

Greece under SYRIZA? Four scenarios for an energy politics of the future

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I. Introduction: a new hope?

Let me thank you for the chance to speak here on the closing plenary of this fascinating conference – a conference that, it seems to me, is trying to achieve two things. First of all, to bring a variety of experiences of energy politics and transitions, largely from other parts of Europe and from Latin America, to Greece; but second, and just as importantly, to transmit the excitement and hopefulness that we have experienced in the many SYRIZA-activists present here back to our own political contexts.

We know that it is by no means certain that SYRIZA will come to power in Greece, nor is it clear how much power coming to power would actually entail. And yet, there is a buzz here that I have not experienced for while. In terms of a genuinely transformative socio-ecological politics, Greece isn't quite yet, but might become, the new 'Latin America'. Several years ago, the Latin American 'New Left' or 'Pink Tide' seemed to offer a genuine hope for a new, socio-ecological left politics, one that wouldn't simply overexploit nature much in the same way capital(ism) does and then merely redistribute the spoils; that placed the 'rights of nature' above the need to accumulate, that would bring indigenous cosmovisions (from Pachamama to *Sumak Kawsay*) to bear where before there were only various shades of Bacon's call to subjugate the earth for our ever-expanding needs. Obviously, there exists today an enormously complicated debate about the relative merits of the various 'pink' governments – focusing particularly on the issue of the trade-off between exploiting minerals and hydrocarbons to achieve redistribution, and the long-term locking-in of destructive social and economic patterns – but I think it's safe to say that in terms of providing a new hope for the left, where our politics might do more than replicate capital's voracious appetite and add some redistribution on top, the Latin American New Left has dropped the ball. Whereas some 4 years ago, the climate justice movement cheered Comandante Chavez when he took up one of our slogans – 'system change, not climate change' – inside the halls of the climate summit in

Copenhagen, today we know that this was somewhat disingenuous: whatever its social benefits, an energy politics focused on extracting ever more hydrocarbons can no longer, anywhere, be the way forward.¹ Clearly, we need a new hope...

II. 4 Scenarios

... and that hope we might find in Greece: not only because SYRIZA might come to power here, but also because – whoever's in power – Greece stands at a cross-roads in terms of its energetic future (and as various commentators have pointed out, the energy sector will play a key role in Greece's crisis- and post-crisis economy, whichever way it goes).² As I see it, there are about four different scenarios, four paths that Greece might go down in terms of its energetic – and therefore, by implication – wider socio-ecological future: Extractivism; 'all of the above'; large-scale renewables; and a renewables transition from below.³ In what follows, I will briefly sketch out each of these scenarios, focusing on their pros and cons from a left-wing perspective.

II.a. Extractivism

Whether it is digging up indigenous lignite deposits and burning them – for example in the new *Ptolemaida V* plant, currently under construction while being financed at least in part by the German Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)⁴ – or beginning the

¹ On the debate regarding the socio-ecological positions of the progressive Latin American governments (esp. Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela), cf. Miriam Lang and Dunia Mokrani, eds., (2013) *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America*. Quito and Amsterdam: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Available for download at http://rosalux-europa.info/userfiles/file/Beyond_Development_RLS_TNI_2013.pdf

² A somewhat random, but nonetheless, I hope, illustrative list: *Spiegel Online*, Germany's key online news platform, describes the energy sector as Greece's "economic saviour" (here: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/key-driving-sector-greece-turns-to-energy-as-its-economic-savior-a-805173.html>); the respected *Christian Science Monitor* discusses the potential of pipeline-driven investment into Greece under the headline "Can a pipeline save Greece?" (<http://www.csmonitor.com/Environment/Energy-Voices/2013/0823/Can-a-pipeline-save-Greece?>); famous (though controversial) neoliberal economist-turned-green Jeffrey Sachs argues in one of Greece's key newspapers that exporting renewable energy would be one of three key moves in order to generate an economic recovery (http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite3_1_12/11/2013_527349).

³ This is not the place to develop this argument, but there's a reasonably strong link between the organisation of the energy sector and other social and political structures. For a more detailed exposition of the argument, see Tadzio Mueller, (2013) "Of Energy Struggles and Energy Democracy", *Luxemburg Online* (<http://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/of-energy-struggles-energy-transitions-and-energy-democracy1/>).

