

Minutes of the

Workshop and writing retreat on socio-ecological justice in the context of European energy poverty alleviation



Venue: University of Applied Sciences, Schlüterstraße 1, 99089 Erfurt, Germany

Time: 14th – 17th March

Participants:

COST members: Raúl Castaño-Rosa, Małgorzata Dereniowska, Ute Dubois, Katrin Großmann, Rachel Guyet, Ana Horta, George Jigla, Giulio Mattioli, Lina Murauskaitė, Christian Smigiel, Michael Steinke, Ana Stojilovska, Nicola Thomas, Anaïs Varo, Lidija Zivcic

Other participants: James Connolly, Michael Friesenecker, Luca Nitschke

Minutes by Katrin Großmann and Michael Steinke

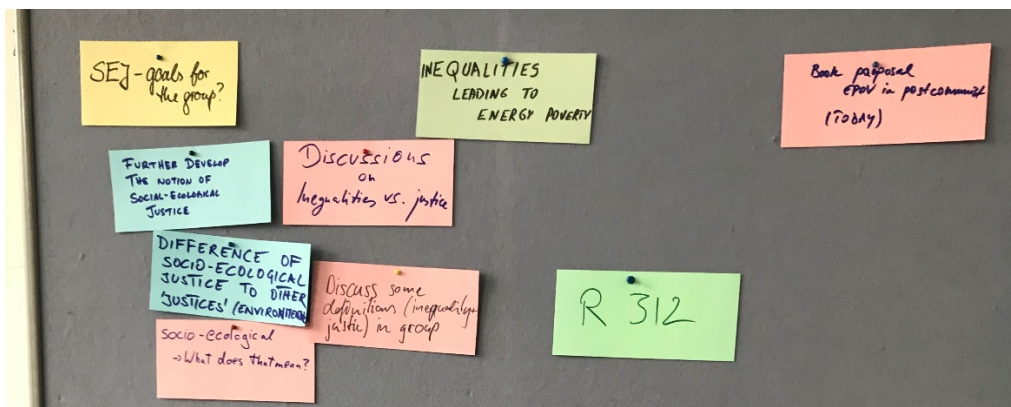
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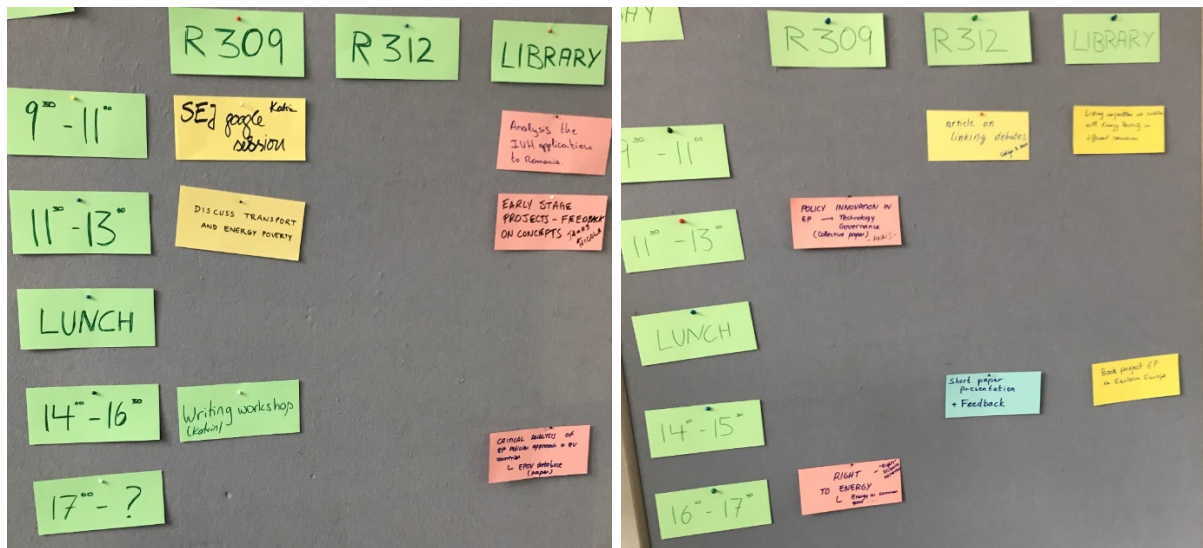
Structuring the workshop

