been accused of supporting state violence and corruption, polluting ecosystems (Banza Lubaba Nkulu et al., 2018), and exacerbating poverty, while the informal mining sector is known for ignoring occupational safety and health standards and human rights concerns (Sovacool, 2019).

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Other prominent examples of unintended consequences have been documented for: a) large-scale renewable and bioenergy projects, resulting in significant local opposition (Cavicchi, 2018; Torres Contreras, 2022); b) the displacement of Indigenous peoples, local communities (Zurba and Bullock, 2020) and coastal fishers (Beckensteiner et al., 2023); c) deforestation (Kraxner et al., 2013); d) biodiversity losses (Pedroli et al., 2013); e) competition for land and water resources (Haberl, 2015; Tarhule, 2017); f) food insecurity (Hasegawa et al., 2018); and g) for decarbonisation of the built environment, particularly the housing stock, resulting in health impacts from poor indoor air quality, and fuel poverty (Davies and Oreszczyn, 2012).

An example of climate policy leading to unintended outcomes with social justice implications is 'carbon leakage' (Carbon leakage, 2023; Grubb et al., 2022). Although often difficult to measure and distinguish from the more general offshoring of emissions due to globalisation of trade and deindustrialisation in richer countries, carbon leakage in response to climate policy measures is an example of a negative spill-over effect. Unilateral climate policies such as carbon pricing and emissions trading schemes (ETSs), designed to encourage domestic carbon-intensive sectors to invest in carbon-neutral production, may raise costs and contribute to the decision to relocate to a region enjoying equal access to the same markets, but which has fewer, less stringent policies/regulations (Prellezo et al., 2023). Further intervention in the form of carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAMs), carbon content labelling/mandates and other measures may then be introduced to adjust for these climate policy asymmetries.

Relatedly, significant policy research is being devoted to the concept of a 'just transition' Wang and Lo, 2021; Newell and Mulvaney, 2013), which originated from labour market impacts of decarbonization strategies in coal-intensive regions the Global North (Abraham, 2017). Unless sufficient government investment, regional regeneration, support and retraining are provided to those workers and communities most at risk in the transition away from fossil fuels, severe economic, social and cultural hardships may predictably (though unintentionally) follow. Furthermore, trust in government will fall even lower, and counter-narratives on grounds of fairness/justice voiced by actors for climate policy delay will be strengthened Patterson et al. 2018; Lamb et al., 2020) potentially further undermining efforts to strengthen governance and make it more inclusive. Participatory and deliberative governance approaches that include potential losers and other stakeholder groups in designing and implementing policy for sustainability transitions, can help to lower the barriers to transition by building political will and legitimacy, and negotiating effective compromises for more just outcomes (Fesenfeld et al., 2022). More generally, fiscal policy needs to be designed to subsidise lower-income households for the higher costs that may accompany climate policies such as carbon pricing, emissions trading, new mandates/standards for energy-efficient buildings, smart energy systems, and the electrification of transport. Failure to do so could set off a cascade of unintended consequences

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and increase poverty, inequality, hunger and other health impacts, popular protest and political instability (Newell et al., 2021; Davies and Oreszczyn, 2012).

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In the Global South, the transition to net-zero carbon emissions faces multiple challenges, such as addressing energy security, poverty, multidimensional vulnerabilities, and ensuring decent living standards for all. These countries are confronted with a toxic mix of shrinking carbon budget, growing inequalities, heightened climate-related risks, and limited capabilities for mitigation and adaptation due to increasing debt burdens (Steele and Patel, 2020), but the debate on historic responsibilities, development rights, and net-zero efforts is gaining renewed attention (Mishra, 2021). From the perspective of the Global South, achieving just transitions requires addressing the double inequality of the climate crisis where developing countries bear a disproportionate share of the risks associated with emissions, while industrialised nations are primarily responsible for historical emissions (Gardiner, 2004). Therefore, developing countries are demanding fair procedures for distributing the costs and benefits of mitigation and adaptation. Such financing commitments from rich countries remained absent in the decisions taken at COP28 in Dubai in 2023 (Jessop et al., 2023).

Unpopular climate policies can sometimes trigger a widespread 'backlash' that can be defined as:

'An abrupt and forceful negative reaction by a significant number of actors seeking to reverse a policy, often through extraordinary means that transgress established procedures and norms' (Patterson, 2023, 68).

Examples of climate policy backlash include the ill-fated Australian carbon pricing scheme (Crowley, 2017), and the fuel tax increase that gave rise to the Gilets Jaunes or Yellow Jackets protest movement in France in 2018-2019 (Kinniburgh, 2019). Other well-researched forms of unintended impacts of policy measures include rebound effects and moral licensing (Chakravarty et al., 2013). Rebound effects generally refer to behavioural responses in which people consume more of something that costs less due to an environmental improvement such as energy efficiency, which can perversely lead to an overall net increase in pollution and resource use. For example, people may choose to drive further or buy larger cars as cars become more fuel efficient (Sorrell et al., 2009). Although rebound effects have so far shown negligible impact, these kinds of dynamics highlight the complexities and uncertainties surrounding human-nature systems, and the potential for unintended consequences in our efforts to induce 'positive' tipping points (Constantino et al., 2022).