⁴ http://urgewald.org/sites/default/files/kfw_coal_briefing_april2013.pdf.

exploitation of the various 'unconventional oil' deposits in the country (some of which are located under the Aegean Sea), there are strong voices in Greece, including on the Greek left, who are pushing for a strategy that in the Latin American discussion has become known as 'extractivism'.⁵ The benefits of an energy-strategy based on the exploitation of domestically available resources are obvious: easy cash, lots of it. That might sound somewhat dismissive, but after several years of crisis during which Greece's economy contracted by some 25%, there is a lot to be said for (at least partly) reversing capital flows – not spending as much money on acquiring fossil fuels from elsewhere – and having cash-on-hand to satisfy societal needs, which obviously have grown during the crisis. An extractivist strategy would presumably, and according to its proponents:

- attract foreign direct investment (for Canadian investment in a gold-mining project in Chalkidiki);
- generate employment;
- provide the government with revenue, either from taxes, sales, or royalties paid by the exploiting corporation.

These are, to be sure, significant upsides. But the downsides are equally, if not more significant, as the Latin American experience shows increasingly clearly. Colleagues who know more about these issues have spoken here about the dangers of extractivism, even an extractivism of the left,⁶ so I won't go into much detail. Suffice it to say that these dangers are by no means confined to 'ecological' damages that are going to occur at some point in the more or less distant future, and somewhere else, somewhere far away. The dangers of an extractivist strategy are located much closer to home, as extractivism is more than an *economic* strategy – it is an entire 'development model', entailing the construction of a particular state-civil society complex, a particular insertion into the world market, etc.

From a radical left perspective, the key problem – if, again, we abstract for a moment from the argument that contributing to climate change is in and of itself an enormous problem from a justice-perspective⁷ - lies in the fact that the extraction of fossil fuels,

⁵ For Greece, cf. Alexis Charitsis and Giorgos Velegrakis, (2013) "Transition beyond Oil in Greece?". Available for download at http://rosalux.gr/sites/default/files/transition_beyond_oil_final.pdf. On the wider issue of 'extractivism', see again Lang and Mokrani (2013).

⁶ Lander at this conference; Tympas at this conference.

⁷ A perspective also known as 'climate justice': those people who contribute most to runaway climate chaos tend to be those who can best insulate from its effects, whereas – again, on average, those who contribute least (i.e. the poorest) tend to suffer the most under its effects. Cf. for example Ulrich Brand et al., eds. (2009) "Contours of Climate Justice. Ideas for

really of most mineral resources, tends to generate strong local resistance, whether or not the community gets to share in the spoils of the extraction.⁸ In turn, this resistance has to be managed/repressed, creating what is, for a left government, an often untenable position vis-à-vis social movements whose agenda we would have supported while out of power. More broadly (cf. Tympas at this conference), the type of financial flows associated with resource extraction tend towards being accompanied so-called rentier states, where elites can lay claim to the resources, further contributing to the emergence of a top-heavy state that can no longer be controlled from below. Other problems are the country's insertion into the world economy in a dependent position, with declining terms of trade; and of course the fact that – if we accept for a moment the 'carbon bubble' argument pushed by an increasing number of climate activists, from Naomi Klein to Al Gore, and taken up nowadays even by the head of the OECD, Gurría – that exploiting fossil fuels is increasingly an unviable strategy, both ecologically *and* economically.⁹

II.b. 'All of the above'...

...which is, in fact, the *official* name of Barack Obama's energy and climate strategy (and, ironically, one of the few political big-ticket items on which there is agreement between Democrats and Republicans).¹⁰ When faced with the question of what to do – expand the extraction and use of fossil fuels, invest in large-scale renewable power generation or try to support the relatively bottom-up emergence of a diversified renewables sector – the answer given by proponents of this strategy is to, well, do all of the above. On the face of it, this sounds like an excellent choice. Not only because, at least in the minds of its supporters, this strategy offers the specific benefits of each of its constitutive elements (lots of quick cash flow from extractivism, community renewal and such from a small-scale RE-sector, etc.) – of which more below – but more importantly, it seems to offer the political meta-benefit of not having to make any real choices, thus guaranteeing that no significant constituency is

Shaping New Climate and Energy Politics". *Critical Currents* 7. Uppsala: Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation.

⁸ This dynamic is visible anywhere, from Eastern Germany to Ecuador, from Canada to Chalkidiki.

⁹ The argument refers to the so-called 'carbon bubble', and was developed by the British 'Carbon Tracker' Initiative. Its most succinct summary is probably the one by Bill McKibben, (2012) "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math", *Rolling Stone* (<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>).

