

Reflections in the aftermath of a road trip from Oslo to Durham, England, and organisers' summary of Include's international symposium, Durham University 14th-15th September 2022

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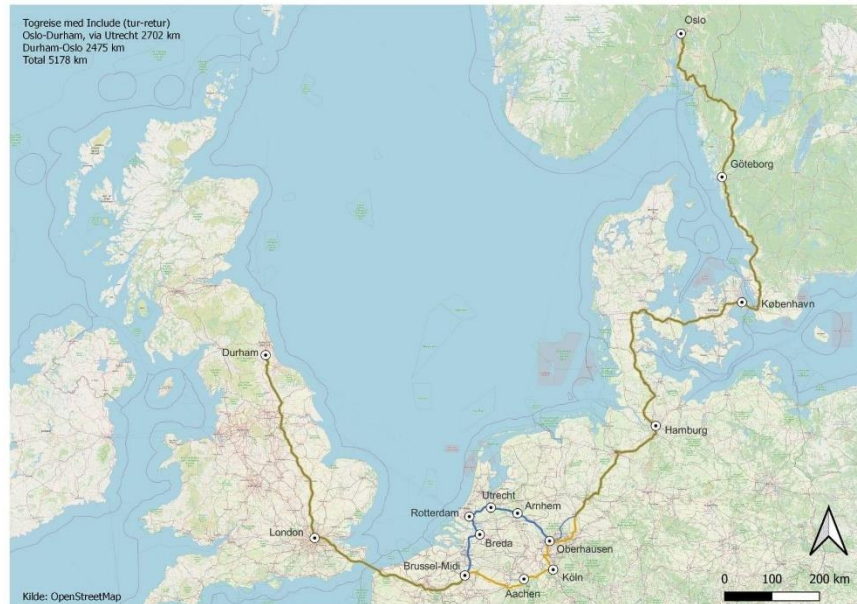
Introduction: the meaning of a road trip and physical encounters

Who would have thought we'd look forward to getting back on the train in Durham after three intensive days organising and attending conferences? After *already* having spent three days on ten different trains and 2600 km in the first place, getting from Oslo to this beautiful city in North-East England? We must confess our group of 12 researchers and fellows initially decided to travel by train for *environmental reasons*, having calculated in advance that we would only cause 55% of emissions compared to flying (6464 kg, one way only). We would also use the occasion to explore just how easy/difficult it would be to go through Europe – and how the UiO-contracted travel agency would deliver this kind of service.

But perhaps in a similar fashion as people living in ecovillages tend to select this type of living for environmental reasons and end up celebrating social aspects – the road trip primarily seemed to serve as *social glue* for our newly established group and research centre. The same was true in the moment we could finally meet our British colleagues, after having spent 2 ½ years and 'met' each other during some 50 Zoom meetings. And when our PhD fellows in an exclusive and lively workshop moderated by UK colleagues debated whether and how social inclusion and social justice at times can be conflicting goals. A lesson they drew from this is that inclusion and justice invite contextualised inquiry. In sum, we needed to meet to give room for creativity, trust, and humour. As a result of the symposium which encompassed musical interventions (including multiple references to 'a nine million page report') as well as social events, while paying respects to the late Queen of England, we are now convinced that the Include group is in a particularly good position to work jointly to develop concepts and theory on socially inclusive and just transformation. For example, we will engage more actively and critically with the paradigm of economic growth and pay renewed attention to the problems surrounding the green transition in terms of the socio-technical extraction of raw material across the globe.



Include travel route Oslo-Durham via Utrecht 9th–12th Sept. Return trip via Köln 16th– 18th Sept.



Map created by Marieke van der Star

The Include symposium 14th–15th September: [Climate Emergency! Energy Crisis! A symposium on responsibility, inclusion and place-based action, Durham University](#)

The symposium attracted 36 physical participants, while 29 people had registered for online attendance (ca 20 logged in). It was a good mix of Norwegian and British participants, and several discussions comparing the two contexts appeared, particularly on the issue of electric vehicle policies.

Keynote Ben Anderson set the scene for the event by reflecting on the concept of emergencies (which, strangely, does not seem to have a corresponding word in Norwegian). There has been a shift, he held, from applying the concept in political terms: an emergency is that which threatens the government's capacity to act. Rather, emergency has become a more widely applied term, encompassing a sort of general mood or atmosphere. An emergency is characterised by four traits:

- a) a claim of exception, for example, when a state declares an emergency (e.g. Covid): prior to this, there must be a perception that an exception is happening, a threat. In comparison, a crisis is also a sense of disruption of the normal, but more ambivalent, frequent, not contested, can be cyclical, can be passed through.
- b) hope, making a promise: if the action is right, we can get it right (Boris J: we can get back to flying after the pandemic). In comparison: a catastrophe is too late, an end.

c) a sense of urgency, including the politics of urgency: unevenly distributed, not all claims of urgency circulate evenly across mass media, whose claim of urgency is claimed and felt? The opposite: flatness, boredom (Anderson plans to publish new book on boredom)

d) something that changes the temporality of the present: Suspension (climate change as a proximate to action but delayed) vs denial/delay. We need to understand how to inhabit the intermediate. How do you act well? Emergency management: run without panic.