In the field of climate communications, there are unintended consequences associated with a failure to build broad coalitions based on values-inclusive narratives and norms (Evans, 2017; Klein, 2015; Constantino and Weber, 2021; Rowson and Corner, 2014; Sloterdijk, 2012; Meadowcroft, 2011). Research shows that politically progressive actors tend to believe in the inseparability of climate, (re)distributional and social justice issues as a moral imperative. Procedural justice is also key as small producers and/or vulnerable people are often excluded from political mechanisms which determine climate actions (Villasante et al., 2022). 'Climate justice' can then include colonial, gender and racial injustices and future generations (Jafry,

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2018; Perkins, 2018), particularly in its more transformative form which seeks to address the drivers of climate injustice (Newell et al., 2021). In centering justice and combining multiple, intersecting social movements under the climate justice umbrella, many campaigners and scholars believe that the strength of their combined movements can be amplified Mikulewicz et al., 2023). However, there are also concerns that strong social justice framings can have the unintended effect of increasing political polarisation rather than building broader coalitions Patterson et al., 2018; Smith, 2022). Political progressives tend to frame climate change risk in terms of 'individualising' values of equality, care and fairness, while political conservatives prefer to use 'binding' values based on loyalty, authority, and purity (Adger et al., 2017; Haidt, 2013; Graham et al., 2009). Conservatives are not necessarily against stronger climate governance, but reject progressive framings that challenge their values and identities Feinberg and Willer, 2013; Feygina et al., 2010; Kidwell et al., 2013). Research has also shown that some actors recognise the need for greater urgency in climate policy, but are reluctant to champion it due to a lack of support and to avoid being labelled as 'extremists' (Willis, 2020). As a result, some climate policymakers and other actors prefer to focus on the more technocratic, less politically risky aspects of transition governance (Patterson et al., 2018).

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If decarbonisation is left to market-based mechanisms that prioritise only profitability, the speed and up-scaling of technological change may threaten the human rights and well-being of some people while allowing other, more powerful, incumbent actors and structures to prevail (Newell et al., 2022). Unique opportunities to redesign entire systems and subsystems along more efficient, ethical, sustainable, and equitable lines may be lost where speed is allowed to trump inclusivity and depth of process (Leach and Scoones, 2006). For example, U.S. solar photovoltaic deployment is forecast to grow non-linearly in the near-term, generating around 12% of all US power by 2027 (SEIA/Wood MacKenzie, 2023). While this is a positive development in terms of the speed of overall decarbonisation, the perpetuation of an energy system dominated by profit-maximising utility companies would be viewed as a missed opportunity for advocates of energy democracy and place-based, cooperative and community-owned energy (Stone et al., 2022; Hoffman and High-Pippert, 2005). Likewise, 'plug and play' approaches that seek to electrify cars, but not boost the accessibility of public transport can serve to reinforce private automobility (Rionfrancos et al., 2023).

Additionally, there is a risk that a growing concern regarding Earth System tipping dynamics could propel research into speculative interventions such as widespread carbon dioxide removal or social geoengineering or solar radiation modification—a set of hypothetical solutions aimed at reducing incoming sunlight and thus lowering global mean temperatures (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021). The most common solar geoengineering proposal involves injecting aerosols into the stratosphere to limit the influx of solar energy, but there are also more regional or local proposals involving different technologies. Proponents often argue for these hypothetical solutions on the grounds that we have made little progress on reducing carbon emissions and that solar geoengineering could be used to buy time or as a failsafe (Keith, 2013; Keith et al., 2017). However, solar geoengineering and other more speculative solutions often come with substantial uncertainty and risks, which are likely to vary across regions, and insufficient governance mechanisms to equitably and effectively manage such

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risks (Schneider et al., 2020; Stephens et al., 2021; Kravitz and MacMartin, 2020; McLaren, 2018). This has led groups of scholars to call for an "international non-use agreement" and for limits on related research as well (Biermann et al., 2022).

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2.2. Winners and Losers: Sacrifice Zones

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To include equity and justice in the discourse of tipping points, it is necessary to consider how resource extraction at the planetary level is not only pushing local tipping points through resource dispossession, but is also exacerbating the drivers leading to transgressing planetary boundaries (Richardson et al., 2023). Resource extraction, be it for fossil fuels or green energy sources, creates sacrifice zones mainly in the Global South to sustain unlimited economic growth in the Global North while it contributes to transgressing the planetary boundaries further (Sultana, 2023b). The tendency of PTPs to benefit some while (intentionally or unintentionally) excluding others, exacerbates sacrifice zones. Winners and losers from transitions are relational in a highly unequal global economy stratified by power, race, class and gender (Newell, 2021). Well-intentioned interventions therefore have the potential to put severe pressure on lands held by Indigenous and marginalised communities and reshape their ecologies into "green sacrifice zones" by reproducing a form of climate colonialism in the name of just transitions ¿Zografos and Robbins, 2020). Climate colonialism involves "the deepening or expanding of domination of less powerful countries and peoples through initiatives that intensify foreign exploitation of poorer nations' resources or undermine the sovereignty of native and Indigenous communities in the course of responding to the climate crisis" (Zografos & Robbins, 2020: 543). They go on to define Green sacrifice zones as "spaces or ecologies, places and populations that will be severely affected by the sourcing, transportation, installation, and operation of solutions for powering low-carbon transitions, as well as end-of-life treatment of related material waste" (Zografos & Robbins, 2020: 543). Current examples include 'green grabs' for critical minerals, biofuels and water or the acquisition of land for forestry carbon offset projects (Fairhead et al.,