The workshop was structured using the Open Space method. In result, two larger workshops incl. all participants took place on Wednesday, 13th to kick off the event. For the following day, each morning a schedule was set up (see photos) which comprised larger roundtables as well as small workshops and discussions in order to discuss individual topics in greater depth (eg present paper designs).

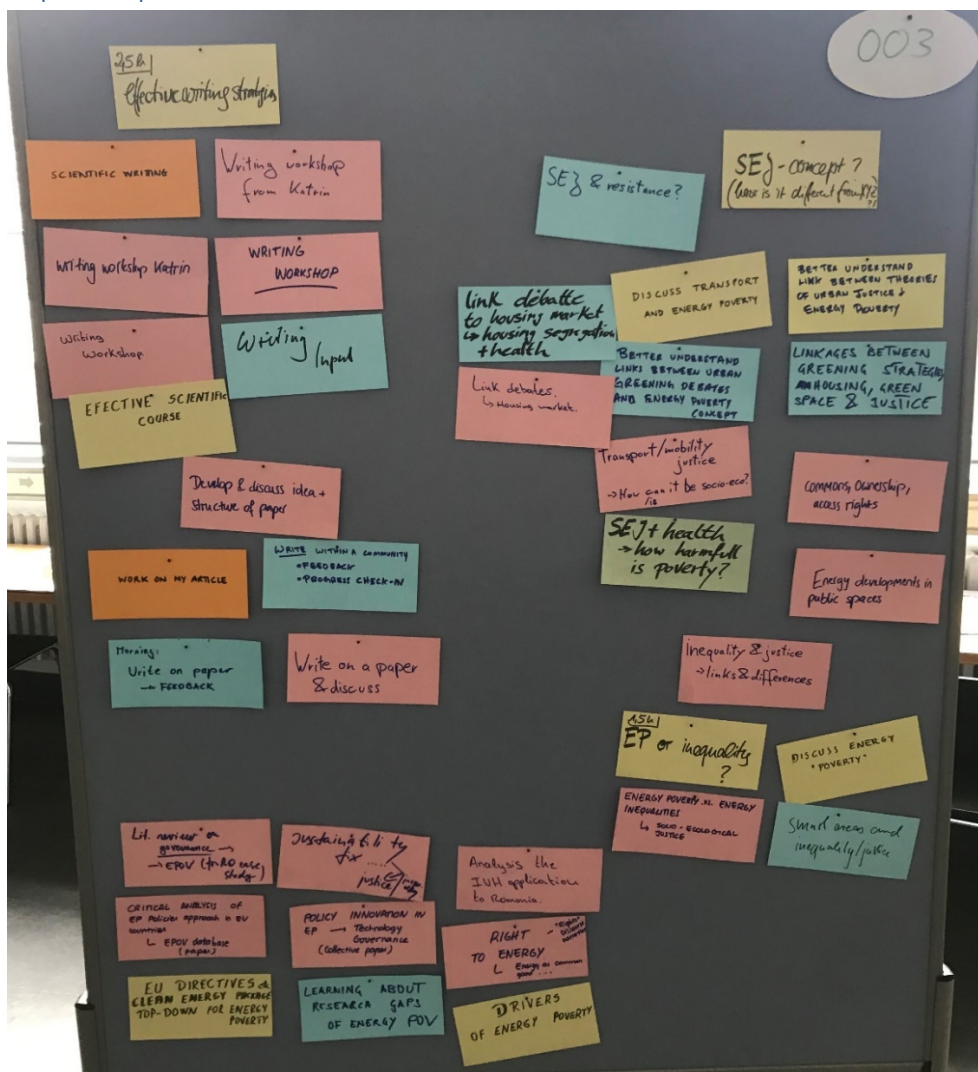
Plan for Wed afternoon



Schedule for Thursday and Friday (developed for the following days respectively)