Conclusion: emergencies are changing the temporality of the present: how is this distributed and mediated?

Questions and comments included how emergencies are related to the concept of utopia, relational spaces, different actors, hopes for multi-sited, collective action. How do environmental groups contribute to the discourse of urgency, what about fear and resistance, what is the link between urgency and agency, are the protocols for actions unclear in terms of hindering climate change? Is there a particular sequence as to the four elements or are they relational? For whom do the questions resonate (class, everyday life). Responses (selection): people on the political Left are often more accustomed to the vocabulary of emergency not because the others don't care but because the discourse does not reach them. Utopia: there are limits to the vocabulary of emergency (and crises) as they hinder other types of work. Bloch: utopia is here, now. Protocols: interesting, have not thought about this before.

Panel debate: What is an emergency? What makes an inclusive response?

Susanne Normann brought in the perspective of indigenous groups in Norway living in a double set of emergencies (double burden of climate change): losing their cultural heritage due to exploitation of land for wind power production – and experiencing the problems in nature caused by climate change, often referred to as 'Green Colonialism'. Helen Stockton brought in the problem of fuel and energy poverty which numbers in the UK has increased from 4.5m households in 2021 to an estimated 6.7 million this year, including people who would hitherto not have been considered poor. The media helps convey that we need action. The energy transition must be completed by 2050, but we need action now. Anders Tønnesen discussed the land-take for sustainable energy, and the narrow approach to sustainable transport that EVs represent. He stressed the need for multi-level networks within the current structures of government and law to address conflicting processes towards land.

During the remaining part of Day one, a range of researchers presented their work, with discussion around Green Industry firms, local energy systems, multiple transitions, consumption and provisions, urban densification and households under climate threats, challenges for low-populated municipalities, socio-technical imaginaries and labour implications of energy transitions.

Musicians **Ian McMillan** and **Luke Carver Goss** spiced up the first day of the symposium with musical interludes reflecting the discussions. At the end of the day, they presented a musical summary of the event, having started the day with a conference song!

The catering served during the event was provided by the 'Conscious Kitchen', using ingredients that would otherwise have gone to waste. For dinner conference participants were invited to Durham Amateur Rowing Club for a vegetarian/vegan meal.



Participants during Include Symposium, Durham University, 14th September 2022

On Day 2 Janet Stephenson of Otago University in New Zealand gave a keynote lecture via zoom on Culture and energy transitions, starting off by stating that we are experiencing a crisis of culture. Her Otago team has employed with success their 'energy cultures framework' (ways of thinking, things involved, actions/routines) and their external influences (policies etc) to understand how sustainable cultures can be formed. She mentioned several studies that have employed the framework of energy cultures (see her presentation). Stephenson's speech was discussed by Iris Leikanger, who asked how energy cultures are linked to justice. In response, Stephenson referred to several studies, including how they have studied slum housing and asked how households may be assisted.

The discussion on EV politics in Norway and the UK triggered a comparative discussion. Lars Böcker found that immigrant families in Oslo have a higher likelihood of owning an electric car. There are also geographical differences in Oslo, in addition to income and educational factors. Unni Berge from the Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association shared the Norwegian "success story" and held that such a shift was obliged to start by addressing the market for new cars and depended on rich people, who have the resources, buying them and then generating a more affordable used-car market. The Norwegian panellists agreed that Norway had a fortunate starting point in that all cars were already subject to high taxes a long time ago, which made it possible to promote EV simply by dropping the tax on these cars

while keeping them for fossil fuel cars. Tracy Millmore shared experiences from Durham: most people do not have private space for charging a car, so here the main focus has been to try to install charging stations in public places. A question was asked from the audience if perhaps the UK model (addressing normal people) has been more inclusive than the Norwegian model (supporting first the rich), but in fact the provision of public charging in the UK lags far behind Norwegian levels of provision, with even EV car clubs already well established in Norwegian cities.

Following the formal close of the main conference, participants joined one of two events. A PhD workshop or an excursion to sites of sustainable development in County Durham.

