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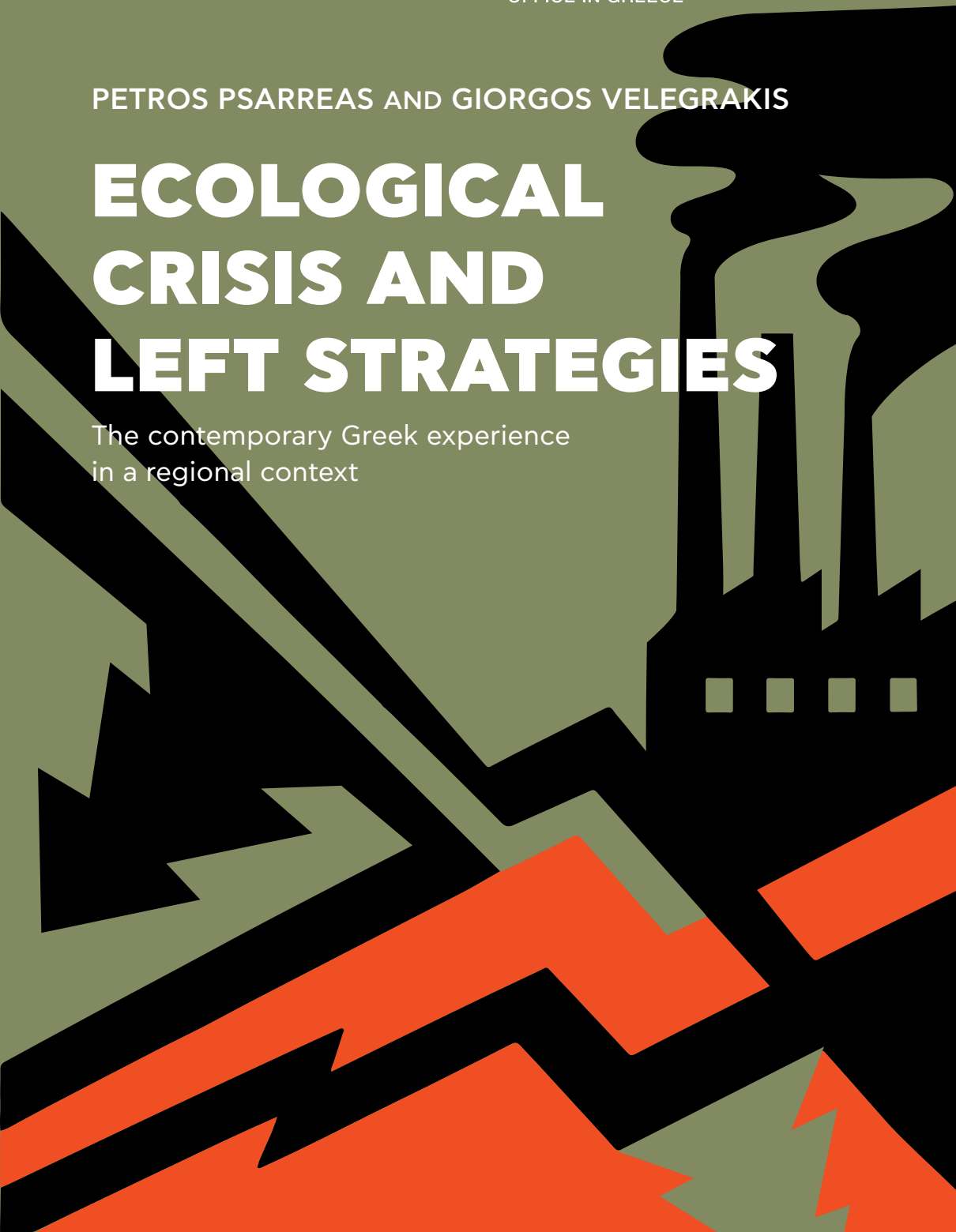
ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND LEFT STRATEGIES

The contemporary Greek experience in a regional context



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Athens, November 2025

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THE ERA OF ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: AN UNEQUAL DYSTOPIA IN THE MAKING

01

While the ecological crisis has unfortunately become an everyday reality across the globe, it still does not constitute a universal common ground. Many deny either the existence of the phenomenon itself or its cause and origin,[1] while others adopt a sceptical stance or prioritise different issues. Yet the challenges do not end there. One could argue that the problems arising from the dominant political forces of the bourgeoisie – who, at least rhetorically, have embraced a climate agenda and a general strategy of "green" or "greener capitalism" – are even more complex in every aspect. Over the past decades, these forces have played a decisive role in shaping the fundamental priorities of the dominant ideology, while constituting, at least until recently, before the second Trump presidency,[2] the dominant socioeconomic forces that drove societies to dystopia.[3]

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1. They deny that climate change is primarily anthropogenic, claiming that natural causes are responsible for climate observations due to the natural climate variability in terms of geological timescale. Apart from that, we feel that it is important to point out that we are a little cautious with definitions and terminology and, although this is not strictly a theoretical text, we will question terms that are widely accepted even in radical approaches. For example, although the term "anthropogenic" is widely accepted, we argue that has a dimension that is quite misleading, as the cause is not humans as a biological species, not even forager societies, but rather a specific mode of production, capitalism. Additionally, the term "climate change" resembles a natural process, unlike other terms such as "global warming", or climate crisis.

2. This report was primarily written before COP 29 and before Trump's second presidential election win in 2024. As such, it is challenging for us to rigorously test our approaches and estimates against new major events shaping a "new reality".

3. Fernandes emphasises that: "green capitalism poses more of a threat

For decades, the problem of tackling climate change has been always deferred to a future time (today, it's the year 2050), with every strategy, policy and action overdetermined by market mechanisms, opportunities for profitable capital investment and the creation of new markets – all aimed at boosting economic growth and capitalist development. In the best-case scenario, this has been conceived as an opportunity for capitalism itself to pursue a green transition through a prolonged process of creative destruction.[4] As a result, the climate crisis has been cast as a future problem, imaginable only within the context of profitable opportunities for capital expansion across emerging sectors.

However, both scientific research and the everyday experience of billions of people make it clear that the reality of the third decade of the 21st century could not be more different. Along with many others (e.g., Pohl & Swyngedouw, 2023), we argue that not only do we already live in the era of the climate crisis, but that we have already crossed the

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than standard climate denialism, as it appears to acknowledge the scientific consensus around climate change, but conceals capitalism's role in the crisis. Its misrepresentation of climate change as a problem that can be managed without drastic changes to the mode of production leads to false solutions and is thus itself a kind of denialism. Its solutions address some critical issues, but only to the extent that they are compatible with the ultimate objective of generating future profits" (Fernandes, 2022).

4. Theoretical approaches that combine elements from the Schumpeterian theory of creative destruction, along with waves of technological innovation and Keynesian policies, in the framework of a mixed economy (a variety of combinations between market, state, public space, commons) reaching even the shores of Marxism, can be found in the broad tradition and currents of social democracy, up to the so-called progressive or liberal left. Not only do all these approaches not question the capitalist mode of production, or market mechanisms, but they are rather based on the imperative of capitalist development (i.e., economic growth) and prioritise a green transition to strengthen capitalist development is in the short term and ensure its sustainability in the long term. This is undoubtedly linked to a very specific sociopolitical framework, its limits, and types of transitions.

threshold of a dystopia in the making, an elusive reality that often escapes our attention precisely because we inhabit it.

The Greek peninsula, situated in the eastern Mediterranean, is characterised by a highly heterogeneous environment that hosts exceptional biodiversity and a wide range of ecosystem types. This richness stems from the country's geographical and geomorphological characteristics – its geographical position, intense anaglyph, island complexes and extensive coastline – together with its wealth of cultural heritage monuments.

Thus, the most significant factor is the socioeconomic dimension, especially the recent history of political and social struggles during the first two decades of the 21st century. As in many other countries, in Greece this period included an unprecedented international experiment within a eurozone member state: the imposition of ultra-neoliberal programmes – also known as economic adjustment programmes, memorandums or bailouts – by the state's creditors, namely the EU, IMF, ECM and ESM. The global capitalist crisis was seized on by the domestic ruling classes and their international allies as an opportunity to impose a harsh austerity regime entailing massive income redistribution and the deregulation of the legal, institutional and regulatory framework (including the downgrading of environmental protection), extensive privatisations and aggressive devaluation policies. Within a few years, Greek society, the state and the economy were violently transformed on an unprecedented scale.

This turbulent era also saw intense social mobilisation: a robust antiglobalisation movement, an extensive and victorious student movement against constitutional reform in universities (2006), a youth uprising with massive riots (2008) and massive strikes and riots during the first adjustment programme (2010). It witnessed the Greek version of the Indignados movement (2011–2012), the first government of a

self-declared "radical" left party[5] in an EU member state as well as an extensive constellation of far-left organisations, parties and anarchist groups.[6]

Amid these developments, marked by major events in the class struggle and sociopolitical challenges of historical magnitude, socioecological movements emerged and diversified. While interwoven with the challenges of the period, these movements also introduced the ecological dimension of the struggle, though not always without contradictions.

Building on these social and political experiences, and acknowledging their weaknesses and contradictions, as well as their theoretical, strategic and political dilemmas/choices, especially in the wake of devastating defeats, we aim to explore alternative paths that address yesterday's shortcomings and confront today's challenges within the framework of an ecosocialist strategy.

To begin this exploration, we situate our analysis within the broader context of the current global crisis of capitalism, emphasising its multifaceted nature and the systemic inability of political and economic elites to address the climate emergency. We then delve deeper into the geographical scope and severity of the climate crisis, focusing particularly on the Eastern Mediterranean. Subsequently, we examine the Greek context, analysing how socioenvironmental relations were reshaped before, during and after the financial crisis. We explore the wave of social unrest that emerged during the austerity era and beyond, focusing on the diverse socioenvironmental movements and local actions that have collectively constituted subversive practices and insurgent

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5. SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) formed a coalition government with a conservative right-wing party, Independent Greeks (ANEL).

6. We mention just a few major milestones of a complex and multidimensional period, which has not yet been analysed in depth and which ended up in a devastating defeat regarding the interests of the working class and the oppressed social majority.

ecologies. We continue by reflecting on the inherent diversity and localised origins of these movements, which have collectively formed a powerful force for grassroots resistance and contestation. We then turn our attention to the major strategies, contradictions and challenges in the era of the ecological crisis, analysing critical pillars and narratives. Insisting on the need to both acknowledge and overcome the experiences, defeats and mistakes of the past two decades, we propose key principles, criteria and priority areas for the sociopolitical struggle towards an ecosocialist transition.

MORE THAN ONE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

The last Conference of the Parties (COP 28) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place at the end of 2023 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, following the previous disastrous COP 27 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, a conference that failed even to observe the familiar "protocol" of manufacturing the "expected expectations" so that it was impossible to disappoint them. However, the new "paradigm" in President al-Sisi's Egypt was not repeated in Dubai, where we returned to the customary "climate" of lofty expectations, ambitious declarations and bold targets – comforting in their rhetoric, yet seemingly detached from the lived reality of our planet.

It is worth noting that the UAE ranks seventh and eighth in the world in oil reserves and production, respectively. It is therefore no surprise that COP 28 saw a record presence of more than 2,456 fossil fuel lobbyists (Kick Big Polluters Out, 2023) – up from 636 at COP 27, itself only about 100 more than COP 26. The president of COP 28 was Sultan Al-Jaber, director-general and CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC). Speaking at a "She Changes Climate" event on

21 November 2023, he commented that "there is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuel is what's going to achieve 1.5°C", adding that such a phase-out would prevent sustainable development "unless you want to take the world back into caves" (Carrington & Stockton, 2023). Climate summits have always been the central stage for world political leaders of capitalist states, organisations and corporations, while experts and scientists have been relegated to a secondary role. For socio-ecological movements, the epicentre of the summits has long shifted towards alternative, anti- or counter summits, organised in parallel and carrying their own, still relatively short, history.

Although COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009 was widely regarded as an absolute fiasco, it also marked a turning point for the climate movement (Conway & Eisler, 2009), particularly for the emerging climate justice movement. Ten years after the Seattle WTO protests, Copenhagen seemed like the next station: "Copenhagen: Seattle Grows Up" (Klein, 2009). More than 100,000 people attended what was probably the largest demonstration for climate change up to that point, and over 50,000 participated in Klimaforum09, the alternative conference or counter-summit (Eriksen et al., 2010). Three events set the tone. First, the famous People's Declaration called for "System change – not climate change" – a famed anticapitalistic ecological slogan. Second, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, quoted the same slogan in his official speech. Third, Bolivian President Evo Morales called for an alternative climate summit the following year in Cochabamba, the "World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth", aiming to "gather all those progressive forces that want to develop an explicitly anticapitalistic climate politics" (Mueller, 2012). At the same time, although the term "new extractivism" had already emerged and local movements were challenging some aspects of the developmentalist politics of left-wing

governments,[7] these were times of hope and Gramscian "optimism of the will". "The Peoples Agreement" was unsurprising in its omission of a central demand of radical movements: to leave fossil fuels in the ground. Yet, it set the tone for an anti-growth and anticapitalist discourse with passages such as:

> The capitalist system has imposed on us a logic of competition, progress and limitless growth. This regime of production and consumption seeks profit without limits, separating human beings from nature and imposing a logic of domination upon nature, transforming everything into commodities: water, earth, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, the rights of peoples, and life itself. Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are ... Humanity confronts a great dilemma: to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation, and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.