severely affected by the sourcing, transportation, installation, and operation of solutions for powering low-carbon transitions, as well as end-of-life treatment of related material waste" (Zografos & Robbins, 2020: 543). Current examples include 'green grabs' for critical minerals, biofuels and water or the acquisition of land for forestry carbon offset projects (Fairhead et al., 2012; Scoones et al., 2015).

Some queer decolonial critique puts it, sacrifice zones are not random, but carefully chosen: "the colonial paradigm, worldview, and technologies [...] mark out regions of "high biodiversity" in order to reduce life to capitalist resource conversion" (Gómez-Barris, 2017). The violence that capitalism inflicts on places designated as sacrifice zones can be immediate, but it can also be slow and imperceptible. Decolonial ecocritical thinker Rob Nixon, describes the "slow violence," that unfolds in marginalised communities, over a long period of time and which are almost imperceptible (Nixon, 2013). This extractive view from corporations and governments meets the resistance of "submerged perspectives", that is, the ways in which the local humans and nonhumans that inhabit those territories perceive life as entangled, where the destruction of one parcel affects the rest of the entities and breaks the spiritual heritage in a region (Gómez-Barris, 2017). This slow violence has delayed effects and requires justice to take new forms to secure effective legal measures for prevention, restitution, and redress (Nixon, 2013: 8,9). To include justice and equity in climate mitigation actions, Latin American countries, for example, have developed the first agreement Acuerdo de Escazú in 2018 (CEPAL, 2018). This regional

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policies and transition actions: (1) access to environmental information, (ii) public participation in

agreement proposes three concrete objectives to include climate justice in environmental

environmental decision-making processes, and (iii) access to justice in environmental matters. These three points involving communities in discussions of climate justice stand out as crucial for a theory on positive tipping points that aims to include equity and justice frameworks.

A theory of tipping points should not only recognise the way in which the military-industrial complex through powerful non-state actors, and even well-intentioned government policies. disguise and disregard the toxicity and contamination that poor and disadvantaged communities of the world suffer (Bullard, 2005), but also where the "disposable" populations are rising in resistance to demand a climate justice attuned to local social-ecological realities (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). Discussions of tipping points similarly need to be aware of the technologies of governance (race-making, even the processes for identifying 'indebted countries' or Least Developed Countries - LDCs) that enable access to and appropriation of stocks for capitalist resource conversion. For the concept of sustainability and just sustainable futures to help improve the situation of those local realities, environmental justice scholar Julie Sze argues that a "situated sustainability" is necessary (Sze, 2018). Situated sustainability should "set the parameters for why and how vulnerability (environmental or other) is disproportionately distributed, one of the key questions in environmental justice research" (Sze, 2018, 13). In other words, if the questions we ask aim at transformative change or positive tipping points, these cannot neglect how racial capitalism contributes to inequalities and environmental degradation (Sze, 2018; Newell, 2005).

2.3. Reinforcing current power dynamics and structures

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While averting negative biophysical tipping points in the Earth system is a global challenge that will require a coordinated global effort, the research and policymaking surrounding positive tipping must also grapple with historical and contemporary inequalities in the production of environmental harms, and the differentiated and uneven capacity and responsibility to respond or to withstand such impacts. These concerns are echoed in the principle enshrined in the UNFCCC of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities' and highlights the greater responsibility to act to reduce emissions and the likelihood of crossing critical thresholds by richer countries and polluter elites, whether through their own direct efforts or through the support of efforts in countries with fewer economic resources (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2000). Refocusing mitigation attention on high-emitting groups, countries and sectors highlights the need for interventions and policy measures that attempt to shift the current consumption patterns of the wealthy and the actions of large private corporations (Newell, 2021; Kenner, 2019; Wiedmann et al., 2020; Rammelt et al., 2023) and the infrastructures of high-impact sectors such as food (reducing meat and dairy consumption) and energy production (switching to non-fossil fuel based energy), transport (reducing car use and air travel) and housing that, combined, comprise about 75% of total carbon footprints (Newell et al., 2021). Furthermore, this view also highlights the need for substantial financial transfers from the Global North to the Global South to help build climate resilience, to compensate for irreparable losses due to climate change, and to offset the costs of mitigation efforts (Jackson et al., 2023). Without such measures, efforts to address Earth System tipping points risk reinforcing unequal power dynamics and current inequities.

