



The new social contract

Re-defining a social contract fit for a fair,
green economic transition

Najma Mohamed | GEC Policy Director

The context



The pandemic has exposed the **scale of global inequalities** and is likely to exacerbate them.

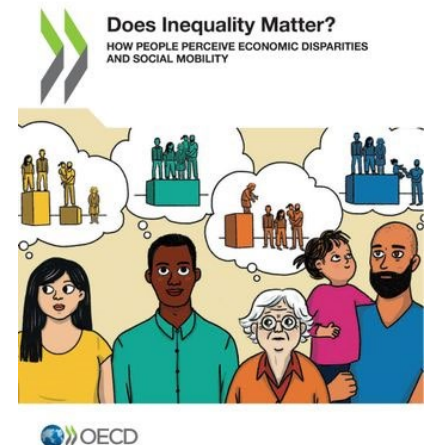
Four in five people in the OECD feel income disparities are too large in their country. People care about inequality of both outcomes and opportunities.

Declining trust in institutions, governments, business & media. In 2019, only 45% of citizens trusted their governments (OECD).

Civic space is declining year by year (Civicus).

As more and more people feel unrepresented by their political systems, **social unrest and populism** is growing.

The unspoken agreement between citizen and the state – **the social contract, is broken.**



The challenge

Growing inequality and rising distrust **undermines the transition** to a climate-resilient and sustainable economic system.

Most organisations working on green policy, decarbonisation and environmental protection know they must **address inequality**.

Equally, inequality campaigners are beginning to recognise that **inclusive green economies** can tackle systemic inequality.

The transition to a green and fair economies require **deep social support**. This is not merely a 'nice to have', it is key if we are to achieve a just transition.



The opportunity



A political space for tackling inequality has opened up:

- **Diverse and unusual champions are calling for a ‘new social contract’**, including labour movements, youth movements, UN bodies, and the World Economic Forum.
- As a result of COVID-19, public discourse is increasingly attuned to the **connections** between human health & wellbeing and planetary health.
- **Citizen’s visions, priorities and demands** are being sought in order to accelerate the green transition and recovery (e.g. Citizen Assemblies; public dialogues; multi-stakeholder consultations)
- People are **holding their governments to account**. Globally, the cumulative number of climate change-related cases - **climate litigation**, has more than doubled since 2015 (LSE).



What is a social contract?



Agreements between citizens and government about the mutual rights and responsibilities that will uphold a just social order. Increasingly, there is the recognition that a social contract must address the relationship between humans and nature, and spur the transformation of economies and societies to halt climate change and environmental destruction.

and in practice...



ITUC New Social Contract for Recovery and Resilience: Union Wins Globally

Examples of unions that, even during the hardest economic times, have won big advances towards a new social contract between business, government and workers.

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/union-wins>



Green Deal Network, US THRIVE Act to be tabled in US Congress in April 2021

Transformational economic recovery to cut climate pollution in half by 2030 and advance gender, environmental, Indigenous, economic, and racial justice, with particular attention to Black and Indigenous people

<https://www.thriveagenda.com/>



Fundacion Renovables, Spain

The Social Contract of Energy: Electrify to Democratise - A model of energy rights which includes an intergenerational perspective on environmental sustainability.

<https://fundacionrenovables.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Social-Contract-Executive-Summary.pdf>



Dirty Air Case, South Africa

A legal challenge by two South African environmental justice organizations – groundWork and Vukani Environmental Movement (VEM) which argue that, by failing to improve Mpumalanga provinces's air quality, the South African government has violated communities' constitutional right to healthy environment. <https://oxpeckers.org/2021/05/deadly-air-case/>



Just Transition Summit and Consultation Plans, New Zealand

Government engaged with communities, regions and sectors to manage impacts and maximise opportunities brought about by the transition to a low emissions economy.