Fifteen years later, the optimism, and the hopes – that is, the development of social movements, the mobilisations and the enforcement of left-wing parties internationally – of that entire period have long vanished. In addition to the historical impact of the first global pandemic, which tore apart capitalism's normality on an unprecedented scale, almost globally and simultaneously, we are now dealing with a far-right surge and imperialist antagonisms, escalating with regional wars in Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. It is crucial to emphasise that war changes everything, including strategies and priorities regarding the climate crisis.

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7. Without a doubt the sociopolitical situation in Latin America was and still is of great complexity, full of contradictions and problems of historical magnitude. Consequently, we have no intention of simplifying anything or analysing the conditions in Latin America; our argument has a different objective.

Emissions during the last three decades of COPs

To put things in perspective, we will not revisit the UN Environment Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, its declaration or the accompanying action plan, nor other milestones that followed. Let us instead begin with the signing of the UNFCCC in 1992. More than 30 years after the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, over 25 years after the Kyoto Protocol, seven years after the Paris Agreement and a year after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 6th Assessment Report, it is clear that we have already surpassed the tipping point for limiting the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. So, after more than 30 years of conferences, declarations, action plans, protocols and agreements, progress is not only absent – the situation is much worse. Figure 1 is quite revealing.

Therefore, by 2018 CO_2 emissions were 60% higher than at the time of the Rio Earth Summit, while half of all historical CO_2 emissions occurred in just the past three decades:[8] approximately 804 $GtCO_2$[9] were emitted over the 240 years from 1750 to 1990, compared to 872 $GtCO_2$ in the three decades from 1990 to 2019 (Stoddard et al., 2021, p. 657). This stark contrast illustrates the cumulative character of capitalism's exponential growth and its destructive dynamics. In fact, during the 28 COPs, cumulative emissions have been more than doubled.

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8. Although most emissions historically have been released from so-called developed countries, it is worth mentioning that in the past 30 years half of the cumulative emissions came from so-called developing capitalist countries which, of course, represent approximately 80% of the world's population (Stoddard et al., 2021, p. 655).

9. GtC: Gigatons of carbon. 1 Gt= 109t and 1 GtC=3.67$GtCO_2$.

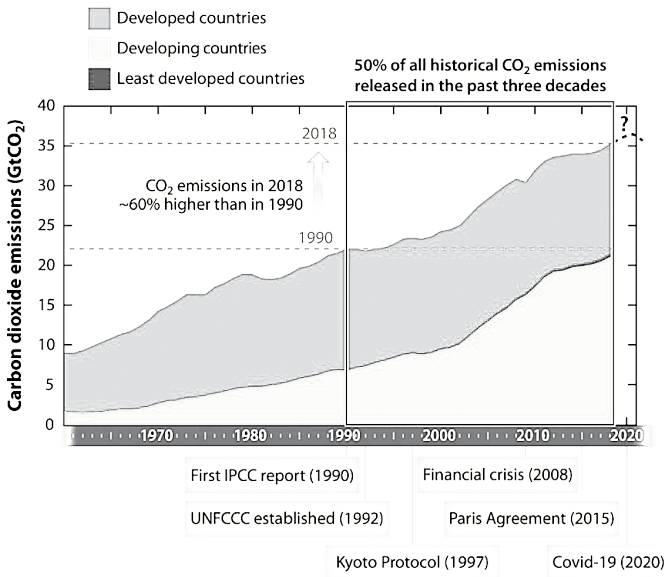
FIGURE 1.

Territorial carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions of so-called developed, developing and least developed countries (LDCs) a) over time, b) cumulative and c) per capita, in correlation with important milestones of the last 30 years.

The categorisation of countries – i.e., developed, developing, LDCs – follows the UNFCCC terminology, as it is mentioned by the authors.

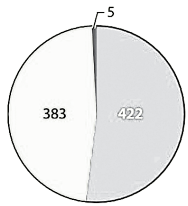
Source: Stoddard et al., 2021.

a Global carbon dioxide emissions*

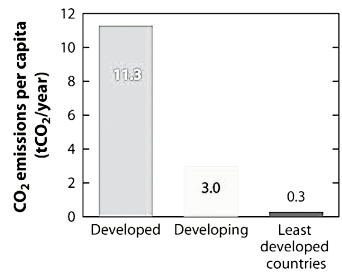


* Emissions from fossil fuels and cement only (excluding international aviation and shipping). Note that emissions from agriculture, forestry, and other land use are not part of the data.

b Cumulative carbon dioxide emissions 1990–2018 ($GtCO_2$)*



c Average annual carbon dioxide emissions per capita 1990–2018*



Fossil fuels in the energy mix

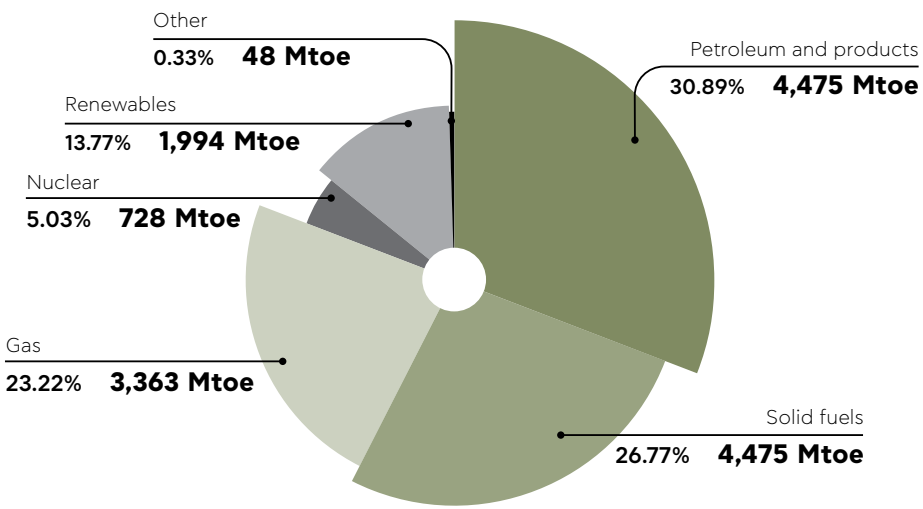
Let's now turn to another crucial driver of the climate crisis: the energy sector, notwithstanding the importance of other important sectors such as agriculture, transportation, land use, etc. One might reasonably assume that the share of fossil fuels in the energy mix has declined over recent decades. In reality, this is not the case. According to the IEA, "the share of fossil fuels in the global energy mix has been stubbornly high, at around 80% of for decades (IEA, 2022b, p. 21 & 43): "Oil, coal and natural gas, in this order, are the largest energy sources together representing 81.2% of totally primary energy production" (United Nations, 2024, p. 6).

FIGURE 2.

World total energy supply by fuel, 2019.

Source: European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy, 2021, p. 13.

Total: 14,486 Mtoe



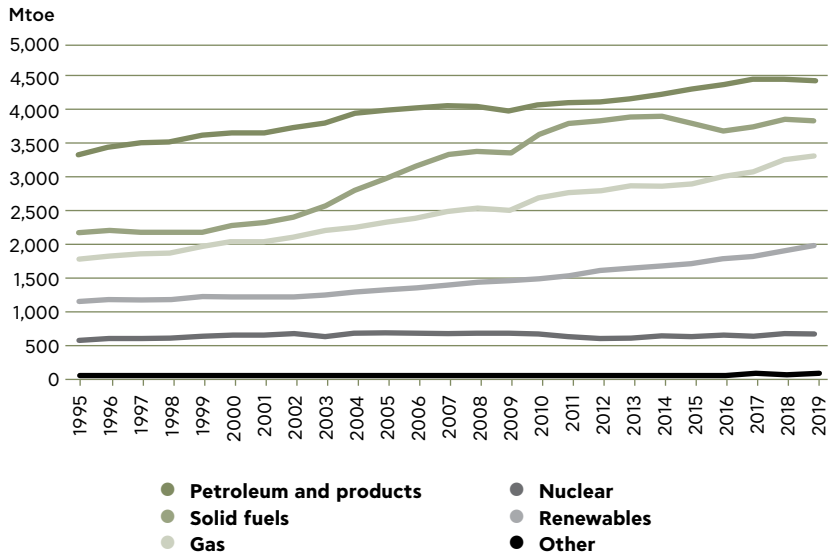
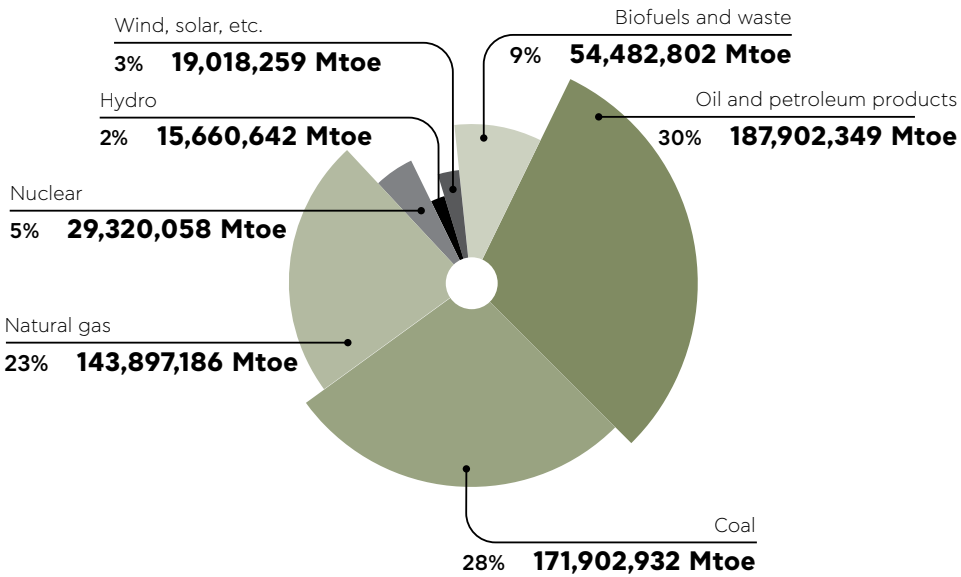


FIGURE 3.

World total energy supply by source, 2022.

Source: International Energy Agency, 2022a.



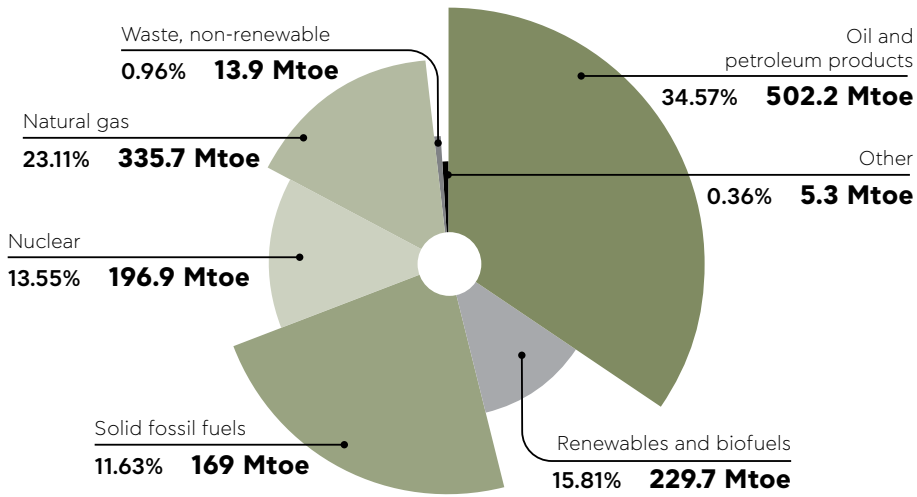
As depicted in Figure 3, the pandemic brought no meaningful change. The share of fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil), according to the latest IEA data, stands at approximately 81%. Surprisingly or not, the situation in the EU27 is not substantially different. As we can see in Figure 4 (before the Covid-19 pandemic),[10] fossil fuels account for 69.8% of the EU27 energy mix. However, this is accompanied by a nuclear – "ultra green" – share of 13.6%, more than double the global average.