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2.4 Positive financial tipping points: actors and mechanisms

Large financial actors have been shown to possess significant corporate control globally (Fichtner et al., 2017). Through their influence over economic activities that modify ecosystems associated with tipping elements, financial actors can also affect climate stability and biodiversity. A financial sector tipping point that reconfigures flows of finance towards climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage compensation, biodiversity conservation, addressing vulnerability etc. requires reimagining and reconfiguring governance of public and private finance (Rammelt et al., 2023), including changing the mandates of multilateral development banks, reforming central banks and regulating private company law and disclosure policies.

For example, higher costs of accessing finance in the Global South mean that many countries are unable to invest sufficiently in providing access to basic services like electricity (Ameli et al., 2021), which underpin provision of healthcare and clean water, food security, and access to information and economic opportunity. The most vulnerable in these countries stand to gain significantly from the low-carbon transition, with cost reductions in renewable energy generation making solar PV the most viable way to provide electricity to the majority of those currently without access (nearly 600million people in Sub-Saharan Africa alone) (IEA, 2023). Low investment due to the difficulty of accessing finance creates a higher risk-perception of investment in these countries further increasing the cost of capital and leading to an 'investment trap' that can be further exacerbated by climate impacts (Ameli et al., 2021). Interventions that lower the cost of capital, like credit guarantees and supporting growth of domestic capital markets, can help to break out of this cycle and open up flows of finance to address critical vulnerabilities and support adaptation.

Furthermore, the public sector should ringfence funding to support the need to respond to unintended consequences. With this improved and new direction of finance mechanisms, businesses should then be able to both meet standards and operate in vulnerable areas that need finance to become more resilient. This includes moving money to key areas where it is needed (adaptation, biodiversity, social common goods) rather than just for profit (Crona et al., 2021).

A framework for guiding sustainable and equitable investments, and a taxonomy of these investments are not universally defined. It is necessary to provide a classification system of activities that comply with the principles of such investments, thereby guiding capital investment decisions and development policy towards an improved sustainability (Sumaila et al., 2021). One example is the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment¹ committing to responsible investment, which has been signed by 1400 signatories from all over the world since 2015, and with 59 trillion USD of assets under their management. In practice, this means that publicly listed companies globally need to abide by international principles, even if the countries they operate in might be insensitive to such standards (Galaz et al., 2015). Another example is the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Sustainable Blue Economy

¹ www.unpri.org/about-pri/the-six-principles

Finance Principles whereby UNEP works with financial institutions to incorporate environmental, social, and governance issues into business principles and financial market practices (UNEP, 2020).

The recent vision for a global, multi-directional and interconnected public investment to design a new architecture of the finance system based on the application of a global and progressive tax system on wealth and on more democratic ways of deciding how best to spend public investments is one of the serious proposals for reform of the global financial structure (Global Public Investment Network, 2023). In addition, Zucman (2016) suggests that there are several ways that would help limit tax evasion and avoidance in the global economy. For example, the creation of a global financial registry that tracks wealth regardless of where it is located, reforming the corporate tax system so that the global profits of multinational companies are distributed where the resources are extracted, and more strictly regulating banks that help evade taxes with lax regulations.

Although the secrecy practices afforded by tax havens hinder a precise quantification, Fortune 500 companies are estimated to have US\$2.3 trillion in offshore accounts and capital positions. Tax havens cost governments between US\$ 500-600 billion/year in lost taxation, including an estimated loss to non-OECD economies of US\$200 billion. Individual wealth sheltered in tax havens is an estimated US\$ 8-36 trillion, costing public accounts further (Shaxson, 2019). For comparison, financing needed to preserve global biodiversity is estimated at US\$ 722-967 billion per year until 2030 (Deutz et al., 2020). In addition, the average global statutory corporate tax rate has gone from 40% in 1980 to 24% in 2020, with an actual tax rate much lower in many jurisdictions (Dempsey et al., 2022). This reduction in the tax rate for large companies has already been shown to lead to increased inequality in different countries around the world, with a higher risk in developing countries that are highly dependent on natural resource-based exports (Banerjee and Duflo, 2020). At the national level, positioning sustainability as a tax principle, integrating this dimension into corporate social responsibility on financial markets and reducing the acceptability of tax avoidance can be powerful levers for generating the funds needed for sustainability agendas (Bird and Davis-Nozemack, 2018). Moreover, reducing tax avoidance, tackling illicit financial transfers, and reducing the debts of developing countries can produce in many cases more governmental income than what has been identified in the biodiversity finance gap (Dempsey et al., 2022).