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/just-transition/>



French Citizens Assembly

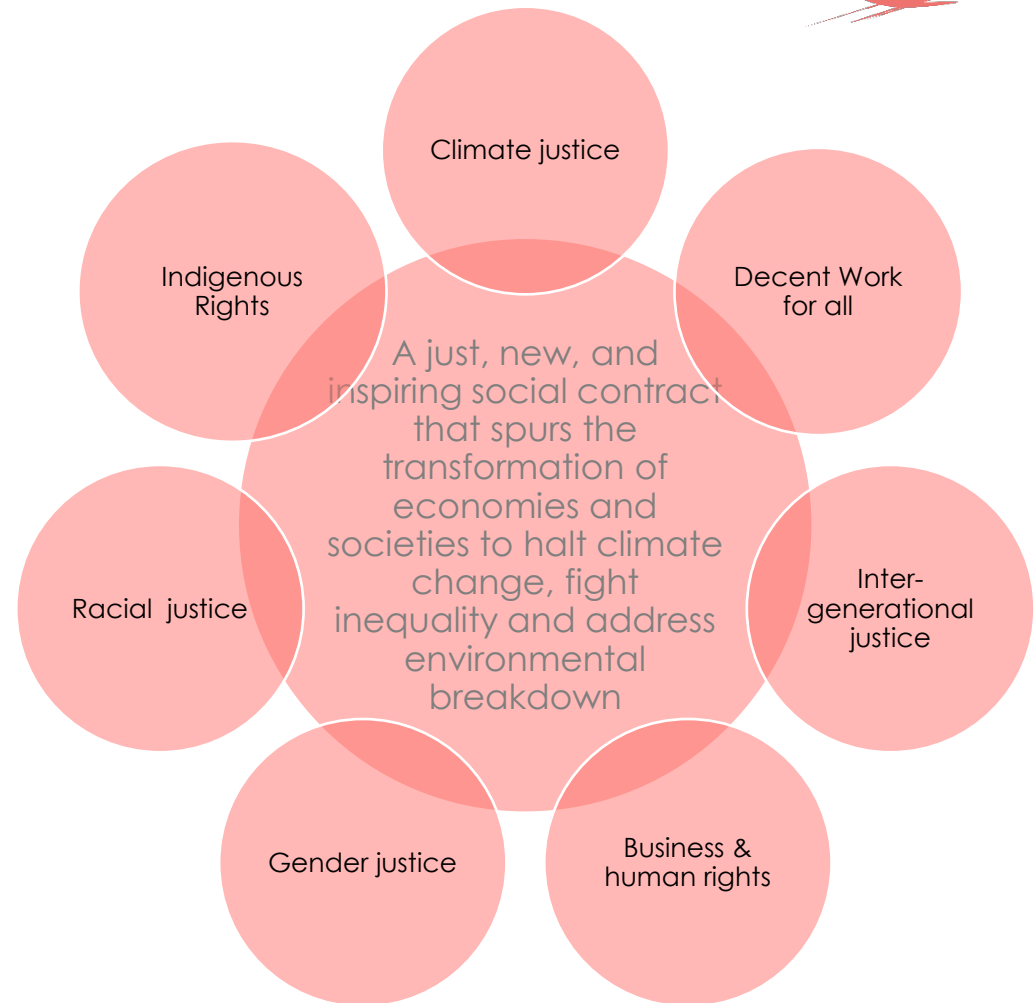
A panel representative of the diversity of French citizens, directly involved in submitting proposals for the preparation of climate legislation in France.

<https://www.conventioncitoyennepourleclimat.fr/en/>

The vision



To convene and build a **progressive, intersectional alliance and movement** of climate, environmental & inequality champions to highlight pathways, procedures and mechanisms for renegotiating a new social contract in practice.





Inception

- Build thought leadership: Op-Eds, Blogs, Video
- Launch Podcast
- Engage partners
- Mobilise resources

Connect

- Research and Action Network for an Eco-Social Network GEC / UNRISD, 10 November 2021
- Strengthen partnerships

Learn

- Social Contract Narrative Analysis
- Review of Mechanisms for Redefining Social Contract

Ramp-up

- Develop long term work programme
Highlight 7-10 lighthouse actions that illustrate citizen action to redefine a social contract, across themes and geographies
- Lessons / Steps to Build Movement for a New Social Contract

What are we doing?



PODCAST

<https://www.powerpeopleplanet.org/>



Research and Action Network for a New Eco-Social Contract



Join us as we build an
intersectional
movement to redefine a
social contract fit for a
fair, green economic
transition