FIGURE 4.

Gross inland consumption by fuel for EU27, 2019.

Source: European Commission, Directorate-General for Energy, 2021, p. 47.

Total: 1,454 Mtoe



Hence, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to escalate over the last three decades, with no sign of bending the curve. At the same time, the share of fossil fuels has not diminished within an ever-growing gross energy consump-

10. We chose to present data before lockdowns, as the long-term trends that we are interested in are more accurately depicted in those and not in those that are drastically altered by a temporary external factor.

tion (and production) that "fuels" capitalist development. At this point, it is crucial to stress that what matters for the climate system are absolute, not relative, figures. The earth's climate system cannot "appreciate" the improvements in the amounts of energy we need in terms of GDP (monetary units). Moreover, as William Stanley Jevons demonstrated in the famous The Coal Question (1866), energy efficiency improvements led, ceteris paribus, to an increase in aggregate fuel consumption (in total absolute numbers), a phenomenon known as the Jevons paradox (Jevons, 1866). More broadly, the Jevons paradox underlies the capitalist dynamics of expanded reproduction on a constantly greater scale (except during capitalist crises), outweighing any advance in the efficiency of the use of natural resources, as The Weight of Nations report also showed (Matthews et al., 2000).

+1.5°C a future goal, or today's reality?

One telling remark illustrates how capitalism's ideological mechanisms have operated – and through UN negotiations – over the past three decades: "A rapid decarbonization of the energy system is the key to keeping the goal of 1.5°C within reach" is the opening line of paragraph III, entitled "Fast-tracking a just, orderly, and equitable energy transition", of the Summary of Global Climate Action at COP 28 (UNFCCC 2023, p. 2).

A crucial question immediately arises. How many empty-meaning buzzwords can be packed in a single heading? The answer is that it doesn't matter, so long as the goal serves only an ideological purpose that goes even beyond "tangible" reality. The stated aim is: "Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change" (UNFCCC, 2016, Paris Agreement. art. 2, p. 4).

which was adopted, popularised and celebrated at the Paris Agreement in 2015. An ambitious and, at the same time, comforting goal, in a UN agreement (major international institution) to limit temperature increase – and the words do matter – to 1.5°C in order to "significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change", and all this in a text in which avoids any mention of the term "fossil fuels" and openly projects aggregate greenhouse gas emissions to continue rising until 2030 (ibid., p. 29)

Yet there is a deeper problem: the goal itself. Even in 2015, most scientific research and emission scenarios showed that limiting warming to 1.5°C, or even 2°C, until the end of the century, which represents the threshold for runaway climate change, was unrealistic Yet, the same goal is still repeated, almost a decade later at COP 28, when Copernicus, the EU's Earth Observation Programme, announced that "the global-average temperature for the past 12 months ... [was] 1.64°C above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial average" (Copernicus, 4 July 2024). In September 2024, NASA announced that "the researchers affirmed that GISTEMP[11] is correctly capturing rising surface temperatures on our planet and that Earth's global temperature increase since the late 19th century – summer 2024 was about 2.7 F (1.51 C) warmer than the late 1800s – cannot be explained by any uncertainty or error in the data" (Younger, 2024). Moreover, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in January 2024 said that "six leading international datasets used for monitoring global temperatures and consolidated by WMO show that the annual average global temperature was 1.45 ± 0.12°C above pre-industrial levels (1850–1900) in 2023", and not just that but "the ten-year average 2014–2023 was 1.20 ± 0.12°C above the 1850–1900 average" (World Meteorological Organization, 2024).

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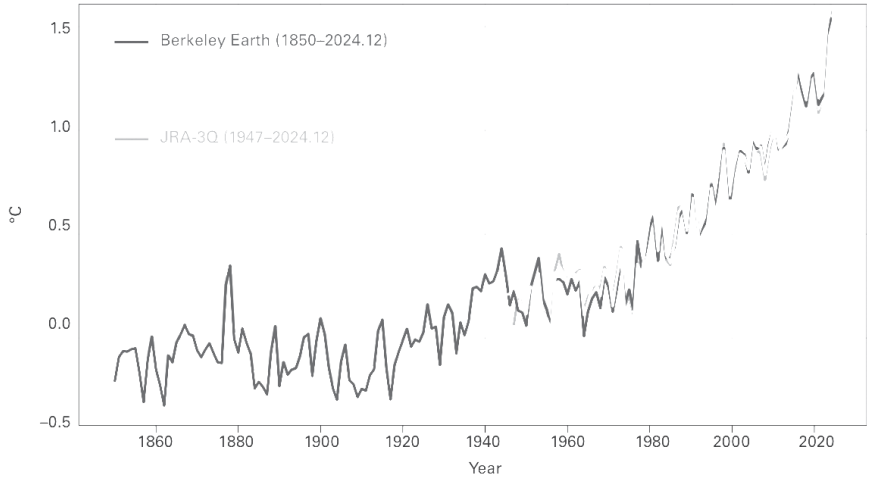
11. Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) and GISS Surface Temperature Analysis (GISTEMP).

FIGURE 5.
Consolidated global datasets until 2023.
Source: World Meteorological Organization, 2024.



As a result, it is now widely debated, both in peer-reviewed research and in the media, whether the 1.5°C target retains any meaning. Put bluntly, has the Paris Agreement been cancelled by reality? The answer may seem obvious, yet technically it remains "no" because the agreement refers to long-term warming – in particular, a 20-year running average[12] – rather than to a sole year, even though every model already shows that it is only a matter of – statistical – time before technically the answer will be positive (Dunstone et al., 2024;

12. The IPCC uses a specific methodology for the calculation of average global surface temperature relative to 1850–1900. Specifically, for the scenarios that are presented, "the assessed time when a certain global warming level is reached under a particular scenario is defined here as the mid-point of the first 20-year running average period during which the assessed average global temperature change exceeds the level of global warming" (IPCC. 2023, n. 111, p. 64).

Tollefson, 2023). That kind of "scientific" institutional accuracy dictates that, according to Hausfather, "we could effectively hit 1.5 degrees of warming each year for a whole decade before the long-term averages passes that mark" (Tollefson, 2023). The question, then, is whether it is time to break from a framework that deliberately is instrumentalised to mislead.

THE UNEVEN IMPACTS OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND ITS CLASS DIMENSION

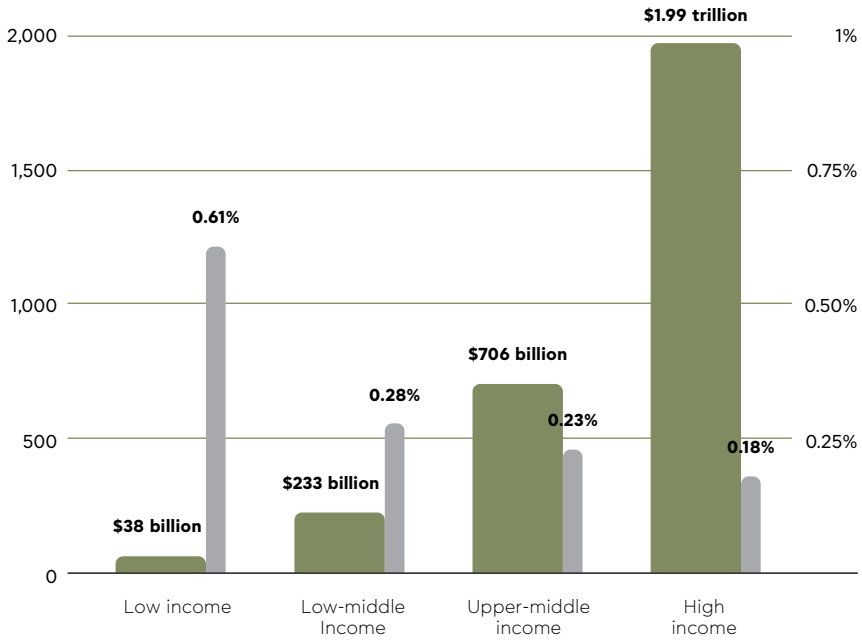
The consequences of climate change are far from horizontal. Rather, they disproportionately impact the billions of people in the Global South, who historically bear far less responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. But they also affect the working class and the vast majority of the population of the capitalist developed North, due to the fewer means they have to deal with it. Vulnerabilities include: a) residential areas, such as the lack of green open spaces, pollution and exposure to extreme weather events; b) working conditions, including extreme heat; c) living conditions; d) energy poverty; e) inadequate public infrastructure and access to social services, such as water supply, public health and welfare services; and f) the close interdependence between their productive activities (agriculture, fishing, etc.) and the local environment, which is generally their permanent place of residence. According to the UN,

> Poverty, geography and historical and structural inequity and discrimination affect people's exposure and vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, losses and damages are unequally distributed across systems, regions and sectors and strongly concentrated among the poorest vulnerable populations (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2024).

According to an OECD Environmental Outlook, water scarcity will affect 40% of the world's population by 2050, while the cost of damages due to extreme weather events associated with water cycle disruptions alone ranged between US$50–100 billion from 1980 to 2009 in the spatial distribution of extreme weather events, 95% of their victims are in non-OECD countries, while 66% of the associated economic losses occur in OECD countries (OECD, 2012, pp. 218–223). It is then clear that in terms of countries (supposing somehow arbitrarily that this correlates with high- and low-income classes), low-income countries' populations pay with their lives, while high-income countries pay with their wallets. Recent reports confirm the pattern: "compared to population distribution by income group, the distribution of disaster events is quite evenly distributed. However, the distribution of deaths, total people affected, and economic damage differs across income groups" (CRED & UNDRR, 2020, p. 22).[13] As a result, high-income countries accounted for (67%) of total economic losses – amounting to $1.99 trillion – from disaster-related events between 2000 and 2019, while low-income countries account for 23% of total disaster-related deaths, even though they account for less than 10% of the world's population (ibid., p. 22). Yet even these figures understate the disparity: relative to GDP, high-income countries experience a lower percentage of economic losses than low-income countries, especially when considering underreporting in the latter (ibid., p. 24).

13. CRED (Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters) and UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction).

FIGURE 6.
Economic losses from disasters in absolute value (US$) compared as % of GDP by income groups (countries).
Source: CRED & UNDRR, 2020, p. 26.



The predictions for global health are ominous. A 3°C rise in the average global temperature will cause an epidemic explosion, with an additional 220–400 million people exposed to malaria, while an additional 600 million people will face the spectre of malnutrition by 2080 (UNDP, 2007, pp. 8–10). "Shifting rainfall patterns and greater variability in precipitation poses a risk to the 70% of global agriculture that is rainfed and the 1.3 billion people dependent on degrading agricultural land" (CRED & UNDRR, 2020, p. 7).

Another significant consequence of climate change relates to environmental refugees. Low-latitude areas (those less than 10 m above sea level) are particularly vulnerable, facing risks not only from sea-level rise but also from hurricanes,

floods, water logging, etc. Although these areas make up only 2.2% of the world's land area, they are home to 10.5% of the world's population: that's 602 million people, including 438 million in Asia and 246 million in the world's poorest countries. A rise in the average global temperature of 3–4°C could have catastrophic consequences due to rising water levels and extreme weather events, resulting in the displacement of 330 million people. It is estimated that 1 billion people living in shantytowns, hillslopes and on the banks of rivers that often overflow are at increased risk. Over 372 million people around the world have been displaced since 2008 due to natural disasters – floods, windstorms, earthquakes or droughts – with 32.6 million in 2022 alone. The Institute for Economics and Peace predicts that, in the worst-case scenario, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to natural disasters and other ecological threats (Apap & Harju, 2023).

AGAINST THE STRATEGY OF GREENWASHING CAPITALISM

Despite 30 years of scientific evidence, 30 years of UNFCCC COPs, with governments setting goals, ratifying agreements, agendas and action plans, all have been proven to be hollow words.[14] Nevertheless, despite the climate crisis already in-

14. Of course, one can claim that progress has been made. The share of renewables in the electricity sector mainly in the EU, US, etc., is increasing, as they mainly substitute part of the increase in energy final consumption, that otherwise would originate from fossil fuels. For energy efficiency, we have already commented and, of course, we have not yet referred to the material life cycle or the export of energy-intensive production to third countries or flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol. But climate crisis is the par excellence global problem that has no borders and the blame game lose-lose game for the social majority.

flicting severe consequences on billions of people, the political and ideological domination of the ruling classes through governments remains relatively intact.

Why is this the case? One explanation is that the climate crisis is so vast – in terms of time, space, complexity and tangible impact on individual lives that two kinds of reactions are very common. The first is denial or avoidance, which can take many forms:[15] believing that the crisis is not real, or dismissing it as a natural phenomenon, to the perception that it is a future problem. The second reaction concerns those who, while recognising the significance of the issue, are so overwhelmed by its enormity that they delegate all responsibility to confront it to leaders, governments, international institutions, experts and so on, often concluding that all they can do is become eco-conscious consumers.