The above distortions are not simply a market failure, they signal a broader institutional failure. Governments almost everywhere exacerbate the problem by paying people more to exploit Nature than to protect it, and to prioritise unsustainable economic activities (Dasgupta, 2021). Therefore, another way to unlock the funding needed to reverse nature loss by 2030 as well as the cost of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is to remove harmful subsidies that harm biodiversity, such as in agriculture, fisheries and fossil fuel production (Dasgupta, 2021; Sumaila et al., 2021). According to Koplow and Steenblik (2022), the world is spending at least \$1.8 trillion a year, equivalent to 2% of global GDP on subsidies that are driving ecosystem destruction and species extinction. In other words, public money is funding our own extinction (Dasgupta, 2021). To address this problem, Costello et al., (Costello et al., 2016) recently

showed that global governments could repurpose some or all of the roughly US\$22 billion they annually allocate as harmful fisheries subsidies to directly support fishers' incomes without incentivizing overfishing. This funding could support business development capacities for fishers, be given to fishers as lump sum cash transfers, or be used to develop and institute management reforms all of which would support low-income fishers, particularly in the countries of the Global South.

Achieving a sustainable future leaves no choice but to avoid a transgression of planetary boundaries and tipping points in key Earth system processes (Lenton et al., 2019). Financial actors are key players in the global economy and affect biodiversity around the world. Several recent policy and private initiatives have been launched with the ambition to redirect financial flows towards activities that protect natural capital, influence ecosystems and generate equitable outcomes to people in a positive way (Galaz et al., 2015).

3. Illustrative case study on risks and justice implications in Marine Protected Areas

The ocean economy is expected to grow faster than the global economy in the coming decades, reaching \$3 trillion by 2030 (OECD, 2016), with well-established (e.g. fisheries, aquaculture) and novel ocean sectors (e.g. seabed mining, ocean wave energy) multiplying their activity and footprint in recent years (Jouffray et al., 2020). Yet, opportunities, access and benefits from oceans remain highly unequal. For instance, seafood production is highly concentrated in a few Global North large corporations (Österblom et al., 2015), while in most places of the Global South, the local nutritional needs are jeopardised by the activity of distant fishing fleets, seafood trade, and the use of catches for fish oil/fish meal for animal feed (Hicks et al., 2019). The unprecedented race for food, spaces and materials, but also the effects of other drivers such as climate change and pollution, are exacerbating social inequities and threatening marine ecosystems functioning and productivity. The race to occupy the oceans and exploit more resources and at greater depths, combined with the impacts of climate change, are leading to an increasing risk of reaching dangerous ocean tipping points (Jouffray et al., 2020; McKay et al., 2022). Thus, there is a pressing call for transformative actions that halt and reverse marine biodiversity loss rates (IPBES, 2019), particularly in some Global South biodiversity hotspots.

The recently agreed Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework seeks to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 to halt biodiversity loss (30x30 target 3 (CBD, 2022). Through the global CBD negotiations, conserving 30% of the ocean (and land) is seen as an important threshold for halting biodiversity loss and maintaining ecosystem function as previous levels of protection were insufficient (Dinerstein et al., 2019; Baillie and Zhang, 2018). With Target 3 set 'to ensure and enable that by 2030 at least 30% of terrestrial and inland water areas, and of marine and coastal areas, are effectively conserved and managed (CBD, 2022),' it could function as a potential positive tipping point if appropriately implemented. However, the 30x30 target risks perpetuating historical injustices, colonial legacies and power imbalances by imposing Western conservation models on communities in the Global South (Obura et al., 2023). In effect, it is essential to explore the intricate social aspects of the initiative (Sandbrook et al., 2023), offering

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a more nuanced and equitable discourse on positive tipping points in ocean governance and conservation and the role of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in achieving them.

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Although the positive ecological impacts of MPAs are relatively well understood (i.e. large, old, well-enforced and 'no-take' MPAs would provide greater ecological benefits within the area effectively protected (Sala and Giakoumi, 2018), less attention is paid to the negative socioeconomic impacts that MPA establishment can have on dependent and marginalised communities (Bennett and Dearden, 2014; Rasheed, 2020). Past research has shown that the MPAs can exacerbate equity issues currently present in the Global South, by further marginalising already vulnerable coastal communities (Sowman and Sunde, 2018; Hill et al., 2016). MPAs establishment and management may exclude local and Indigenous participation, which in turn can also lead to reduced conservation and management gains (Hill et al., 2016). A heightened focus on increasing MPAs may entail undesirable consequences for social wellbeing of vulnerable communities in a variety of ways, including forced removals and displacement of Indigenous peoples from traditional lands and waters, loss or restricted access rights, as well as negative impacts on food security, health, livelihoods, identity and culture Bennett and Dearden, 2014; Hill et al., 2016). As an example, (Sowman and Sunde, 2018) explored the social dimensions of five MPAs in South Africa, finding that they led to the weakening of local governance rights and processes, loss of tenure rights and access to resources, loss of livelihoods, negative impacts on culture and way of life, and increased conflict in already marginalised coastal communities. Similarly, Oracion et al. (2005) documented how in some MPAs in the Philippines, the tourism sector marginalised small-scale fisheries in terms of access and control, jeopardising the economic and socio-cultural viability of fishing-dependent communities.