Topics of potential interest for Thu – Sun

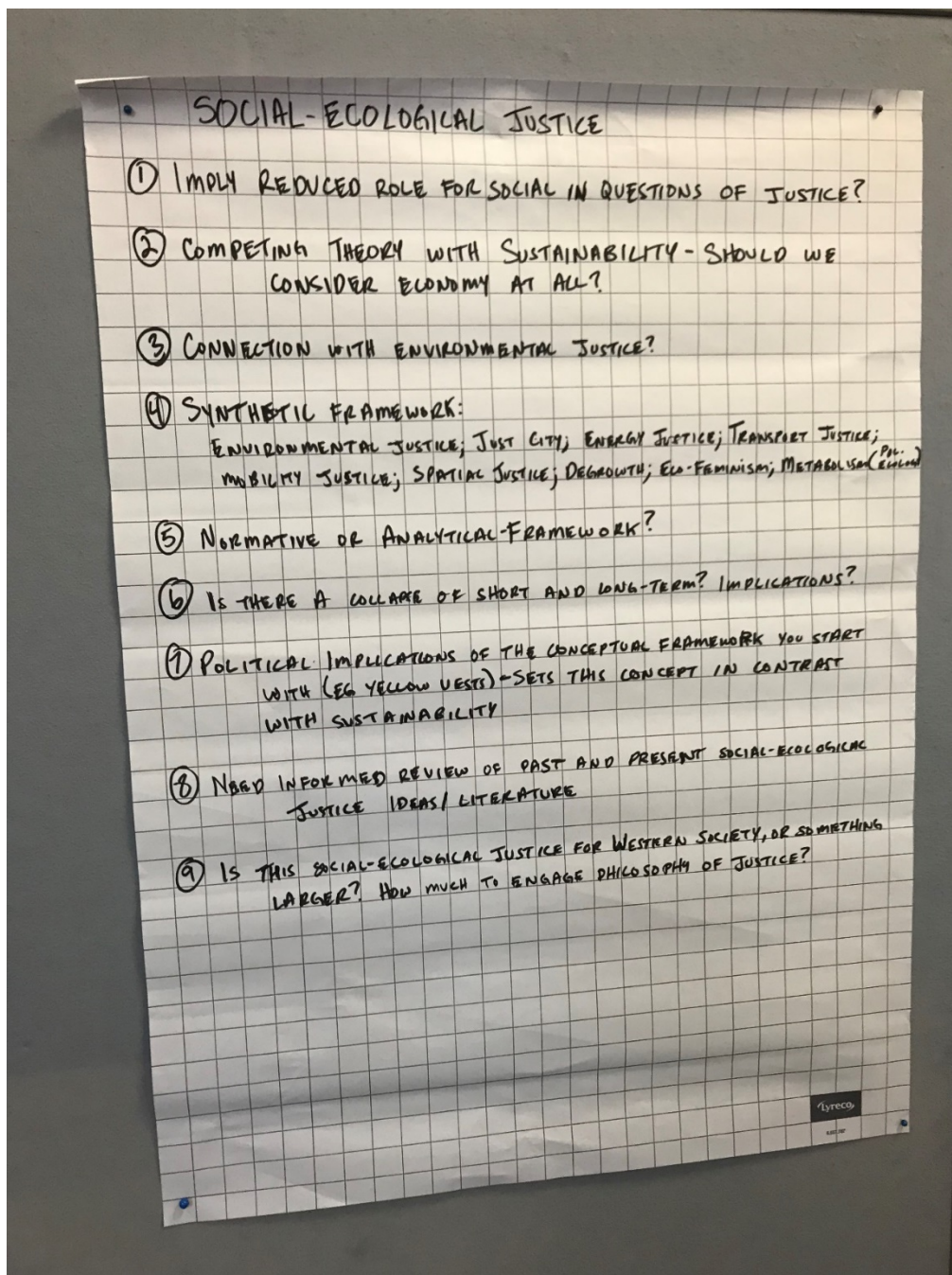


Contents and results of the discussions and working groups

Clarify open questions to SEJ (plenary discussion)

Due to the heterogeneous discussion group (with different professional backgrounds, some) there are further basic open questions about the definition of SEJ, which should first be collected and structured in order to structure the schedule of the workshop.

In the first plenary discussion, the highlights of the discussions from the first workshop in September 2018 were taken up, reflected anew and structured. This led to nine points of reflection:



Notes from the plenary discussion on social-ecological justice

Right to energy

Working Group 4 has to deliver a **policy brief** in June 2019. During the meeting, it was decided to dedicate it to the right to energy. We aim at a short document (2-4 pages) mainly focused on practical issues. The target audience of the policy brief are policy-makers and practitioners, so it has not to be an academic text but policy orientated.

A structural proposal and the dates was discussed:

POLICY BRIEF: Short document (2-4 pags) adressed to policy makers, practicioners, etc.

DELIVERY DATE: June 2019

DRAFT DELIVERY DATE: April 2019

FINAL VERSION: 15th May 2019

1. Introduction to the Right to Energy Concept (2)
 - a. Right to Energy in the EU Regulation Framework
 - b. Right to Energy from the European civil society claims
2. Examples of best practices
3. Key policy insights

A link to process the policy brief will be added to the participants.

Also a „**Right to Energy Workshop – January 2020**“ was discussed.

Taking into account that the Right to energy is a topic not developed, we suggested celebrating a Workshop trying to put in it the most relevant contemporary voices on the right to energy, both in the academia and in social movements and institutions.

The Workshop will take place on the 8th and 9th of January 2020, at the University of Groningen. It will be a two-day event, that will be structured as follows:

Day 1: Foundations and Content of Right to Energy: Transdisciplinary Perspectives

Day 2: Right to Energy in Action: Perspectives from Practice

A link to collect several proposals/ideas for (keynote) speakers and perspectives will be added to the participants.

Book proposal as an outcome of the Workshop:

An idea came up to be debate the Right to Energy as it is a not well developed topic. Bearing this in mind, and maintaining our idea of using this event to combine different perspectives and to get a wider debate on the topic, a good idea would be to recapitulate the different contributions in a "book".

The publication format and the structure were discussed.

Linking debates

A paper on linking debates should be worked out.

The aim of the paper is to explore links between energy poverty and different fields, ranging from health to gentrification. The format of the paper is academic article

A link to contributors will be send.

The idea is to bring these contributions into such a matrix:

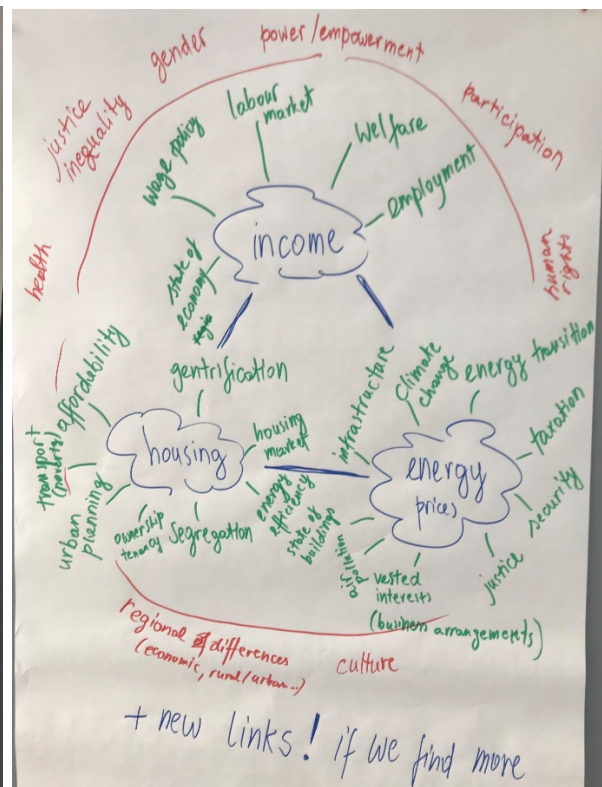
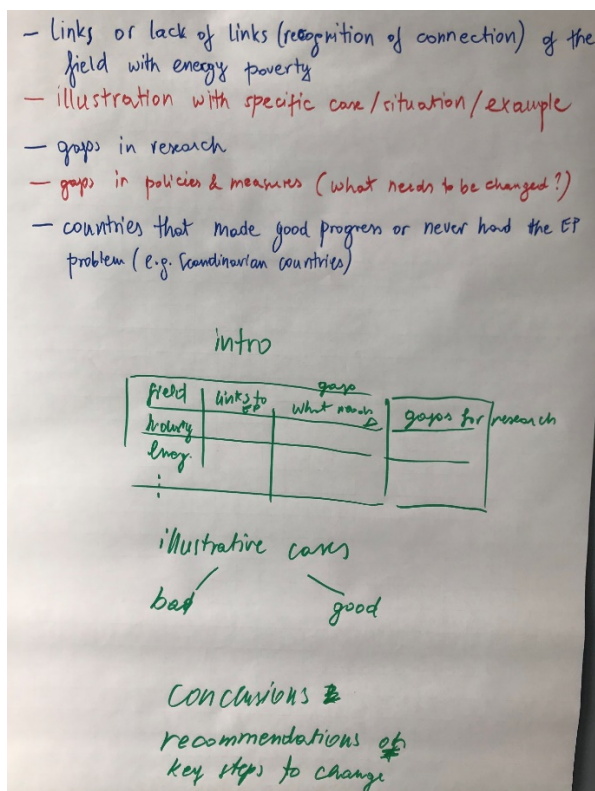
- Links to energy poverty / drivers of energy poverty (literature review)
- Key changes needed (own ideas or ideas from literature)
- If it exists, give an example, case (own knowledge or from literature)
- Gaps in research (own knowledge or from literature)
- Poverty
- Minority/migrants
- Infrastructure
- ...