Assigning the entire responsibility for the climate crisis to the jurisdiction of international institutions, governments, technocrats and experts is essentially a form of depoliticising the issue. This, in turn, constitutes a crucial political and ideological mistake-defeat that affirms the TINA (There Is No Alternative) narrative and, consequently, both the political and strategical domination of capitalism.

The reality is that the climate crisis is the most urgent and truly global problem, challenging scientific knowledge, human societies' mode of production and reproduction, international relations, the historical status quo of nation-states as well as philosophical and metaphysical stances. In other words, is an inherently political and strategic problem on an international scale that changes everything.

The climate crisis does not threaten the destruction of the planet itself, nor the entirety of its ecosystems or wildlife in

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15. We are, generally, very sceptical about employing metaphors from psychology to analyse political phenomena and stances. Here, allow us a rare exception.

general.[16] We do not need to "save" the planet or nature – a notion that represents a reverse form of anthropocentrism – which existed for billions of years before human societies and will likely exist for billions more, even without humans. What is at stake are the climate conditions that characterised specific geological epochs which favoured the development of human civilisation as we know it. This is both a major issue and a profound political responsibility. It is time for the ruled or exploited classes of society to recognise the climate crisis as an urgent, vital issue for their everyday lives: for their access to food and fresh water, their living and working conditions, their health, etc. This is not a matter of abstract eco-consciousness pursued by millionaires flying private jets across the globe while promoting "eco-friendly" consumption.

Moreover, we must recognise that we are not all in the same boat. The "storm" is the same, but most of us are refugees in lifeboats, while there are those who are on cruise ships. The billions who live along rivers and are threatened by floods and fresh water scarcity, as well as the workers who live in ground-floor apartments in Valencia, are not in the same boat – they have different vulnerability, to use the institutional technical terminology – as those[17] living or manag-

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16. We use the form of simplistic aphorisms not to undermine the fact that there exist numerous endangered species, the severe degradation of ecosystems, extensive threats to biodiversity, etc., but to emphasise the fact that we do not have to act according to a higher ideal or purpose, but to protect our lives, human societies and our common future (sic).

17. We must mention that we are not referring to individuals per se, but as subjects to class relations. We use the example as a metaphor to depict a structural antithesis. To be more precise and concise, we quote the following passage: "Marx's notion of capital is not derived from an analysis of the actions of the capitalist. It is not a response to the striving the decisions or the actions of a subject. On the contrary, it is the movement of total-social capital (often mentioned by Marx as the 'laws of capital') that imparts 'consciousness' to the individual capitalist. The power of capital is impersonal" (Milios, 2018, p. 15).

ing their businesses from the 30th floor of an air-conditioned skyscraper, or living in a mansion constructed to the highest standards and probably with the best available eco-friendly technologies and materials. This stark reality reveals a clear class dimension – as will be further elaborated below – that dictates entirely different needs, interests and strategies. Consequently, the climate crisis has an unmistakable class dimension, with corresponding social subjects whose experiences and stakes diverge profoundly.

Moreover, governments primarily serve the strategy for the sustainable reproduction of capitalism, at national, regional and international level. They represent the interests of aggregate social capital (Gesamtkapital),[18] which, in a capital social formation, as the general interest of society. In practice, this means that governments prioritise the protection and ensure the interests of domestic capital, both in international competition and in the internal social formation, by sustaining capitalist development, securing profits rates as well as creating opportunities to enforce capital accumulation, growth, etc. These principles apply equally to agendas on the mitigation and adaptation to the climate crisis. The so-called green transition through market mechanisms, technological fixes, new markets, etc., is based on creating new growth opportunities, increasing profits and enhancing capital accumulation, all while maintaining the necessary conditions for capitalist reproduction in the future, not the well-be-

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18. "Through free competition, they all become constituent elements of aggregate-social capital (Gesamtkapital). In Marx's Conception, free competition ensures the reciprocal engagement peculiar to the capitalist system, of institutionally independent production units, imposing the law of capitalist production on the respective capitals. Through their structural interdependence, that is to say their organisation as aggregate-social capital, the individual capitals proclaim themselves a social-class: they function as a uniform social force counter-posing themselves against, and dominating labour" (Milios, 2018, p. 14).

ing of society at large. Business as Usual (BaU) remains the baseline scenario both for green business and for "dirty" production. An alternative scenario is ruled out.

When genocide has been perpetrated in Palestine, with schools, hospitals and even UN missions being bombed day after day, and all of this with the legitimisation and weapons from many EU states (including Greece) among others, it would be politically naïve, if not wilfully blind, to expect that the ruling classes and their political representatives would adopt a different stance towards the victims of a flood in Pakistan or Valencia, the hunger crisis in South Africa or construction workers in Greece labouring under severe heatwaves.

Thirty years after Rio, with the world already hurtling towards a climate dystopia; with the CEO of a major oil company serving as president of the COP 28; with fossil fuels multinationals positioned at the forefront of the green transition, it is time to recognise the whole top-down process as an economical, ideological, strategic and political greenwashing of capitalism.

The climate crisis is a fundamentally political issue. We do not simply need transition policies, reforms and action plans; we need a whole different strategy.

BUILD AND FIGHT:[19] BEYOND COPS, BEYOND AND AGAINST CAPITALISM

It is a matter of urgency to formulate a different strategy, in terms of social relations of production and reproduction, the societal forms of organisation at both local and global levels, and the relationship between nature and society. We must

19. We borrow the slogan from a different – inspirational – movement, i.e., Cooperation Jackson, hoping to give it an additional spin (Loh & Shear, 2022; Nangwaya & Akuno, 2017).

build the necessary collective social and political networks, organisations and parties, and commit ourselves to struggle – starting today.

As we have already argued, the facts and evidence show that relying on governments or institutions that are fully controlled by ruling classes, demanding to do a little more, a little sooner and to implement their commitments for small, delayed actions or marginally effective reforms, is meaningless. Not only do such measures have little impact, they transfer the costs onto labour and the social majority in general.

By continuing a modest – and strategically limited – path focused on proposing and demand immediate reforms, and trying to force governments and institutions to adopt them, we commit multiple mistakes: a) we legitimise and delegate those institutions and authorities with full responsibility and authority to decide how to deal with the climate crisis; b) we cede our power and responsibility, while unintentionally adopting the institutional forms of capitalist greenwashing and the massive ideological mechanisms that those institutions enforce, through conferences, decisions, action plans, reports, terminology, goals, mechanisms, etc.; c) we legitimise the framework of capitalist development, technology, social forms of appropriation, market mechanisms, the criteria of economic efficiency and competitiveness, etc.; d) we alienate part of the working class as we cannot escape from the systemic dilemma between the protection of the environment and climate change mitigation, on the one hand, and working-class income, on the other; e) and as a result part of the ruled and exploited classes often become "vulnerable" to the deniers or even far-right propaganda.

In January 2025, Alan Thornett, a well-known ecosocialist, published a quite interesting and alarming article characterising COP 28 as "a surprising productive event". The harsh reality, he said, was that "the only way to avoid catastrophic damage to the planet is by making the COP process work [...]

Any other proposition is leftist posturing. [...] At this stage, moreover, only governmental action – and action taken by governments prepared to go on a war footing – can make the changes necessary to stop climate change in the limited time we have left, and only the UN COP process has a chance of achieving it" (Thornett, 2024). From our perspective, Thornett's position essentially admits that there is no alternative – a stance we strongly reject. We couldn't disagree more with that kind of approach. Political disappointment, deadlock or fear in the face of the climate crisis are understandable. Yet history is full of situations of despair[20] and dead ends; when people choose to fight they open new paths out of the impasse. Thornett also made an observation that is both interesting and revealing. "Most of the left denounce the UN COP process at every opportunity in the most vitriolic terms [...] while having no viable alternative to offer itself" (Thornett, 2024). This highlights a major problem: today, there is no alternative strategy or vision for the "other world" that is urgently needed.

Therefore, beyond slogans, rhetorical protests and political critiques that fail to challenge the core of the problems lies the strategic and political impasse. This deadlock consequently results in a complementary role that offers no real way forward, no alternative strategy, no direction for societies to fight against the climate nightmare. At the same time, it represents a deeper problem of social mobilisation, of social and political forms of organisation, of political programmes, analyses, theories and ideas. Ultimately, it comes down to the question of willingness, capacity and organisation to fight.

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20. Today, people are still fighting in Gaza.

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN: NOT ONLY A CLIMATE CHANGE HOTSPOT

02

WAR, INEQUALITY, REFUGEES AND FOSSIL FUELS

The Mediterranean region spans three continents: Europe and its southern peninsulas to the north, southwestern Asia to the east, and the Maghreb region of northern Africa to the south. Rich in history, it is both densely populated and politically complex. It cannot be understood merely as a landscape of ancient civilisations, cultural exchange, trade, migration and constant human movement; it has also, historically, been a hotspot for wars and conflicts. As of spring 2025, genocide has been committed in Palestine by the State of Israel, in a war that has evolved into a regional conflict engulfing almost the whole Middle East. It has already spread, in one form or another, to Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Syria and Qatar, involving external powers, including the US, NATO, the EU and Russia. War, as the most catastrophic expression of antagonism and the application of brute force, inflicts its worst consequences mainly on the ruled and exploited classes as well as on ecosystems. Thus, from a socioecological perspective, war changes everything, creating an entirely different framework in which the climate crisis must be perceived. Our approach to the climate crisis, as we have already mentioned, is grounded in a perspective that is organically connected to human societies, and not the planet and the climate in general, in terms of geological time and scale. At that scale, the very notion of "crisis" lacks any meaning. When children are massacred, entire populations are starving and lack access to safe water, and when the ecological balance is obliterated under

heavy bombardments, the discourse of international cooperation for climate change mitigation and environmental protection becomes grotesquely out of context, unless we are speaking hypocritically within the framework of "business as usual", wilfully ignoring the harsh reality.

The Eastern Mediterranean consist of a unique geographical landscape at the intersection of three continents. The emergence of regional and international powers, mainly China, has amplified the importance of the region as a transnational hub. Historically characterised by major energy and trade routes, migration pathways and connections between nation-states, with significant differences in social-political regimes and capitalist development indicators, remains at the epicentre of antagonisms and tensions for control over resources, routes and regional hegemony – tensions whose effects extend deep into neighbouring regions in Europe, the Sahel and western, central and southern Asia (Scheffran, 2020). Wars and occupations, often involving the direct involvement of nation-states at the top of the imperialist chain, such as the US, Russia and EU member states, are closely related, among others, to the control of fossil fuels mainly in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries. For decades, many of these states have pursued an extractivist model of accumulation dependent on oil and natural gas exports, which has resulted in the establishment of authoritative regimes, the militarisation of the region and the proliferation of major inequalities and environmental degradation. Yet, the Mediterranean is a landscape of uprisings, protests and sociopolitical movements, witnessing, over the past two decades, the Arab Spring, the Indignados, the Athens riots (2008) and many others.

The Mediterranean is a region of high complexity and severe socioeconomic inequalities.[21] In 2018, the population of

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21. Mediterranean countries' GDP represents about a 10% share of global GDP, a piece of data that probably does not offer any useful information. We

the countries bordering the Mediterranean amounted to 512 million. The demographic transition has been completed in two-thirds of these countries, as depicted by the fact that while the population in the north has stabilised, in the southern and eastern basin it doubled in the same period, from 153 million in 1980 to 314 million in 2018, and is projected to increase by 182 million by 2050. Moreover, around 70% of the population now lives in urban areas, one in three people in a coastal area. At the same time, coastal urbanisation is closely related to tourism as in 2017 360 million international tourists – 27% of world tourism – visited Mediterranean countries, mainly coastal areas during the summer (UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020).