A strong global focus on increasing MPAs as a 'tipping point' towards conserving marine biodiversity, may fail to carefully and comprehensively address historical impacts and ongoing equity issues experienced by coastal communities in the Global South. In addition, measuring conservation success based solely on a coverage metric can incentivize the establishment of large centrally-governed MPAs (often situated in former colonies) (O'Leary et al., 2018), at the expense of relatively small, but locally managed MPAs (Smallhorn-West et al., 2020). A looming time horizon for 30x30 may also discourage participatory and collaborative processes that may take longer to achieve but are more efficient in the long term (O'Leary et al., 2018). Concerning global planning of MPAs expansion, maps are not apolitical. Global conservation planning exercises informed by biophysical variables and cumulative human impacts placed a significant fraction of priority areas within the Global South (e.g. Coral Triangle, Southwest Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea) (Zhao et al., 2020; Selig et al., 2014; Jenkins and Van Houtan, 2016), occupying the entire Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of some Global South countries (e.g. Indonesia) and thereby perpetuating a form of green sacrifice zone. While providing important, foundations, this literature hardly discusses the ethical and governance considerations of such "conservation planning exercises" and local socio-economics needs are either conceptualised as an extra map layer that competes with wildlife or something to consider in future analyses.

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The 30x30 initiative and the revitalization and empowerment of local communities may be reconciled by: (1) balancing both biodiversity and well-being outcomes of local communities when enhancing existing MPAs and designing new ones; (2) seriously considering the wide range of "other effective area-based conservation measures", including those where small-scale actors are empowered; (3) involving coastal communities from the very beginning of decision-making processes to enhance procedural justice, increasing the likelihood of equitable outcomes; (4) acknowledging customary, traditional and local practices of Indigenous peoples when protecting coastal areas; and (5) considering ongoing sustainable Indigenous management systems within the 30x30 target (e.g. (Atlas et al., 2021). Importantly, the expansion of MPAs, across both large and small areas, should not be seen as a single strategy to balance marine biodiversity and socio-economic needs; it must be part of a broader and more diverse management and governance portfolio to govern our oceans in a sustainable and equitable manner (O'Leary et al., 2018).

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4. Jmplications for practice,

Above we have laid out a series of risks and potential injustices associated with the need to act to address the existential threat that is climate change and related sustainability concerns like biodiversity loss. We argue that interventions, especially concerning narratives of positive tipping points, cannot be divorced from current injustices and inequities in the global earth system. Below, we set out some specific key messages for different actor groups to internalise as we all seek to act to shift the planet onto a more environmentally sustainable and equitable

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4.1. Researchers

trajectory.

4.1.1. Employ participatory and plural/inclusive approaches.

Biophysical and social system tipping points are interconnected, and do not exist in isolation (Sultana, 2023a). Avoiding an increase of harms requires a broad set of expertise, approaches, and acknowledgment that we may need multiple and plural approaches not only within academic disciplines, but also of diverse knowledge systems beyond academia and that these need to be taken seriously (Tàbara et al., 2022). Interactions with other knowledge systems are only slowly developing, but participatory approaches that involve stakeholders in science, can still be very superficial and not go beyond consultation into more embedded modes of knowledge co-production (Osinski, 2021; Chambers et al., 2021). By being more mindful about inclusiveness, we can bring about more procedural justice in research through participatory codesign, action research and humility on the part of researchers (Huybrechts et al., 2017).

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4.1.2. Diversify the research space.

Diversity is a key principle of resilience and should also be a core framing when thinking through equity, so that diverse groups, perspectives, knowledge systems and research methods are not side-lined in the quest for addressing global tipping points. Greater diversity in research is therefore needed - in terms of cultural, religious, ethnic, gender or background of the researcher, but also in the disciplines that are engaged. For example, considering social

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sciences in the intentions, design, implementation and evaluation of interventions are also more likely to avoid harms and associated costs, with potential to achieve both positive social and ecological impacts on people (Latulippe and Klenk, 2020). Including diverse groups, perspectives, and knowledge systems in the quest for addressing global tipping points will enhance resilience and success for social tipping and will broaden the type and scope of research undertaken (Stirling, 2010). To harness relevant social tipping opportunities we need to learn about diverse living realities and interact with actors outside science (Bentley et al., 2014).

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4.1.3. Have more heterogeneity in research contributions.

Science has an agenda setting function that could benefit from accounting for the heterogeneity of the expertise that is needed to solve complex problems like tipping points. Place-specific information and experience is often lacking as a lot of traditional research is concentrated in high-income countries. A more inclusive global research project to reflect on the justice and risk aspects of the Earth system and understanding the full breadth of impacts of positive and negative tipping points needs to be undertaken. Diversity and inclusivity of research teams—within and beyond academia—are needed to help find solutions to tipping points that do not exacerbate existing inequities and inequalities (de Souza, 2021; Latulippe and Klenk, 2020).

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4.2. Business and finance

4.2.1. Transformed financial systems

Recognise that finance and business as part of social and ecological systems and not somehow apart from them; that active steering and regulation are required to divest, de-finance and divert financial resources to where positive tipping points can be found. This means reconfiguring currently highly uneven access to credit, education and capital in order to bring about more transformative change and creating mechanisms that redirect finance away from activities pushing us past planetary boundaries and towards sectors and regions where they are most required (Newell, 2021).