Action list

List of contributors: 25 March

Mail to contributors: 28 March

Reminder for contributors: 15 April



Social Ecological Justice: Finding a focus for collaborative writing

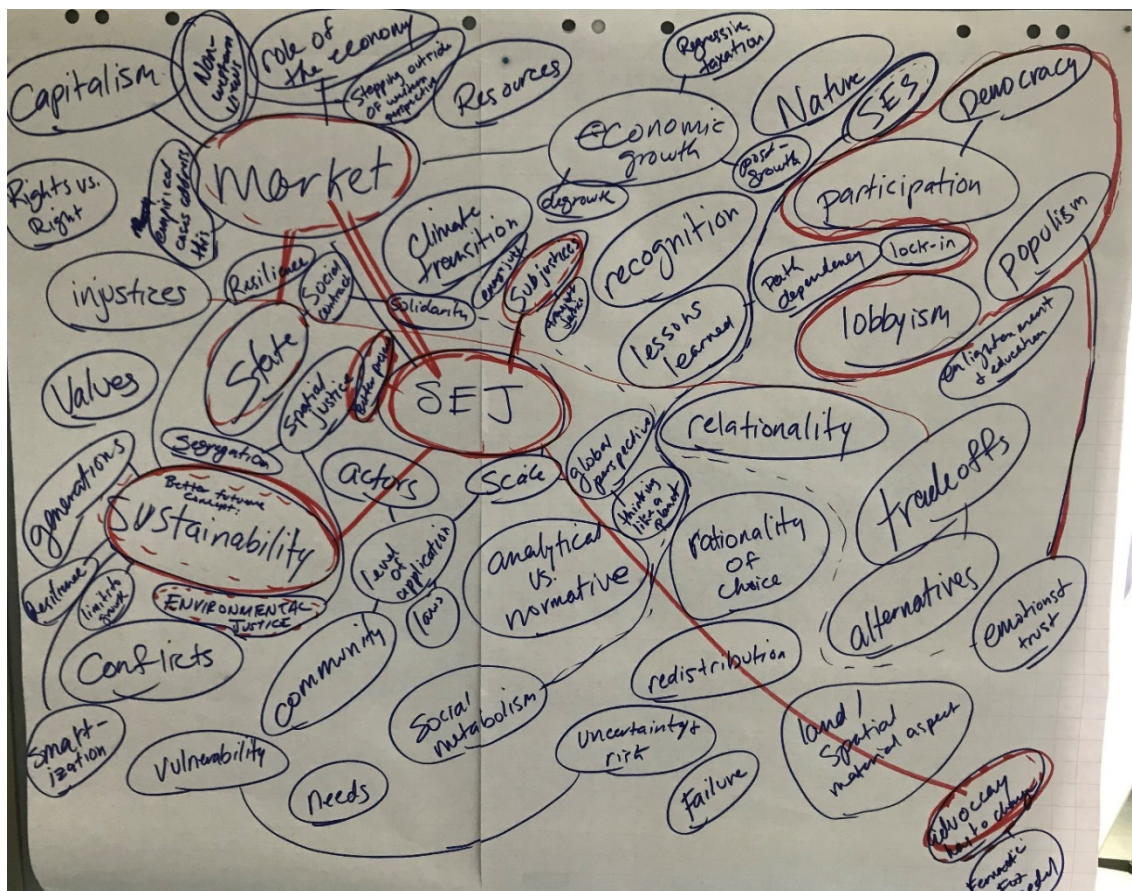
The scope of the topic was mapped collectively; relevant subtopics and linked debates were identified. Potential foci for collective papers were discussed and lead to three proposals for papers. Commitment of participants was noted down.

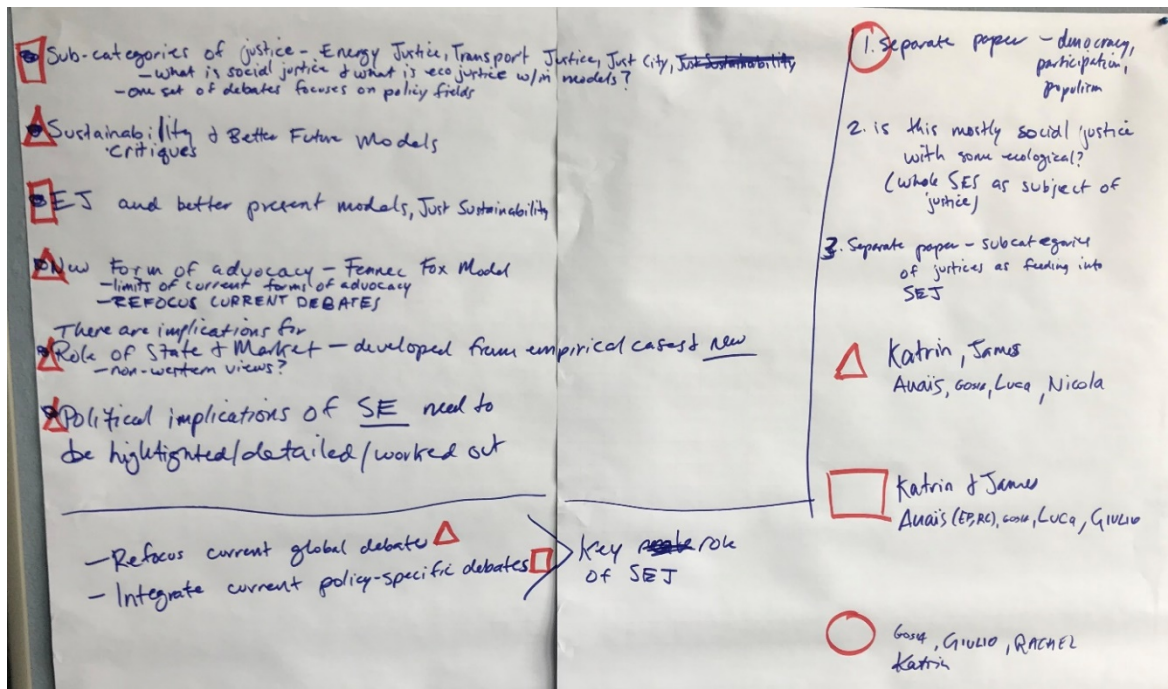
Three different foci were identified:

(1) developing SEJ as an umbrella for current policy-specific debates like energy justice, mobility justice, green gentrification and others ("square" paper). This will be an appropriate focus for the envisioned editorial of the Special Issue on SEJ that is in the making already as an outcome of the workshop in Sept. 2018.

(2) developing SEJ as a contribution to more general, global debates on societal development, engaging with a critique of existing concepts such as sustainability, resilience, social justice, environmental justice etc. Further, arguing for a new form of advocacy around social-ecological justice. Finally, spelling out the political implications of a strictly social-ecological (as opposed to social or ecological) view of justice.

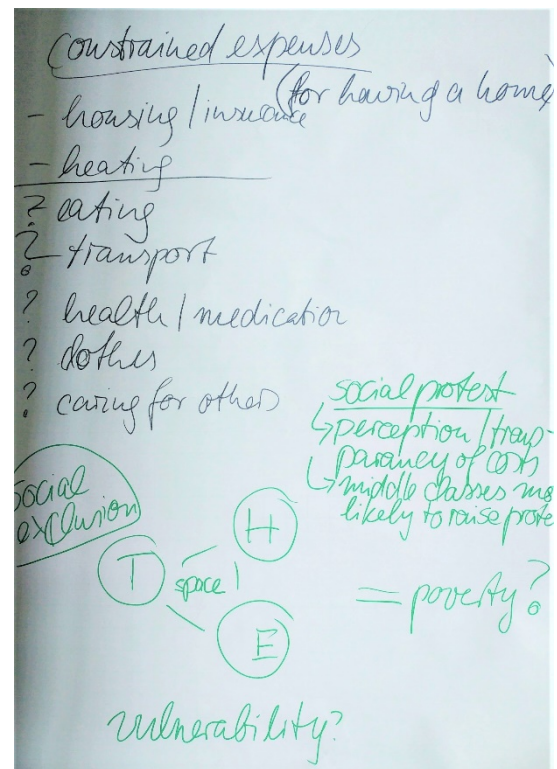
(3) interlinking SEJ with the upswing of populism and democracy in shaping the potential for and limits to social-ecological justice. This was rather a common interest, it has not been developed in more detail, yet.





Links between energy poverty and transport poverty

In the morning of Thurs 14th, a group of participants gathered to discuss the relationship between transport and energy poverty. In some EU countries, like Portugal, an already serious problem of (domestic energy) poverty is compounded by issues of transport energy poverty, mainly linked to car-dependent transport systems. Participants briefly discussed findings from [\(t\)ERES](#), a UK-based research project which has unpicked the transport-fuel poverty analogy, and proposed quantitative indicators for measuring transport energy poverty. The discussion highlighted the need to consider a triad of 'constrained expenses': domestic energy, transport and housing. These three factors have in common that they foreground the role of *space* in poverty and social exclusion processes (e.g. through residential location, type of building). These links however have attracted limited attention in EU countries, with the French debate a possible exception.