An economic divide in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) is evident between Northern Mediterranean Countries (NMCs) and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMCs), with the exception of Israel. "In 2017, the average GDP per capita in SEMCs was three times lower than the average income in the EU Mediterranean countries." (UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020). Three important issues should be highlighted here. First, most comparative indexes, that are used for comparisons between counties, by default rely on averages that obscure internal class divisions in the interior of a social formation by flattening the disparities between labour and capital. Second, most socioeconomic indexes are rooted in the framework of capitalist development and thus operate within the logic of developmentalism and capitalist social organisation. Third, the aforementioned division between NMCs and SEMCs suggests a direct spatial split between North and South in the Mediterranean, echoing the broader well-known North-South

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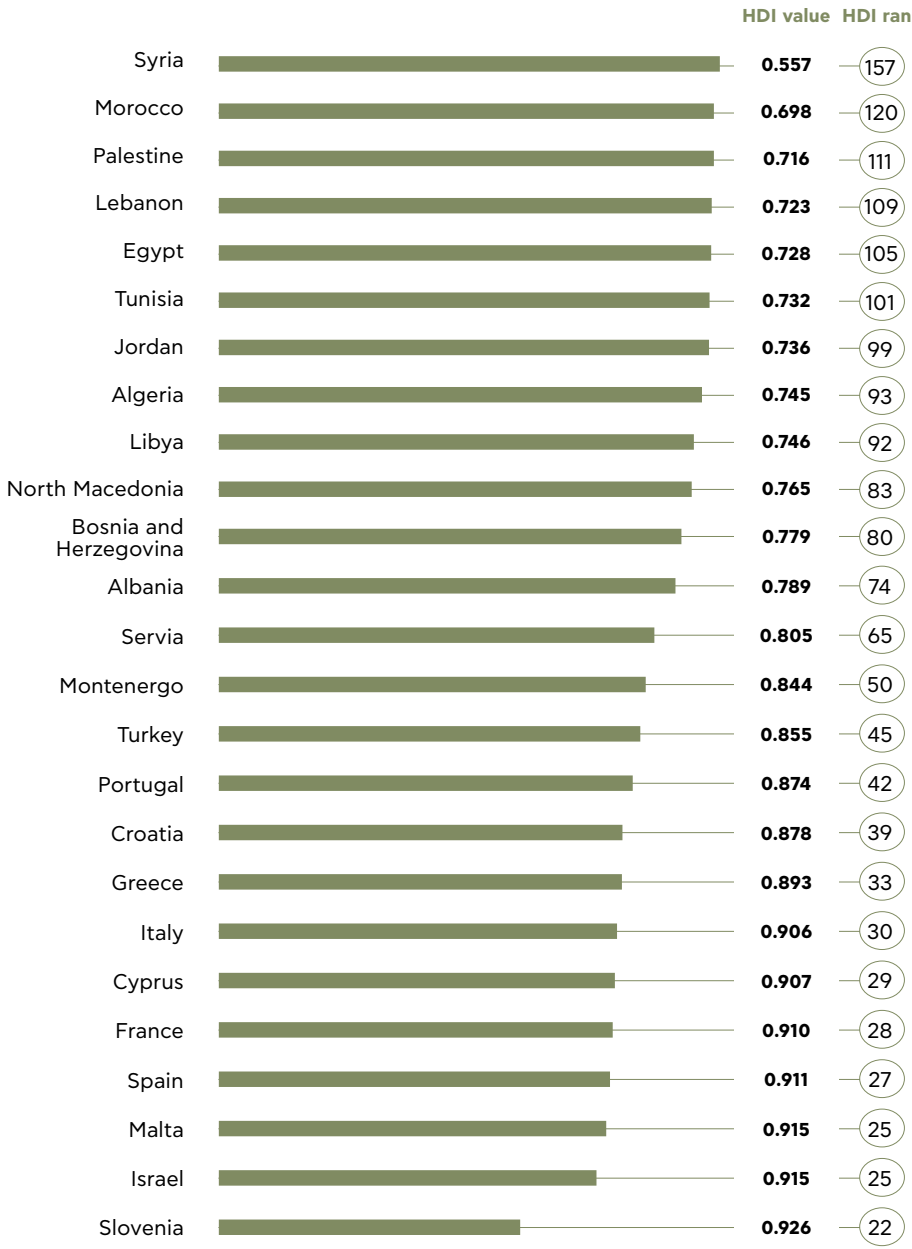
will just refer to some socioeconomic figures and trends with an emphasis on inequalities as they are presented in the report in the framework of the UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020.

FIGURE 7.

HDI scores and rank for Mediterranean countries, 2022.

IEMEd, 2024, p. 421.



divide. Although we have also referred to the Global South and the North-South divide, we do so cautiously, recognising their limitations but preferring them to alternatives that carry internal connotations of chauvinism, such as "developed/underdeveloped." Finally, while HDI shares many of the problems noted above,[22] we use it because it is more multidimensional than single measures such as GDP or per capita income.

EU countries' higher incomes are accompanied by stronger social security systems, longer life expectancy and more years of schooling. Hence, even when countries have lower GDP per capita, for example the EU candidate countries of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, compared to Libya, their HDI scores are higher (UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020, p. 36)

Since 2010, the Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) has been used, following the Foster, Lopez-Calva and Szekely (FLS) approach. In essence, IHDI is designed to reflect the distribution of human development achievements across the population, adjusting HDI: each of the three dimensions is "discounted" according to its level of inequality (Alkire & Foster, 2010). Figure 8 compares HDI and IHDI scores for most Mediterranean countries. The diagonal line represents the point where HDI and IHDI are equal to each other. The further a country falls below this line, the greater the deviation between HDI and IHDI – indicating higher inequality.

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22. The HDI was developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul-Haq and is used by UNDP as a measure of key dimensions of human development. The HDI is the geometric mean of normalised indices for three dimensions: a) life expectancy at birth; b) expected mean years of schooling; and c) GNI per capita (PPP$). As UNDP states on the page for HDI, "HDI simplifies and captures only part of what human development entails. It does not reflect on inequalities, poverty, human security, empowerment, etc." https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI

TABLE 1.

HDI of Mediterranean countries, 2022.

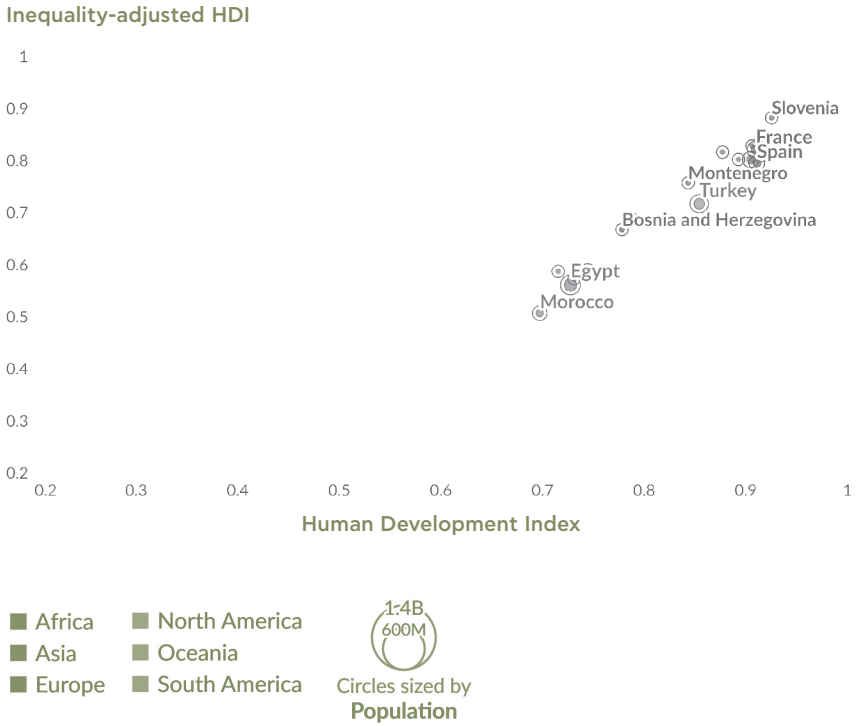
Source: IEMEd, 2024, p. 421.

	Life Expectancy at Birth (years)	Mean years of Schooling (years)	Expected years of Schooling (years)	GNI per capita (2017 PPP $)	Human Developemnt Index (HDI) Value	HDI rank
Portugal	82.2	9.6	16.8	35,315	0.874	42
Spain	83.9	10.6	17.8	40,043	0.911	27
France	83.2	11.7	16.0	47,379	0.910	28
Italy	84.1	10.7	16.7	44,284	0.906	30
Malta	83.7	12.2	15.9	44,464	0.915	25
Slovenia	82.1	12.9	17.4	41,587	0.926	22
Croatia	79.2	12.3	15.6	34,324	0.878	39
Bosnia and Herzegovina	75.3	10.5	13.3	16,571	0.779	80
Servia	74.1	11.5	14.5	19,494	0.805	65
Montenergo	76.8	12.6	15.1	22,513	0.844	50
North Macedonia	73.9	10.2	13.0	16,396	0.765	83
Albania	76.8	10.1	14.5	15,293	0.789	74
Greece	80.6	11.4	20.0	31,382	0.893	33
Cyprus	81.9	12.4	16.2	40,137	0.907	29
Turkey	78.5	8.8	19.7	32,834	0.855	45
Syria	72.3	5.7	7.4	3,594	0.557	157
Lebanon	74.4	8.6	12.1	12,313	0.723	109
Jordan	74.2	10.4	12.6	9,295	0.736	99
Israel	82.6	13.4	15.0	43,588	0.915	25
Palestine	73.4	9.9	13.2	6,936	0.716	111
Egypt	70.2	9.8	12.9	12,361	0.728	105
Libya	72.2	7.8	14.0	19,752	0.746	92
Tunisia	74.3	8.0	14.6	10,297	0.732	101
Algeria	77.1	7.0	15.5	10,978	0.745	93
Morocco	75.0	6.1	14.6	7,955	0.698	120

FIGURE 8.

Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index vs Human Development Index, 2022.

Source: UNDP, 2024, pp. 283–286; Our World in Data: https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/inequality-adjusted-human-development-index.



In Mediterranean countries, the share of informal employment is quite high, according to the ILO. Especially in Albania, Egypt, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia it reaches or exceeds 60%, with major consequences for public services, welfare state systems, infrastructure and investments in environmental protection and climate change mitigation. Women and youth are disproportionately represented among informal and precarious workers, while youth unemployment remains a critical challenge in all Mediterranean countries,

where it is often double or triple the overall rate (UNEP, Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020, pp. 37, 42). Furthermore, a significant gender gap in economic activity also persists, which is not attributable to educational differences but rooted in sociocultural norms regarding women and their role in family, society and the workplace, leading to significant discrimination (European Committee of the Regions, 2017).

The Mediterranean is a global hotspot for forced displacement, encompassing nearly every category of migration drivers, such as war, political and social reasons (religion, ethnicity race, culture, government persecution, human rights violations, demographic and economic pressures) but also environmental and climate-related causes. While this report cannot cover the full breadth of the issue, we highlight two key aspects. First, the issue of environmental or climate refugees[23] will be (and already is) a crucial issue in the decades to come: "According to recent statistics published by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, over 376 million people around the world have been forcibly displaced by floods, windstorms, earthquakes or droughts since 2008, with a record 32.6 million in 2022 alone [...] The Institute for Economics and Peace predicts that in the worst-case scenario, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050 due to natural disasters and other ecological threats" (Apap & Harju, 2023). Second, is the struggle over EU migration politics and policies since the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam and the profound consequences they have for millions of people. European Union and member-state policies have effectively turned the Mediterranean into a migrant graveyard. Between 2014 and 2020 alone, more than 20,000 migrants lost their lives at sea, according to the International Organization for

23. We will not refer to the legal implications and terms. For more about this issue, see Warner, 2011, PPLA/2011/02.

Migration (IOM) (Kandoul, 2023). In 2023, the IOM reported that "the Mediterranean crossing continues to be the deadliest [in the world] route for migrants on record, with at least 3,129 deaths and disappearances" (IOM, 6 March 2024). A stark example was the shipwreck off Pylos in 2023, when a boat carrying up to 750 people capsized; only 104 were rescued (UNHCR & IOM, 14 June 2014). Eighteen months later, the Report by the Greek Ombudsman found "clear evidence of serious criminal liability among Coast Guard officers and unacceptable interference by the Ministry of Shipping" (Press Release, 2025).

Finally, it is important to note that Mediterranean countries remain "highly dependent on fossil fuels, which represented more than 90% of the total fuel consumption" in 2015, according to the World Bank (UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020, p. 53).