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Transformation of financial systems must extend to providing mechanisms to transform sufficient financial assets back into biodiversity and climate assets held in secure commons instruments that can ensure equitable access to all, in particular in developing countries (IPBES, 2022). This requires a greatly strengthened architecture of global financial governance that prioritises sustainability and social justice (UNEP, 2015). Reaching a financial sector tipping point implies changing the mandates of multilateral development banks, reforming central banks and regulating the need to change company law and disclosure policies. Furthermore, the public sector should ring-fence funding to provide a cushion against unintended consequences.

4.2.2. Introduce investment restrictions for non-compliant companies.

Cutting off investment for companies that are seen to be complicit in transgressing planetary boundaries, such as some oil majors and powerful cattle lobby groups in the Brazilian Amazon (Piotrowski, 2019), has the potential to reshape the business environment towards more ethical

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practices. Another area where investments could leverage positive tipping points, for instance, would be an investment shift from car dependency as this could potentially ease pressure in the mining sector, reinforcing reduced social and environmental harms and a densification of metropolitan areas, which would experience myriad benefits from improved air quality to pedestrian safety (Rionfrancos et al., 2023). Likewise redirecting the \$11 million per minute currently being spent on fossil fuel subsidies towards improved access to renewable energy for poorer communities would represent a major gain (McCulloch, 2023).

4.2.3. Develop more supportive and inclusive investments.

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Financial actors, such as international development banks, institutional and private investors, credit rating agencies and international commercial banks, are increasingly interested in the financial risks of climate change and associated changes in ecosystems (Galaz et al., 2018). It is crucial that capital investments steer the sector toward improved sustainability, as opposed to unsustainable working conditions and overexploitation of resources, (Hickel et al., 2021) by integrating sustainability and equity into traditional finance mechanisms, Jouffray et al., 2019), through ESG approaches or measures like the Social Cost of Carbon. For example, Prellezo et al (2023) highlight the need to build climate resilience, social sustainability, and equity in global fisheries to achieve targets to limit global warming established by the Paris Agreement. By internalising the social cost of carbon, the authors found that if CO2 trading prices reach the 2050 social cost of carbon, around 75% of the landings worldwide would be more valuable as carbon than as foodstuff in the market.

Redirecting public and private money to new innovative tools and instruments can enable new entrants into the new financial architecture while reducing the degradation of biodiversity. For example, the IIX Sustainability Bonds² are debt securities that can be listed on a social stock exchange, and they explicitly address the inclusion of women in economic activities. There are also initiatives to supplement gaps in the national currency systems such as Community Inclusion Currencies³ that empower communities to create their own financial systems based on local goods and services (Ruddick, 2023).

At the national level, the Netherlands provides, for instance, special green investment funds that are exempt from income tax, thus allowing investors in green projects (e.g. green shipping), to contract loans at reduced interest rates (usually ~2% below commercial rates). Another example is the Raven Indigenous Impact Fund⁴, a new innovative financial product committed to Indigenous-led equity investments in mission-driven and innovative indigenous enterprises to help build a renewed and sustainable Indigenous economy in Canada and the US. The Climate Bonds Initiative⁵ has also a number of sector criteria (e.g. for marine energy and water utilities); while other relevant initiatives include the Blue Natural Capital Positive Impacts Framework⁶ and

² https://iixglobal.com/iix-sustainability-bonds/

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With this improved finance mechanism, businesses should then be able

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³ https://grassrootseconomics.org/

⁴ https://ravencapitalpartners.ca/investments/impact-funds

⁵ www.climatebonds.net

⁶ https://bluenaturalcapital.org

the technical guideline for blue bonds. Mainstreaming these examples as best practice is critical for leveraging the financial system to enable PTPs.

4.3. Decision and Policy-makers

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4.3.1. Design fiscal policies that are reflective and cognisant of extant configurations. Fiscal policy needs to be designed to subsidise lower-income households for the higher costs that may accompany climate policies such as carbon pricing, emissions trading, new mandates/standards for energy-efficient buildings, smart energy systems, and the electrification of transport. Failure to do so could set off a cascade of unintended consequences and increase poverty, inequality, hunger and other health impacts, popular protest and political instability. Hypothecation, for example redirecting funds from fossil fuel subsidies to affordable public transport or from windfall taxes on oil companies for home insulation schemes, can build support among poorer groups for measures that might otherwise be opposed. Policy and governance actors attracted to tipping interventions need not only to design targeted, sectorand actor-specific approaches, but also to combine disciplines and sectors for a coordinated, complex systems thinking approach and capabilities. Including potential losers in the design process can also reduce opposition and ensure more equitable outcomes. They should also maintain the highest commitment to research and policymaking standards that expose hidden assumptions, biases and potential for backfires, rebounds and other unwelcome results (Sterman, 2002).