PhD Workshop

In advance, ten young scholars from Norway and three from the UK had been invited to attend this event arranged for PhD-fellows exclusively. The session was led by Kirsten Jenkins (Edinburgh University) and Andres Luque-Ayala (Durham University), both members of Include's Durham team. Energy justice and social inclusion were selected as overall issues for this occasion. In response, during the 5 minutes set aside to each presentation, the candidates highlighted how and to what extent they deal with justice and inclusion in their own projects. It was discovered that in some projects, energy justice is at the heart of the problem of examination, for example, how may considerations for energy justice be incorporated in energy modelling? In other cases such in a study on how sustainability may be better integrated in educational programmes for teachers, the justice lens had less relevance. In this project, a key question seemed to be how the social dimensions of sustainability, not only environmental aspects, can become more clearly articulated and practiced. It was also observed that the Norwegian projects were more or less focused on the Norwegian context (partly a result of being funded through the Include research centre with 23 Norwegian practitioners on board). The two participating fellows from the UK had a more global take on justice and inclusion, which seemed highly inspiring to the Norwegians.

The session ended with an, 'academic workout' when Andres set his alarm to 10 minutes followed by a set of questions to the students (initially four, but in this summary also the students' own questions pop up): What is the merit of increased inclusion? (positive and negative, please) When we do research on inclusion: what is it really? (not what is it not – exclusion is much more immediately possible to grasp) How do our own positions affect what we emphasise in research on justice and inclusion? How to avoid gate keepers, rather than, say, people in rural areas, getting the power to define questions of justice? What do we lose or gain when we study justice across sectors and levels of governance?

The session was mind-blowing and pushed the candidates to throw in their thoughts. And as if this had not been a stimulating event in itself: when approaching the end the students started to look at Kirsten, who had somewhat withdrawn herself from the whole part of this conversation (was she checking her emails?). But no, Dr Jenkins had not fallen asleep. She now presented to the students an outline for a prospective article that was based on their inputs to the session! In the aftermath, it is up to the students to decide if the article will materialise – they certainly got a flying start!

Site Visits

A dozen participants stepped aboard a small bus to visit three sites in County Durham.

The first, Morrison Busty, is a waste treatment centre built on the site of a former coal mine near the historic market town of Lanchester ten miles west of Durham city. The site has been the focus of an £8m decarbonisation project, with the old pit offices refurbished into low-carbon standard offices for county

council services including social care and other welfare offices. The project includes a large solar farm with under-panel sheep grazing, battery and electric vehicle charging that will help facilitate a low carbon fleet serving large areas of County Durham. We also saw the plant nurseries that serve all of the county's public sites and discussed the plans to convert the glasshouse heating from oil to battery/solar.

Lanchester Wines is the UK's second largest bottling plant where imported 'new world' wines are bottled for the domestic market. It is a family owned business that has invested around £10m in renewable heat and energy across their sites, with a new warehouse currently in construction with a fully solar roof. They also pioneered the use of minewater heat at their warehouses in Gateshead nearby.

The third site was a domestic retrofit project led by Adrian Cattle-Jones of Durham County Council's Low Carbon Economy team. Adrian worked intensively with the residents of 6 streets of privately-owned poor-quality terraced houses in Craghead to retrofit external wall insulation, loft insulation, double glazing and PV roof panels. Residents contributed a small amount towards the cost and benefitted from significant savings on energy bills, which have become even more significant in the current energy crisis.

Finally, the management team and all of the UK team met for a planning review over a meal at a Turkish restaurant in Durham.

Financing the conference and travel & CO2 emissions

Durham University hosted the conference and covered the expenses for catering and accommodation for all participants. University of Oslo organised and covered the trip by train Oslo-Durham for 12 people, which, in monetary terms, cost about four times as much as plane tickets would have cost (including overnight hotels and including return tickets for those who participated).

In terms of CO2-emissions, the 12 people travelling to Durham caused 3780 kg CO2 according to Include's calculator which also comprises indirect emissions. This corresponds to 55% of the 6864 kilos CO2 emissions we would otherwise have caused going to Durham by plane (consumption at hotels not accounted for). We do not here include the return trip, which was only attended by seven people, in the CO2-calculations. One person joined the road trip from Oslo to Utrecht (NL), returning to Oslo (by train) to attend to other commitments. In Utrecht the whole group had an informal meeting with researchers at Utrecht University and Eindhoven Technical University, who form part of the Fair Energy Transition Network.

Other measures to reduce emissions: only vegan/vegetarian meals, lunch catering: using ingredients that would otherwise have gone to waste. Our keynote speaker from New Zealand participated online to avoid traveling.