¹⁰ <http://www.climatecentral.org/news/all-of-the-above-energy-pragmatic-or-revolutionary-16396>

alienated, that no future paths are closed off. Finally, it seems to guarantee that precious good 'energy security' for all, everywhere, at all times.

If this sounds too good to be true, that's because it is. In technical terms, some strategies crowd out others, and political choices are often – especially if they also entail the construction of large-scale infrastructures – path-dependent. In laypeople's terms, if you're offered the choice to go right, or left, or straight ahead, or return where you came from, you really can't say that you'll take every one of those options. One cancels out the other, you can walk only one path at one time.¹¹ Specifically:

- *Systemkonflikt*: the electrical grid can, in principle, either be designed for a manageable number of large, so-called 'base-load' plants (nuclear, lignite, etc.) that might take a long time to fire up, but once up and running can easily provide a constant amount of electricity, at constant prices, all the time; or it can be designed to match the requirements of an enormous multiplicity of distributed producers of renewable energies, which obviously fluctuate throughout the day, and between seasons.¹² Deciding on one makes the other so much harder...
- Investment: in purely economic terms, fossil fuel extraction is one of the most lucrative businesses on the planet. As a result, investing in extractivism would almost certainly crowd out the slower kind of investment that is necessary to expand a community-controlled renewables sector.
- This in turn would entail the growth of social forces (outside of and within the state apparatus) that would further militate for increasing reliance on fossil fuels. The same would happen with renewables, but because in the case of a community-controlled renewables sector, it's likely that the forces supporting their expansion would be weaker both politically and economically, as they would be less centralised.

So unlike the extractivist scenario, which is feasible but unpleasant, the all of the above scenario suffers from a far more fatal defect: it's a complete illusion.

¹¹ Precisely on the issue of the US's 'all of the above'-strategy, the respected financial news-service Bloomberg writes: "The problem is, while we're basking in glee over all our options, we're overlooking the fact that proponents of each of these power sources are trying to pound each other out of business. Historically, only one dominant energy source emerges as its predecessor falls off a cliff." <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-10-24/history-contradicts-the-u-s-s-all-of-the-above-energy-strategy.html>

¹² Cf. <http://www.duh.de/2867.html>.

II.c. Large-scale Renewables

A third strategic option on the table – one that at the very least recognises the severity of the socio-ecological crisis and the potential economic benefits that might be derived from a switch to renewable energy production – is to bet on large-scale investments in off- and onshore windparks as well as large solar farms. *In memoriam* of this strategy's inaugural white elephant-project, let's think of this option as *Desertec-light*: by attracting major outside investment, Greece could turn provide for its own energy needs from renewable sources, *and* become a major exporter of clean energy (especially on the Greek islands there is obviously no shortage of wind and sun).

In administrative terms, this would quite possibly the most easily achievable renewables-transition, which certainly merits some closer engagement with it. A strategy based on large-scale renewables (LSRs) would not require any major changes in regulatory and financial frameworks; be compatible with state forms that have emerged over the last (neoliberal) decades, that is, of the “competition state” trying to “lure buffaloes”, i.e. attract foreign direct investment.¹³ In turn, from the perspective of energy companies, it guarantees state backup for potentially risky investments (cf. attempts to build offshore-windparks in Germany), and entails no need to change their business model structurally from that employed in the fossil-nuclear energy regime: large firms engage in large investments (usually with im- or explicit government backing) to reap large profits. It is, in essence, the strategy where – to paraphrase Lampedusa's *The Leopard* - things must change (in this case, the primary energy source) so that they can remain the same (state and corporate structures).

So that all sounds pretty good: an extremely important ecological transformation (away from fossil fuels) towards renewables, achieved at high speed and easily scalable. Alas, things are a lot more complicated in the realm of LSRs. First, due to political and often technical difficulties, not only is the flagship Desertec-project pretty much a dead letter nowadays, many offshore windparks have run into severe construction delays and have, unsurprisingly, gone significantly over budget. These budget shortfalls are then usually covered out of public budgets, so that we end up with the usual private-gains-public-losses scenario. Secondly, the construction of large-scale electricity-producing units where there were none before also requires the construction of new electric powerlines (and where cross-border trade is planned,

¹³ Palan, Ronen, (1998) “Luring Buffaloes and the Game Of Industrial Subsidies: A Critique Of National Competitive Policies in the Era of the Competition State”, *Global Society* 12: 3.