A CLIMATE CRISIS HOTSPOT

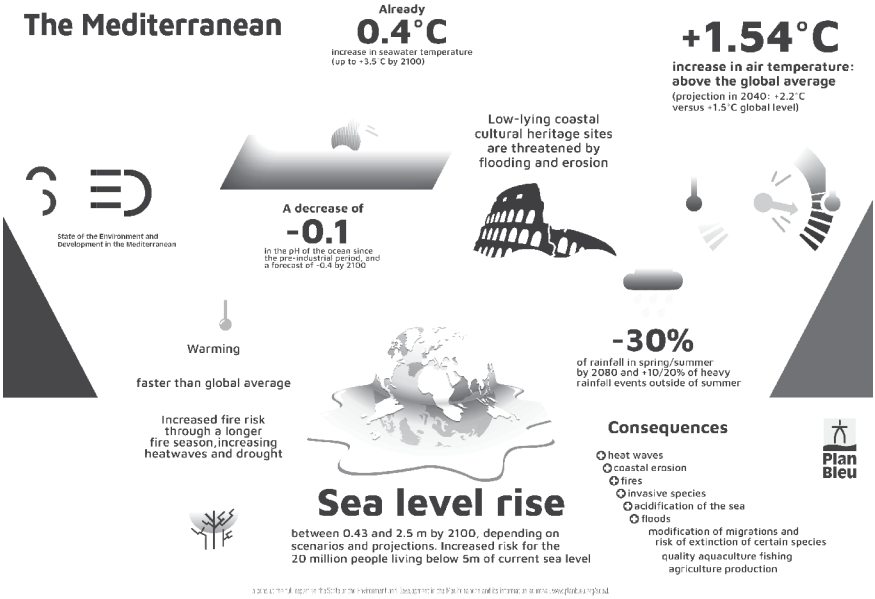
The Mediterranean Sea is the largest of Europe's semi-enclosed seas. Its basin, spanning 3,800 km from north to south and 900 km from east to west, is characterised by a significant environmental and geographical gradient. A complex land morphology of mountain chains, strong land-sea contrasts, and major rivers forms a complex topography of unique physiographic and ecological features and exceptional biological diversity in a transition zone between mid-latitude and subtropical atmospheric circulation regimes (Lange, 2020; Ali et al., 2022). However, as the IPCC emphasises, the Mediterranean cannot be assessed as a region of a degree of homogeneity adequate to be evaluated as a single homogenous entity. Nevertheless, the separate assessment of its different parts could offer us a general view of the region (Ali et al., 2022, p. 2235).

In the Mediterranean region, air and sea temperatures – including their extremes (heat waves) – are expected to rise faster than the global average. According to the IPCC, the surface temperature is already 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (IPCC, p. 223). Furthermore, the Mediterranean has been identified as one of the most climate-change vulnerable regions, making it a hotspot both in observed changes and future projections (Ali et al., 2022; Lazoglou et al., 2024).

FIGURE 9.

Infographic. State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean.

Source: UNEP/Mediterranean Action Plan & Plan Bleu, 2020.

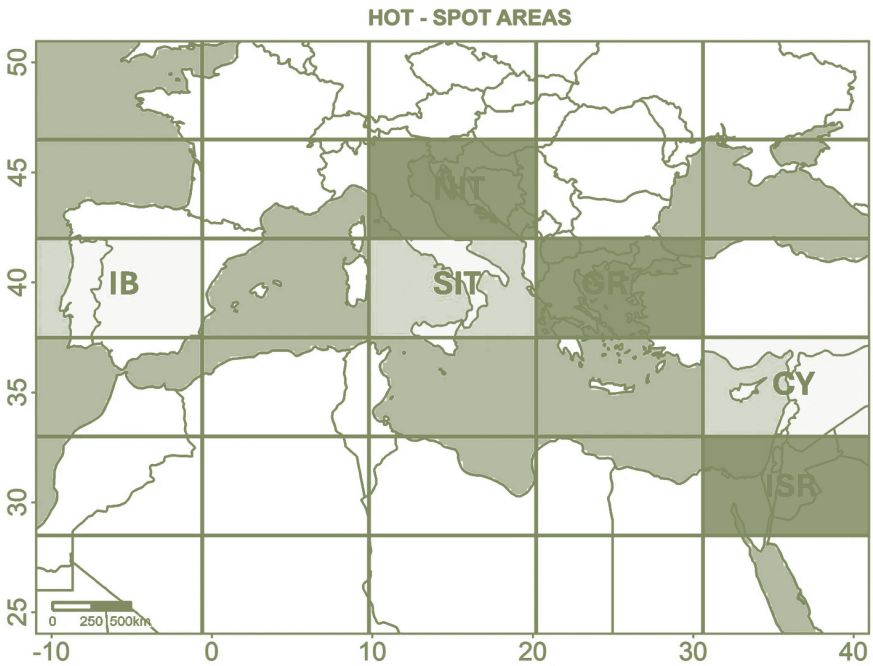


A recent study identifies the Mediterranean subregions most vulnerable to climate change using two indices: the newly introduced Mediterranean Hotspot Index (MED-HOT),[24] which "focuses on extreme high maximum and minimum temperatures, rainfall and drought", and the established Regional Climate Change Index (RCCI), which tracks "changes in mean climate conditions" (Lazoglou et al., 2024, p. 1). Based on historical trends and the combined results of both indices, six hotspot areas are identified as the most vulnerable to climate change in the Mediterranean.

FIGURE 10.

Hotspot areas in the Mediterranean according to MED-HOT (green) and RCCI (gray) indices.

Source: Lazoglou et al., 2024



24. "The MED-HOT index is designed to assess climate vulnerabilities in the Mediterranean region by integrating changes in the frequence and intensity of four extreme climate indicators: extreme maximum temperature (TX90), extreme high minimum temperature (TN90), extreme precipitation (P95) and consecutive dry days (CDD)" (Lazoglou et al., 2024, p. 2).

As is depicted in Figure 10, northern Italy (NIT), Greece and Israel (ISR) are hotspots due to changes in extreme climate events, while the Iberian Peninsula (IB), southern Italy (SIT) and Cyprus (CY) are most affected due to changes in mean values (Lazoglou et al., 2024, p. 5). Summer warming rates, projected to be 20–50% higher than the average and to continue increasing in intensity, frequency and duration (Ali et al., 2022, p. 2237), represent only one of the numerous climate and ecological factors contributing to the broader climate crisis. Figure 11 summarises the main climate, biological, socioeconomic and pollution drivers affecting Mediterranean coastal areas.

Climate hazards and high vulnerability combine to create highly interconnected climate risks across the Mediterranean region. According to the IPCC, these include: a) the low-lying areas are the most vulnerable to coastal-related risks (sea levels rise, floods, erosion, saltwater intrusion and agriculture damage); b) water availability is threatened by reduced river low flows and annual runoff by 5–70%; c) yields in rainfed crops may decline by up to 64% in some locations; d) marine ecosystems, and consequently fisheries, will be impacted by acidification and ocean warming; e) desertification will affect areas mainly in the south and the southeast; f) burnt forest areas may increase by 97–187% under a 3°C warming scenario; and g) beyond 3°C, 13–30% of the Natura 2000 protected areas and 15–23% of Natura 2000 sites could be lost due to climate-driven habitat change (Ali et al., 2022, p. 2235).

AN URGENT NEED FOR SOCIOECOLOGICAL NETWORKS

As previously illustrated, the Mediterranean region – and particularly the Eastern Mediterranean – is marked by significant inequalities, explosive antagonisms of local and inter-

national capital and nationalisms. At the same time, it is a hotspot for the climate crisis, a vulnerable region in multiple dimensions both ecologically and socially, and above all a region where war is almost constantly present. Over the past two decades, and based on our experience and knowledge of socioecological movements in Greece, cases of solidarity and collaboration between movements across countries in the region have been rare. One notable example is the solidarity between the anti-gold mining movement in Skouries, Greece, with the anti-extractive movement in Roșia Montană in Romania (which, although not a Mediterranean country, is part of the Balkans).[25]

Although solidarity and joint initiatives have emerged in other areas, such as refugee crises or Palestine solidarity, socioecological movements across Mediterranean countries still lack similar networks. From our point of view, class and ecological dimensions are integrated in a new synthesis, on local, national, regional and international scales. This is the reason we have chosen to use the term "socioecological movements". In the case of the Eastern Mediterranean especially, we believe that developing such networks is not only a fertile common ground but also a prerequisite for effectively fighting war, militarisation, nationalism, antagonisms, extractive activities and the ecological degradation of the whole region, as the later constitutes a highly complex and vulnerable region.

25. See also Pressenza Athens, 2021, and The Press Project, 2024.

THE GREEK CRISIS: A NEOLIBERAL EXPERIMENT

03

The narrative surrounding the financial crisis in Greece, and Southern Europe more broadly, has been dominated by a narrow focus on internal inefficiencies and societal shortcomings. Often promoted by European and domestic leaders (Hadjimichalis, 2018), this narrative paints a picture of profligate southern states neglecting fiscal responsibility, ultimately leading to their downfall. Widely disseminated by mainstream media, such a portrayal conveniently omits the role of external factors and historical context in shaping the region's vulnerabilities.

We must resist such a reductionist interpretation. In acknowledging and emphasising domestic parameters and factors in terms of class analysis and struggle, we must also examine the historical and economic factors that have shaped the current conjuncture. In other words, this requires scrutinising the economic transformations, uneven development, militant particularism and other critical elements that characterise the "modern Greek tragedy". Greek tragedy, often associated with suffering and downfall, paradoxically offers a profound exploration of the human condition. Through the tragic hero's journey, audiences experience a cathartic release of emotions. Similarly, the current Greek conjecture, though marked by hardship, provides a pathway for understanding and navigating a complex tapestry of historical experiences and possible perspectives. Therefore, we must delve into the specific conflicts, contradictions and challenges that have shaped its course, some of which are explored in this chapter.

The Greek crisis, precipitated by the 2008 global financial

crisis, prompted the implementation of one of the most protracted and stringent austerity regimes in modern European history. The ensuing bailout agreements entailed measures such as the deregulation of labour markets, the dismantling of pre-existing social welfare systems, the privatisation of public assets and infrastructure, and the reallocation of public lands for private development, effectively enclosing elements of the commons. Under the first bailout package, agreed upon in May 2010 under the social democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), provided €80 billion in financial assistance. This initial programme, however, proved insufficient to address the depth of Greece's economic crisis. A second bailout package, approved in March 2012 by a coalition government, significantly increased the total financial assistance to €164.5 billion. This programme, primarily funded by the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), imposed even stricter austerity measures and reforms. A third bailout programme, signed in August 2015 by the SYRIZA-ANEL government, provided an additional €86 billion in financial assistance. Despite the implementation of these successive bailout programmes, Greece has continued to face significant economic challenges, including persistent debt levels, high unemployment rates and social unrest.

This prolonged period of austerity was rationalised as a means of "restoring confidence" among international investors and "fostering economic revitalisation" within the country. In essence, Greece became the testing ground for an ultra-neoliberal experiment within the eurozone, one that fundamentally altered the whole of Greek society. After three consecutive programmes of harsh austerity, cataclysmic adjustments and neoliberal restructuring in every aspect of social life, Greece is now a different country.

SOCIAL FORMATION, NEOLIBERAL POLICIES AND CLASS STRUGGLE

We have already noted that the specific form in which the international capitalist crisis expressed itself in the Greek case was not only an internal issue, in particular as regards excessive spending on the welfare state, a large public sector, irresponsible public finances, low productivity and similar neoliberal narratives. Hence, before referring to the structural problems of the eurozone and the phenomenon of uneven development, etc., it is important to outline some central internal factors related to the class and sociopolitical struggle within the Greek social formation. From our perspective, this is crucial as class struggle and the organisation of capitalist power take place at the level of unequally developed (national) social formations, where individual capital is transformed into social capital, in opposition to labour. These unequally developed social formations are interconnected at the international level through dynamic complex relations that formulate what is designated as the global imperialist chain (Milios & Sotiropoulos, 2009, pp. 213–216).

In this sense, our analysis must always focus both – but primarily – on the domestic and international levels in terms of class and global imperialist chain dynamic relations. To illustrate this, we will briefly highlight some indicative examples[26] in order to illustrate two major factors that characterised the domestic situation before the 2009 crisis: a) the negative change in the material balance of class forces; and b) the nearly three decades of internal neoliberal policies before the imposition of the memorandums of understanding (MOUs).

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26. Certainly, the issue is a lot more complex, with numerous parameters and aspects that have been analysed in various levels. Therefore, we do not claim that there are apparent simplistic descriptions and answers, but in the framework of that report we are just sketching some axes of our approach.

A common and classic paradox lies in the fact that although the consequences for labour and the social majority are much more intense and tangible in times of crisis, their relative material position often deteriorates in times of capitalist development. This elusive reality stems from the dynamics of growth: the increase in nominal and real wages, creates the solid ground on which a political consensus is constructed. For this reason, understanding the roots of a crisis requires examining the preceding phases of capitalist development.

TABLE 2.

Greek fiscal data, 1994–2020.

Source: Lapatsioras & Sotiropoulos, 2011.