Drivers of energy poverty/ EP experiences and the impact on trust in institutions/ links to (rising) populism

(Anais Varo, Ana Stojilovska, Malgorzata Dereniowska, Ana Horta, Giulio Mattioli, Lina , Ute Dubois, Rachel Guyet, George Jigla, Leona Sandmann, Katrin Großmann)

Finally, the thematic group which aimed at using existing materials to dig deeper into the drivers of energy poverty, refocussed their goals during a discussion. Starting from exploring what could be – so far – hidden drivers of energy poverty, we collected narratives from interviews with energy poor households that lead to societal structure so far untouched in the broader energy poverty literature. Institutional discrimination was among the suspected drivers of EP, a lack of trust in institutions would be a logic consequence and was reported by those discussing this issue to be a rather familiar feature in ep households. This caught the interest of all in the group and we saw potential links to the interest raised earlier on in the discussion on SEJ to engage with the question of democracy and populism.

Because we expect that it would be rather difficult to detect this in existing material, we therefore decided to join forces for a small qualitative, exploratory study across countries. With a common interview guideline, we agreed to conduct 3-5 interviews per member of the group. Further, we will check existing large scale data sets for the possibility to explore the link between trust in institutions and ep indicators.

Next steps:

- Katrin Grossmann and Leona Sandmann will develop a first draft on an interview guideline
- George Jigla will put down initial thoughts for a framing of this exploratory study incl. thoughts on sampling
- George and Ute explore potentially interesting data sets
- During spring and summer: conduct interviews with EP households, record, share short English summary of the cases
- Katrin checks with Robert Franke for a useful software (freeware) for working with qualitative data: Robert proposes to use "Taguette", see <https://pypi.org/project/taguette/>
- Anybody who would like to join, please contact George and Katrin

Listing injustices in relation to energy poverty

(Anais Varo, Ana Stojilovska, Raul Castano de la Rosa, Ana Horta, Lina Murauskaite, Rachel Guyet, Lidija Zivcic, Katrin Großmann, Ute Dubois)

The aim of this discussion was to explore the various injustices that can occur in relation with energy poverty in different European countries, the idea being to identify similarities and differences between countries regarding the kinds of injustices that can be identified.

The discussion started with a comparison with the rules that apply to energy poor households or customers with energy poverty-related problems in different countries. These rules are important as they shape the nature of injustices that can be identified.

For example, the rules for disconnection of electricity and gas consumers with payment difficulties can include elements of injustice (the definition of who is deserving protection can

vary from one country to another, and in some cases, suppliers have discretionary powers to decide who will be disconnected or not).

In countries where prepayment meters are proposed or imposed to energy poor households, the constraints resulting from the use of these meters (for example the need to pay in advance for the energy) and the higher tariffs that apply to customers using these meters can also be considered as injustice factors.

Some thermal renovation schemes can also result in injustices across Europe: they are not developed to the same degree everywhere and when they exist, some energy poor households can be excluded from these schemes for example due to income thresholds which define who is eligible.

Some elements of injustice also result in the fact that certain population groups are excluded from the possibility to choose cheaper suppliers or supply conditions: these excluded groups include for example people who do not have Internet, or who are not able to use it (elderly people, people with lower digital literacy) and people who do not have the capacity to understand offers and contracts which are often complex and difficult to understand.

The discussion has also focused on spatial injustices resulting from unequal access to affordable energy sources (in particular gas networks) and from disparities regarding thermal renovation offers and funding schemes. Transport energy poverty also has an important spatial dimension and can thus reinforce certain energy injustices related to housing.

The variety of energy poverty injustices identified in this session suggests that this topic would deserve to be explored more systematically and in a comparative manner.