this would increase regulatory risk as it would require cross-border political agreement), which again eat up significant public funds – in essence, the LSR-strategy is one that is fraught with significantly more economic risks than its proponents tend to admit. Thirdly, as evidenced by the many resistances cropping up in Europe and elsewhere against ‘unnecessary imposed megaprojects’,¹⁴ such megaprojects tend to elicit significant local opposition. While opposition to LSRs and the expansion of grid lines has often been branded as resistance to the expansion of renewable energies *per se*, research in Germany shows that the opposition is, in almost all such cases, triggered by a feeling of being either politically and/or economically excluded from decision-making and spoils in relation to the project.¹⁵ Together with the resistance against gold-mining in Chalkidiki, movements against LSRs (cf. also Tsouchlis at this conference) today constitute the only significant ecological social movements, which a government bent on expanding LSRs would necessarily have to repress. Given that these are in most cases movements for more political and economic participation, this is not an attractive prospect for a left government.

Finally, although it is no doubt important to avoid seeing a transition towards renewables as some sort of panacea that would at a stroke cure all social and environmental ills, it has long been argued that such a transition might very well bring many more benefits than ‘merely’ getting out of fossil fuels: from strengthening local economies by generating employment and stimulating regional economic circuits, to providing new avenues for participation in politics and economics, to re-energising communities in demographically and economically declining areas.¹⁶ Generally speaking, the argument regarding the broader social and economic benefits of a renewables-transition assume a large proportion of the sector to be community-controlled or in relatively small-scale hands. A transition based on LSRs, though it is by no means to be sneered at given the alternatives, is from this perspective by far the least interesting option. Taking into account the other drawbacks mentioned above, it ceases to be an interesting transformative strategy for a left formation.

¹⁴ Thus the inspired name of series of Social Fora: against *Grands Projets Inutiles Imposés*.

¹⁵ E.g. Merle Pottharst, (2010) *Widerstände gegen erneuerbare Energien in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Hintergründe und Lösungswege*. FH Eberswalde: MA-Thesis.

¹⁶ Germany’s Hermann Scheer was strongly associated with this argument. In essence, it suggests that while energy sources do not strictly *determine* their mode of social organisation, they strongly suggest certain paths, while making others less likely. Put differently, “whereas fossil and nuclear technologies strongly tend towards centralisation, it is much easier to imagine an energy system that is based on renewables as being democratised, socialised and decentralised” (Müller 2013).

II.d. Small-scale, democratically controlled renewables

Which brings us to the fourth and final option: that of a genuine socio-ecological transformation (SET) in the energy (or at the very least electricity-) sector, based to a large extent on relatively small-scale, relatively democratically controlled¹⁷ renewable energy production. One that is ecological, because it phases out fossil and nuclear fuels; that is democratic, because it places ownership and control in the hands of cooperatives, municipalities and small-scale private owners; that is social, because it is not paid for by the poorest and enjoyed by the richest. The German expression for such a magical panacea would be to deride it as an ‘egg-laying woolly milk-sow’ – so let me embrace that sarcastic moniker, and outline some of the benefits that the German ‘energy transition’ has already brought to the individuals, communities and cooperatives involved, and is likely to bring in increasing measure. The below list is taken straight from the work of a colleague, Hans Thie, who has so far done most to articulate an internationally received left-wing narrative about the German energy transition. In his view, the type of SET envisaged here has already led to: ”

- Reduction of CO₂ emissions
- Creation of added value locally, with new jobs in commerce and agriculture[:

¹⁷ On the question of energy democracy, cf. Sören Becker and Conrad Kunze, (forthcoming) *Die Energiewende als emanzipatorische Praxis. Beispiele in Europa 2013*. Rosa Luxemburg Foundation: Brussels. To be sure, the concept of energy democracy is still being fleshed out, and remains extremely vague. There is, for example, widespread agreement on the fact that it is potentially easier to ‘democratise’ renewable electricity production than it is to democratise nuclear or coal power (cf. gegenstromberlin, (2011) *Energiepolitische Thesen*. www.gegenstromberlin.net/2011/05/15/energiepolitische-thesen-gegen-den-fossil-nuklearen-wahn-energiedemokratie-jetzt/). But an interesting dissent is articulated by Timothy Mitchell (2011, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*. London: Verso), who – from a classical workerist perspective – argues that it was during the age of coal that workers’ and other movements fought for and achieved many of the elements of substantive democracy that we enjoy today in the global North. This, he argues, was based on the workers’ movement’s ability to control certain ‘choke points’ in the coal system. This in turn raises the question of control and of choke points: who controls which choke points in a potential renewables-based system? Once the units are produced and installed, renewable electricity production is not very labour-intensive at all. What does that mean for the potential power of (organised) workers in such a system? Or, put differently: *whose* energy democracy is it? (because that is no doubt crucial in ascertaining *what sort of* energy democracy it is) Is it a producer democracy, closer to the late agricultural/early manufacturing ideas of the anarcho-syndicalists? Is it a workers’ democracy along the old industrial model? Is it a communal, or a universal(ist) democracy? In short, discussions about energy democracy have so far remained too much at an abstract, and/or sloganistic level – they need to move to a greater degree of specificity: giving societal actors options to choose between different types of ED, and how to relate them to each other. This question – of different kinds of ED and of how they relate to each other – became particularly relevant in the current conflicts around the remunicipalisation of Berlin’s electrical grid, where a cooperative-based project was fighting for attention with one based on the creation of a democratically-controlled public utility along the SMUD-model pioneered in Sacramento.