Year	Total general government revenue (% GDP)	Primary expenditures (%GDP)	Interest (% GDP)	Average lending rate	Growth rate (GDP)	Debt (% GDP)
1994	36.3	32.1	12.4	14.3	13.4	96.4
1995	36.7	34.5	11.2	13.1	12.1	97
1996	37.4	33.6	10.5	11.9	9.9	99.4
1997	39	35.6	9.3	10.3	10.7	96.6
1998	40.5	36.2	8.2	9.2	8.7	94.5
1999	41.3	37	7.4	8.3	6.6	94
2000	43	39.3	7.3	8.4	8	103.5
2001	40.9	38.8	6.5	6.7	7.4	103.7
2002	40.3	39.5	5.5	5.7	7	101.7
2003	39	39.8	4.9	5.3	10.1	97.4
2004	38.1	40.7	5	5.5	7.4	98.9
2005	38.6	39.3	4.4	4.7	5.2	100.3
2006	39.2	40.5	4.3	4.7	8.5	106.1
2007	40	41.9	4.4	4.5	7.5	105.4
2008	39.9	44.7	4.9	4.9	4.3	110.7
2009	37.3	47.6	5.1	4.6	-0.8	127.1
2010	39.1	44	5.6	4.3	-2.1	142.8
2011	40.2	43	6.7	4.5	-3.2	157.7
2012	40.2	42.1	7.4	4.8	1.5	166.2

NOTE: **The data between 2010–2012 were estimations according to Eurostat (AMECO).**

As shown in Table 2, Greek public debt remained around 100% of GDP between 1994 and 2007. With the outbreak of the international capitalist crisis in 2008–2009, things changed. The situation escalated dramatically with the implementation of the first MOU in 2010, public debt surged to 142.8% of GDP.

However, in the period preceding the crisis (1995–2008), the Greek economy recorded significant real growth of GDP of an aggregate 61% (compared with Spain 56%, Ireland 124.1%, Germany 19.5%, Italy 17.8% and France 30.8%). Why, then, did public debt not decline well below 100% of GDP during this period? A major reason lies in neoliberal policies, particularly tax cuts on profits and capital in general. Government revenues varied from a high of 43% in 2000 to a low of 36.3% in 1994, while expenditures averaged around 44.5%, around 3% lower than the EU average (with France exceeding 52%). Yet by 2004, Greece's revenues as a percentage of GDP were still 12% lower than France's. In Greece, corporate tax fell sharply: from 40–45% in 1981 to 35% in 2004, 25% in 2007 and 24% in 2009 – alongside various tax exemptions (e.g., for shipping capital), tax avoidance, etc. A 2007 OECD study, Fundamental Reform of Corporate Income Tax, noted that between 2000 and 2006 the largest corporate tax cuts "occurred in the Slovak Republic (-10 percentage points), Poland and Greece (both -11 percentage points), Ireland (-11.5 percentage points), Iceland (-12 percentage points) and Germany where the corporate tax rate has been lowered by 13.1 percentage points" (OECD, 2007, p. 20). Importantly, this OECD assessment does not include Greece's subsequent reduction to 24%. Moreover, while Germany's cut was substantial, its absolute corporate tax rate still remained close to 40%.

According to the "The Greek Economy and Employment: 2010", published by Labour Institute of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (INE-GSEE), labour productivity in Greece rose significantly between 1995 and 2009, reaching

95% of the EU 15 average. Yet, during this same period of exponential growth, the share of labour of GDP – the primary indicator of income distribution between labour and capital – decreased by more than 11 percentage points from 1983 (71%) to less than 60% by the end of 2011 (INE-GSEE, 2010).

Moreover, mass privatisation in Greece did not begin with the ultra-neoliberal experiment of the MOUs but much earlier, under the government of Konstantinos Mitsotakis (father of the current prime minister) in 1990–1993, with the infamous Law 2000/1991, and continued for almost three decades. From 1977 to 2007, Greece ranked fifth among the 17 EU states in terms of privatisation revenues as a share of GDP, transferring 14% of its economy from state to private ownership (Frangakis, 2012). Pasok governments, especially those led by Costas Simitis, excelled in efficacy. According to the Privatization Barometer, Greece ranked seventh among EU countries in terms of privatisations as a percentage of GDP from 1989 to 2008. Taken together, neoliberal policies and the negative shift in the material balance of class forces against labour constitute two fundamental domestic causes of the specific form the crisis has been expressed in the case of Greece.

SOUTHERN EUROPE AND THE PERSISTENCE OF UNEVEN DEVELOPMENT

The common portrayal of Greece and the broader European South as fiscally irresponsible often aligns with certain widely accepted narratives, but it oversimplifies and obscures deeper dynamics. The debt crisis is often explained through local issues, such as political and social corruption, state inefficiency, high wages coupled with low productivity and the misuse of EU structural funds. While these factors are unde-

niably part of the story, the emphasis on these economic explanations is both reductionist and ignorant of broader social dynamics. Such explanations largely ignore the intricate relationships between social classes, firms, regions and institutions, overlooking the critical role of geography and uneven development in the crisis.

More specifically, attributing Southern Europe's economic troubles to geography alone obscures the key concept of uneven development within the EU and the eurozone. It is not simply because these countries are in the "south" that they face economic struggles, but because of long-standing, uneven geographical development that underpin their vulnerability. Since taking shape well before the 2000s, this unevenness has been a driving force for the socioeconomic restructuring that continues to unfold. In this sense, the crisis can be understood as the culmination of pre-existing structural inequalities. Moreover, Greece's economic struggles cannot be reduced to a "local case", isolated from broader global processes. While global and grand structural forces certainly play a role, economic crises are always specific to the local context, shaped by a complex mix of internal and external factors. These factors include the interplay of various class struggles, both within the country and across international borders. Economic crises do not merely result from one dominant force, but from a dynamic tension between conflicting interests, both local and global, and the uneven distribution of benefits and losses.

In the case of Greece, the dominant classes are not blameless for their role in the crisis. Their economic and regional policies, marked by creative statistics and inefficiencies in the public sector, contributed significantly to the crisis. However, the role of European elites is equally crucial. From the very beginning of the eurozone, they deliberately kept wage increases below productivity growth. This policy was designed to suppress domestic labour costs while creating a

large trade surplus, which, in turn, exacerbated the economic imbalances within the eurozone (Hadjimichalis & Hudson, 2014). This trade surplus, while beneficial for specific countries, directly contributed to the rising deficits in Southern Europe.

Secondly, the EU operates historically with a budget that represents only around 1% of the combined GDP of all its member states.[27] Within this modest budget, a significant portion is dedicated to various policy areas, including agriculture, research and administrative costs. However, only about 0.45% of the EU's total GDP, or roughly 38% of the EU's budget, is allocated to structural and investment funds. These funds are primarily used to promote local and regional development in regions that are "lagging behind".[28] This paltry allocation has undermined efforts to address regional disparities and to foster a more balanced development across member states. It has also exacerbated challenges for countries of the European South, which have faced higher unemployment rates, lower productivity and economic stagnation. In addition, the 2010 crisis further intensified these regional inequalities, as the EU's austerity measures, and lack of sufficient financial support, worsened the social and economic conditions in the hardest-hit regions (Hadjimichalis, 2018).

Thirdly, the structure of the eurozone itself created conditions that were ripe for crisis. The euro was positioned as a tool for increasing economic integration within Europe, facilitating trade and creating a single monetary zone. However, it was constructed without the necessary institutional framework to address the disparities between the more competi-

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27. See European Union. "Budget." EUR-Lex. Accessed August 24, 2025. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/06.html

28. For a thorough critique on the "catch-up" assumption and the "left-behind places", see Massey, 1995.

tive northern European economies and the weaker, more indebted southern economies. In parallel, the EU's institutional setup includes several unelected, highly influential bodies that hold significant power in shaping economic policies across the region. These bodies have often acted as multiscalar lobbies, pushing policies that serve the interests of capital and wealthier nations, often at the expense of the weaker economies within the eurozone. In particular, the decisions made by them, such as the austerity measures imposed during the financial crises, reflected the interests of financial markets and creditors, rather than the needs of the populations suffering from economic recession. The imposition of harsh austerity measures promoted economic stability for the stronger economies while negatively impacting the more vulnerable economies of the European South, without allowing any other institutional mechanisms for support and solidarity.

Before, during and after the crisis, EU policies aimed at addressing regional inequalities were virtually nonexistent, aside from vague rhetoric about "social and territorial cohesion". The notion of reducing sociospatial disparities was sidelined, and this lack of substantive policy led to a dramatic increase in inequalities between different regions and social groups. As a result, the eurozone's socioeconomic landscape became even more unfair, with growing injustices in both individual states and across regions. These growing disparities led to severe sociospatial injustices, which manifested in various forms such as escalating unemployment rates, heightened risk of poverty and widespread material deprivation. They are just the multiple faces of uneven development and profound social and economic challenges that have deepened since the crisis, illustrating the harsh realities that have resulted due to the prevailing unfair neoliberal capitalist policies.

THE ENVIRONMENT AS NONCOLLATERAL DAMAGE

The environmental ramifications of austerity in Greece have been profound. The purported "economic recovery" has facilitated land dispossession, exacerbated environmental degradation and amplified socioenvironmental inequalities. Simultaneously, the discourses of "crisis" and "austerity" have been strategically intertwined with narratives of green growth and self-sufficiency to reinforce social control and intensify capital accumulation strategies. Crucially, the tensions and contradictions arising from austerity have influenced the dynamics of environmental conflict, giving rise to novel forms and practices of social mobilisation and resistance. Alongside austerity measures and fiscal stability programmes, so-called "neoliberal conservation" is promoted (Apostolopoulou & Adams, 2017, p. 70). Neoliberal conservation posits that to "save" nature, its conservation must be placed on markets and subjected to private investment (Büscher et al., 2012). This approach not only portrays capitalism as the key to future ecological sustainability (Igoe, 2010), concealing its inherent environmental contradictions, but also exploits ecosystem degradation as an opportunity for investment and further capital accumulation.

During the memorandum period, this was achieved through three interrelated and now institutionalised processes: a) the privatisation of basic social goods and natural resources such as water, energy and waste management; b) the divestment of public resources like minerals, public and communal spaces, and forest areas; and c) the subordination of spatial planning and licensing to a "fast-track" logic.

In 2010, at the onset of the memoranda, Greece possessed significant public wealth in the form of real estate, land, public infrastructure and services, which has become a target for exploitation by productive and nonproductive capital, includ-

ing financial institutions and for-profit organisations. The well-established strategies for expropriation are being implemented in Greece: the privatisation of large public lands, the concentration of land ownership and the restriction of small property and private investment at scale. As Hadjimichalis (2014, p. 18) notes, the debt crisis has facilitated the expropriation of public land as its exchange value declines, the debtor state weakens politically, and structural agreements pave the way for powerful international neoliberal institutions like the IMF to institutionalise expropriation, while international and domestic speculative investors implement it.

Concurrently, fundamental changes have been made to environmental permitting, simplifying and accelerating procedures for environmental impact assessments and approval of environmental conditions. An overview of these reforms and new legislation reveals several key trends.

Firstly, there has been a rapid intensification of the legislative process, particularly for environmental and labour issues, often sparking significant social reactions. This lack of stability within the memorandum framework is evident in the legislative process itself.

Secondly, most laws are direct products of monetary fiscal policies. The common practice is to "spatialise" general guidelines set by fiscal regulations and austerity measures. Thus, reforms are often adjustments to economic and social policies, particularly austerity measures, rather than responses to local social and environmental needs.

Thirdly, numerous revisions, reforms and new provisions often contradict each other, highlighting the lack of a clear strategy for the urban and natural environment. This ongoing and contradictory reform of the concepts of "public" and "common" conflicts with historical norms and practices.

These developments are part of an attempt, within the memorandum framework, to "rebuild the environment and redefine what is considered a public or common good" (Ve-

legrakis et al., 2015, p. 80). In this context, the "debt trap" (Harvey, 2004) has been systematically employed to deregulate environmental legislation and privatise public resources, thereby fulfilling long-standing capitalist demands. The debt crisis has served as a pretext to legitimise the expropriation of land and public infrastructure, primarily through the exploitation of public wealth and the facilitation of private investment. This process, far from being confined to the memorandum period, has long-term implications, as a nation devoid of public property and with its natural resources sold off is destined to become a mere field for speculative capital.

Privatisations and divestments are accompanied not only by a public discourse on debt repayment but also by a narrative of "development" often framed as sustainable or equitable. However, this narrative is underpinned by two fundamental assumptions: the exploitation of nature for market gain, disregarding social and local needs, and the continuous dispossession through which capitalism transforms genuine environmental concerns into matters of economic value, fundamentally hostile to the original intent (Smith, 2010).

This development narrative has been repeatedly invoked and materialised through specific expressions, including:

- Infrastructure corridors: Positioning Greece as a transit hub for major transport and energy networks linking East and Europe, with a focus on ports, roads and pipelines.
- A mining boom: Intensifying mining activities all over the country.
- Mass tourism: Promoting large-scale, all-inclusive tourism complexes, often incompatible with the local environment.
- Real estate development: Encouraging large-scale commercial real estate projects.
- An investor-friendly environment: Deregulating environmental regulations and providing institutional facilities to attract private investment.