4.4. Media/communications

4.4.1. Be aware of the politics of language and power dynamics in the science landscape. Communicators must be alert to the ideologies, values and systems of power that affect which messages are communicated and how they are encoded. For example, how a tipping point is identified (Juhola et al., 2022) and what specific language is used to define and communicate it (Milkoreit et al., 2018). This is particularly relevant in relation to the language of 'positive' and 'negative' tipping points, which can imply a universality of effect that is insensitive to the diverse experiences (and responsibilities) of different communities illustrated above.

4.4.2. Recognize their position in framing key messages in the scientific landscape. In an equity and justice context, media and communicators must be alert to the competing ideologies and value systems that affect how a message is 'decoded' or interpreted by different communities, (Holmes, 2020). It is well established in Communications studies that the meaning of a message is not necessarily determined by the messenger or the message, but 'a complex interplay of how this meaning is framed though ideological values and beliefs' (Hall, 1980). Thus, it is important to view communication not as a neutral process of information transmission, but as a complex, non-linear system that is entangled with competing knowledges and powers. Studies have shown that increased knowledge does not automatically lead to enlightened action (Norgaard, 2011) and, indeed, that more factual information may serve to further entrench dismissive perceptions of climate change (Bain et al., 2012). There is, therefore, a need to go beyond linear 'information deficit' models of communication, moving

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90 A financial sector tipping point that reconfigures where finance can go, for example towards mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, biodiversity, addressing vulnerability etc. requires greatly strengthening the governance of public and private finance. This requires changing the mandates of multilateral development banks, reforming central banks and regulating the need to change to company law and disclosure policies. Furthermore, the public sector should ringfence funding to support unintended consequences.

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instead towards inon-linear' models of communication that prioritise open, reflective dialogue between different stakeholders. For example, case studies of communication strategies involving Indigenous people and local communities on the front line of climate change have found that 'messages rooted in empirical research and using simple language is insufficient and that researchers should investigate different stakeholders' understandings of what good climate change communication is and thereby determine the needs of different audiences from their unique cultural standpoints before developing materials (Gotangco and Leon, 2017; Barau and Tanko, 2018). With this in mind, it is important that communication strategies are co-produced with the communities they are seeking to engage (Moser, 2016).

4.4.3. Embrace creative co-production practices.

Initiatives arising from the Arizona State University Imagination and and Climate Futures Initiative and the University of Exeter-led 'Climate Stories' and 'We Still Have a Chance' projects, have shown that the arts and humanities offer models for empowering communities to create their own narratives and contextualise climate change in relation to their own systems of value, which is an important step towards the design and implementation of just and equitable transitions (Woodley et al., 2022; Roberts et al., 2023; Milkoreit et al., 2016). The effectiveness of literature, film and art in promoting ethical responses to climate change is increasingly being recognised in empirical studies (James, 2015; von Mossner, 2017; Houser, 2014) and, as David Holmes states, 'the arts have an ability to communicate the vulnerability and sensitivity of climate issues that other channels may lack' (Holmes, 2020). Therefore, in the context of tipping points, engaging a wide range of stakeholders in creative co-production would offer an openended, non-instrumental approach to communication that could be key to achieving ethical solutions in this complex field.

5. Conclusion

Biophysical tipping points pose existential threats to current and future generations, both human and non-human, with those currently underserved being the most vulnerable. It is therefore imperative to act. However, this cannot be done in a way that perpetuates past and current unjust or inequitable outcomes. Considerations of what needs to change, who is being asked to change and where the change or its impacts will be felt and by whom, require a level of reflexivity and systemic understanding. All actors have a role to play in ensuring that justice, equity and ethics are incorporated to all actions, with a particular emphasis on the inclusion of marginalised voices; those most affected by disruptive environmental change and the least responsible for causing it. Finally, enabling social tipping points towards radical transformations could benefit from more diverse perspectives to open up the solution space, leveraging a shift in worldviews and paradigms rather than just reconfiguring materials and feedbacks (Meadows, 1999). Trying to fix a system using the same tools that created it is not the best way to go about solving our planetary crises. Taking a cautious step back to explore all options, not just those that seem to offer a quick fix or 'low-hanging' fruit, could offer a more substantial route into thinking through tipping points that could create a more equitable as well as sustainable future.

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1291 Author contribution

> LP conceptualised the paper and prepared the initial draft together with SRS, LG, PN, BS and SV. TA, AC, SC, AG, CV, TP and CZ edited and reviewed the draft.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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(RGB(01,01,01)), Leπ, Spac	e petor	e: 16 pt, After: 4 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1,15 li, Keep

lines together

Page 1: [17] Style Definition Admin 18/12/2023 12:45:00

Heading 2: Font: (Default) Arial, 16 pt, Not Bold, Left, Space Before: 18 pt, After: 6 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1,15 li, Keep lines together

Page 1: [18] Style Definition A	Admin	18/12/2023 12:45:00

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pt, After: 6 pt, Line spacing: Multiple 1,15 li, Keep lines together

Page 1: [19] Style Definition Admin 18/12/2023 12:45:00

Normal: Font: (Default) Arial, 11 pt, Left, Line spacing: Multiple 1,15 li

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