some 200.000 net jobs have been created in the German renewables sector over the last ten years, with good regional distribution – a number that, of course, is bound to shrink if RE-technologies and installations are imported from abroad]

- Substitution of fossil imported energy sources with domestic, clean power generation
- Favorable energy prices for private households and companies by means of local district heating networks, and a drastically increased share of cogeneration
- Strengthening of local democracy, the municipal tax base and citizens' involvement
- Direct meshing of citizens' and local interests
- Stable regional economic circuits, based on needs-appropriate coordination of resources procurement, production and use
- Profitable recycling of residual and waste materials, instead of expensive disposal
- Increased independent activity on the part of municipalities, public utilities, the citizenry and companies
- Minimal dependence on external interests
- Expansion of inter-municipal and interregional exchange (no competitive projects between the municipalities)
- Strengthening environmental consciousness, knowledge about energy, and interest in innovative technological solutions
- Practical implementation of sustainable development models."¹⁸

The benefits, in other words, go far beyond being 'merely' ecological (such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions), at their most interesting from a left perspective they involve a turn towards non-private, collective forms of ownership. There is a boom in German energy cooperatives, of which today some 600 exist, organising more than 130.000 people and investing more than a billion Euros; some towns and cities have even tried (and some, like Hamburg, have succeeded) in 'remunicipalising' their electricity grid.

To be sure, there is enormous discussion on the precise extent, the hows and whys of these changes, which I do not have the space to go into right here.¹⁹ In addition, the *Energiewende* is by no means uncontested. Its opponents, the four big energy companies that still dominate the German electricity market together with their spread throughout the political and cultural spheres (from the Social Democratic Party to key media outlets like *Spiegel Online* to aggressive, industry-funded think

¹⁸ Hans Thie, presentation in Vienna (2013): The Controversial Energy Turnaround in Germany. Successes, contradictions, perspectives. Available for download at http://rosalux-europa.info/userfiles/file/VIE13_Thie_Energytransition.pdf.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the crucial 'feed-in tariff'-law (the EEG), cf. Hübner at this conference.

tanks like *Institut Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft*²⁰), have adopted the strategy of “delay and take over”²¹; that is to say, they are trying to slow down the expansion of small-scale renewables, which are hard for them to control, by cutting back on their support mechanisms, and expand support for large-scale renewables, an area in which (due to necessarily high upfront investments) they obviously enjoy significant competitive advantages. A second element of this strategy is an attempt to focus the current political debate on the supposedly excessive costs incurred by poorer individuals and households: a claim to which, due to the design of the EEG, there is some truth, a fact that needs to be addressed in any coming reform of the law (the shape of this reformed law is one of the key battlegrounds at the moment); but which ignores the fact that these price-increases for households are to a large extent due not to the spiralling costs of renewables (in fact, new RE-installations produce electricity at more or less the same prices as new fossil-fuel installations), but to exemptions and other hidden subsidies for industrial and other commercial consumers.²² Lastly, enormous political conflicts hide behind seemingly arcane technical questions – such as this one: how many miles of what kind of power lines need to be built from where to where? – and remain open questions over which the future of the *Energiewende* will be decided.

These conflicts and attacks notwithstanding, however, the fact remains that the kind of SET described here has significant actual and potential benefits that, from a left perspective, dramatically outweigh those offered by any of the other scenarios. It is also the only ‘proposal’ (if it is that concrete at this point) that goes some way towards addressing the organic (or multiple) crisis that has gripped the world – social and ecological, political and economic. It is the only proposal that seeks to establish a socially and ecologically sustainable (and therefore less globally unjust) energy regime.

A first round of objections to this proposal would no doubt come from the fact that it is reasonably closely modelled on the experience of the German *Energiewende* – an experience that it would arguably hard to copy in Greece. First, there is no widespread popular movement against lignite and shale in Greece that would mirror Germany’s anti-nuclear movement (without which there would today not be an *Energiewende*); second, there is neither enough money in Greece’s government

²⁰ Which ran a spectacularly disingenuous ad-campaign that claimed to want to defend the *Energiewende*, but scrap the law that is central to it, the EEG.

²¹ Cf. again Thie (2013).

²² Cf. Wolfgang Pomrehn (2013), *Armutsrisiko Energiewende*. Berlin: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (<http://www.rosalux.de/publication/39097/armutsrisiko-energiewende.html>).

coffers, nor in the wallets of ordinary Greeks, to pay the significant (though much smaller than often asserted in international media critical of the transition, and downright tiny in comparison to the money spent on the fossil-fuel and nuclear sector) sums of money that have been invested in the growth of Germany's RE-sector;²³ third, there is no legal framework in Greece that allows for the creation of cooperatives. The first, which raises the question of the social base for such a progressive SET, is indeed a tough one to answer – but the way things have developed in Germany over the last few years might give some hope here. Whereas in its early days, the *Energiewende* was driven forward largely by ideologically committed, 'movementist' individuals and groups, the creation of the feed-in-tariff-law has allowed all manners of desires to be channelled into the expansion of REs – see the list above! In fact, in Germany it is increasingly the mundane desire for economic and cultural survival that drives the process forward, rather than a strong ideological commitment to 'clean' energy.²⁴ In turn, if the legal framework for the creation of cooperatives and other participatory structures could be created, these economic desires would in turn fuel the growth of precisely the kind of sector that could become a central part of the social forces driving forward the transition. A potential SYRIZA government would at least potentially be able to create such a framework, and increase the amount of available funds through unilateral debt-writoffs.

Much of this, obviously, is guesswork. In fact, this kind of transition has never been tried under the circumstances I am imagining here: in a country in a deep economic crisis, one which has lost any and all vestiges of economic sovereignty (whether fiscal or monetary), with a strong fascist movement – and with a new leftist party that might just come to power. Clearly, the biggest argument against this proposal is: it might very well not work. It has never been tried in this short a time, with movements

²³ In Germany, and in Europe, subsidies for fossil and nuclear energy production are invariably much higher than for renewables. For Germany, see a report by the Forum Ökologisch-Soziale Marktwirtschaft (http://www.greenpeace-energy.de/uploads/media/Stromkostenstudie_Greenpeace_Energy_BWE_01.pdf), asserting that the €17bn that Germans paid to support renewables in 2012 are dwarfed by the largely hidden costs of €40bn paid to support conventional fuels and deal with their social and environmental costs; for Europe, a recent report prepared for, and then heavily redacted by, energy commissioner Oettinger's office "reveals the true scale of EU energy subsidies. Each year member states spend €40 billion on supporting fossil fuels (including indirect subsidies), €35 billion on nuclear, and just €30 billion on renewable energy." (http://www.theecologist.org/News/news_round_up/2131718/eu_energy_subsidies_the_truth_is_out.html).

²⁴ This is the central, and from a left-wing perspective possibly somewhat ambiguous result of the passage of the German feed-in-tariffs law: it makes investment in renewable energy production, particularly small-scale production, economically risk-free.

and governments working together rather than at loggerheads. The risks are no doubt enormous; but the potential benefits are staggering.

III. Conclusion

So these are, it seems to me, the four basic paths that Greece might decide to take with regard to its future energy regime. Obviously, the choice is up – or should at least be up – to folks here in Greece. But if being on the left, that is, to the left of whatever is left of that broken shell that still wields the name Social Democracy, has any meaning, it is to *both* improve people's lives in the short run, *and* to be the source of a real hope that fundamental change, that a radically different and better future is possible. In the SET sketched out here in broad brushstrokes – based on the emergence/creation of a democratic, small-scale RE-sector, those two tasks of the anti-capitalist left converge. The choice, then, is yours: to go down paths that have already been tried and failed; or that must necessarily fail (if viewed from our shared political perspective); or go down the path of hope, face the enemy (or enemies) and with the help of the energy, the spirit and the dynamism that we have been fortunate to experience at this conference, win the battles that lie ahead. In these battles, we, your international friends and fellow travellers, will be with you every step of the way.

To our Greek friends: thank you for your courage, thank you for your determination, and, most of all, thank you for giving us a new beacon of hope.