While these narratives may contain internal contradictions, they pose significant risks. For instance, energy infrastructure projects can lead to increased conflict and repression, as the historical evidence suggests. Notably, EU and IMF structural adjustment reports have largely omitted terms like "biodiversity", "nature", "environment", "sustainable development" and "green economy", emphasising "growth" instead. This reflects the limited space for even rhetorical references to capitalism's potential to "save" nature within the context of fiscal austerity. This development model, rooted in the constant pursuit of economic adjustment, contradicts local social needs, generates spatial-social inequalities and conflicts, and often gives rise to socioecological movements. The notion that ecological movements decline during crises, as environmental concerns become less prioritised, is widely held but inaccurate. Capital's tendency to isolate social resistance, labelling it as "local", "antidevelopment", "minority" or "isolated", is reinforced during crises.

AN OIL AND GAS EXTRACTION MEGAPROJECT IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CRISIS

04

Among the numerous climate/environmental issues that arose during the last decade and a half, we will focus briefly[29] – beyond the dimension of movements and mobilisations – on the Greek fossil fuels extractions programme. This choice is deliberate, as the issue: a) extends beyond Greece, involving Israel, Cyprus, Turkey, Libya and Egypt, and thus constitutes a wider Eastern Mediterranean matter; b) in reality, it is a strategic issue for the EU; c) directly raises the crucial climate question of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions; d) stands in fundamental contradiction to every mitigation strategy and plan; e) reveals the interconnection between crisis, MoUs, austerity, neoliberal programmes and extractions; and f) illustrates the relation between international antagonisms, nationalism, militarisation, conflicts and war.

GREEN CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND OIL AND GAS EXTRACTIONS: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Greece which, despite being an EU state that has formally adopted the most "climate-friendly" international agreements and treaties, has designed and implemented a fossil

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29. The issue is, of course, of great importance with various dimensions theoretical, political, environmental, etc. For more, see Psarreas, 2021 and 2022.

fuel extraction megaproject in the Greek peninsula as well as the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, while the EU claims to be at the forefront of international efforts to tackle climate change, it directly or indirectly supports hydrocarbon extraction megaprojects and the construction of pipelines, leading to an intensification of the antagonism over fossil fuels in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The discovery of new locations and fossil fuel reserves implies that extraction plans will extend well beyond the first half of the century. Even though crucial, such energy strategies are not confined to a single country, namely Greece; they are connected with the EU energy strategies as a whole and involve the USA, Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, etc., as they require multilateral agreements and cooperation in a variety of sectors and areas (that is, in science, technology, geopolitics, national legislation, financial support, security, military deployment, etc.)

The seemingly contradictory phenomenon of simultaneous promotion of green and "dirty" development has emerged as the prevailing strategy for both business and state policies. Greece's fossil fuel extraction megaproject constitutes a representative example of this approach.

In 2011 a crucial piece of legislation was the turning point for the Greek state in revitalising its aspirations for fossil fuels extraction. The adoption of Law 4001/2011 redefined the licensing framework for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons. With the various corporate interests already activated, in August 2011, through the legislation per se, fossil fuel corporations were granted a new opportunity to extract hydrocarbons in Greece. The key factor was the drastic reduction of the tax rate from 40% to 25% (20% plus a regional tax of 5% on net taxable income) (Law 4001/2011, art. 161, p. 3876). Law 4001/2011 was passed on 18 August 2011 by the social-democratic PASOK government, spearheaded by the prime minister, George Papandreou, and his Environ-

ment, Energy and Climate Change minister, George Papakonstantinou. The specific government could be generally characterised as pro-renewable energy sources (RES), as until June 2011 (two months prior) the first minister of the newly formed Ministry for Environment, Energy and Climate Change was Tina Birbili, who was regarded as an advocate of environmental protection and, during her tenure, introduced and adopted Law 3851/2010 on "Accelerating the development of Renewable Energy Sources to address climate change and other provisions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change".[30] Thus, within the same government and ministry (which bore the symbolic title of a political declaration), we find two contradictory energy strategies – one to accelerate the development of RES and another offering huge incentives for fossil fuel extraction. This same "paradox" is evident today in many other countries and regions, where many fossil fuel corporations also massively invest in RES (Psarreas, 2021, pp. 58–59). That contradiction/paradox is resolved in a higher level of abstraction in the interior of the capitalist system of production, overdetermined by the criteria/priorities of constant growth, profitability and economic efficiency imperatives mediated by market mechanisms and, at the same time, by nation-state priorities (e.g., exposure of national capital) in international competition (the imperialist chain, etc.), dominant ideology and domestic capital strategic plans.

30. From an environmental standpoint, the specific legislation had numerous serious problems, which, at the time, were highlighted by ecological organisations, activists, etc.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL PARAMETERS THAT LED TO THE EXTRACTION PROGRAMME (2011–2019)

The revival, planning and implementation of an oil and gas extraction megaproject in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 21st century required specific conditions emerging at a specific time and place.

First, an international trend emerged as a consequence of the 2008 crisis that aimed to stimulate recovery and "fuel" growth in traditional production sectors through conventional energy supply. Secondly, there was the EU strategy for the diversification of the energy supply in the European market, the control of energy routes, reduction of the dependence on Russia (long before the war in Ukraine) and increase of internal (EU) energy production from both conventional and non-conventional fossil fuels. The 2014 "Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council European Energy Security", among others, underlined that: a) global energy consumption was (typically) projected to increase by 27% by 2030; b) the EU imported 53% of the energy it consumes (90% of crude oil, 66% of natural gas and 42% of solid fossil fuels), representing more than 20% of its total imports, which is equivalent to €1 billion per day or €400 billion per year (2013); and c) Europe had a significant energy dependence on Russia, which exported 71% of its natural gas to Europe, with the highest percentages in Germany and Italy. Among the proposed strategic axes – such as the moderation of energy demand, the completion of the integrated internal market and the development of energy technologies – two issues stood out: a) the diversification of sources of external supply and the reduction of dependence on Russia, both in the supply and dependence of the EU refineries on Russian crude oil as well as on the increasing stakes of Russian companies in European energy

infrastructure; and b) increasing energy production in the EU from conventional and nonconventional fossil fuels, both from the old North Sea energy sources and from new ones in the Eastern Mediterranean (European Commission, 2014).

The drastic neoliberal restructuring of the Greek social formation through internal devaluation policies and a harsh austerity strategy (economic stability and adjustment programmes; MoUs) has violently imposed a different institutional and socioeconomic regime characterised by a) the dissolution of labour legislation, rapid decline in wages and rise of unemployment; b) the extensive devaluation of assets, land values, etc.; c) privatisations (i.e., public land, mineral resources, infrastructure, state enterprises, etc.); d) the deregulation of the institutional framework (for example, spatial planning) and, in particular, of environmental legislation, with the parallel dismantling of control mechanisms and the introduction of "extraordinary" development arrangements and frameworks (i.e., fast-track investments); e) reducing taxation (Law 4001/2011), from 40 to 25%; and f) the exploitation of social conditions (impoverishment, unemployment, insecurity, fear) to weaken social resistance, often through coercive extortion dilemmas. Such adjustments are well documented in the cases of Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa, where crises were leveraged to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources through privatisations, financialisation and land dispossession methods, effectively transforming the "crisis into an opportunity". During the years of crisis and MoUs, resource extraction was promoted as an essential element of the growth model, justified under various pretexts or narratives such as serving the debt, strengthening the pension system (National Account for Social Solidarity between Generations, Law 4162/2013), driving economic recovery, boosting exports, often accompanied by wildly inflated revenue and job creation projections.

The fourth parameter was the discovery of new natural

gas fields in the Eastern Mediterranean: the Leviathan offshore gas field in Israel in 2010 (the largest offshore discovery in the decade from 2000 to 2010) and five years later, in 2015, the Zohr, in the Egyptian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) which is almost twice the size of Leviathan. Finally, the technology required for planning, designing, drilling and managing installations in ultra-deepwater fields – such as those envisaged in Greece's offshore extraction programme, classified as unconventional fossil fuels – has been a process in progress over the last few years. Just over a decade ago (2011), the exploitation of such reserves would have been considered unthinkable.[31]

THE OIL AND GAS MEGAPROJECT AND THE FIVE GOVERNMENTS

Between 2011 and 2019, the initial megaproject expanded to cover 75,607 square kilometres of concession areas, an immense stretch of land and sea for the scale of the region, as depicted in Figure 12.

Major fossil fuel multinationals – ExxonMobil (US), Repsol (Spain), Total (France), Edison (Italy), and Calfrac Well Services (Canada) – participated in the project. Yet one crucial factor stands out: in every consortium and concession, at least one domestic oil company was involved, either Hellenic Petroleum (now Helleniq Energy) or Energean Oil & Gas. This illustrates a parameter of great importance: domestic capital (extending well beyond the oil firms within the consortiums) in each social formation plays a critical role in the introduction of such megaprojects.

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31. "Ultra-deep waters below 3,000 metres are considered today at the edge of the technological innovations while ten years ago it was impossible to plan drilling and installations at depths exceeding 3,000 metres of water" (HHRM, 2020, p. 17).

FIGURE 11.

Awarded licenses in the Greek extraction programme, December 2019.

Source: HHRM (now HEREMA), 2020.

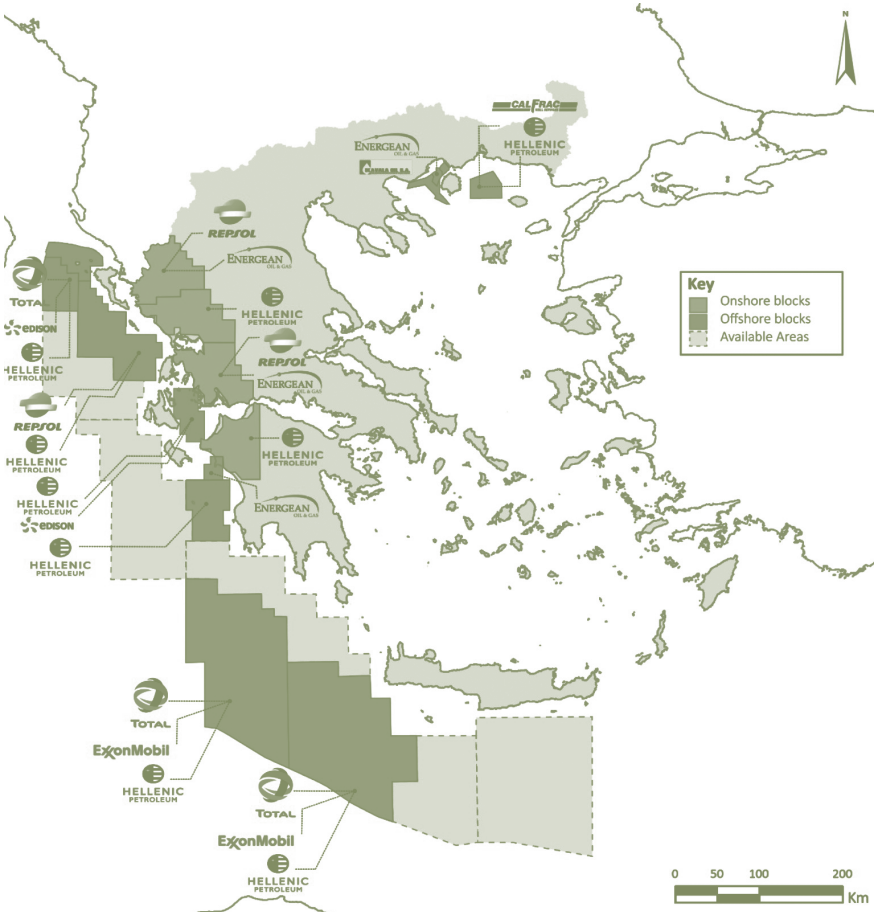

TABLE 3.

Lease agreements, lessees, acreage, site, etc., in the Greek extraction programme, 2019.

Source: Table by authors, based on HHRM (now HEREMA) data.

Block-Concession	Acreage	Site	Sign of ageement
Patraikos Gulf	1,982 Km^2	Offshore	14 May 2014
Ioannina Lease	4,187 Km^2	Onshore	14 May 2014
Katakolon	545 Km^2	Offshore	14 May 2014
Aitoloakarnania*	4,360.3 Km^2	Onshore	25 May 2017
NW Peloponnese*	3,778.3 Km^2	Onshore	25 May 2017
Arta-Preveza *	4,762.9 Km^2	Onshore	25 May 2017
Block 2 - Ionian west of Corfu	2,422.1 Km^2	Offshore	31 October 2017
Southwest of Crete	19,868.37 Km^2	Offshore	27 June 2019
West of Crete	20,058.4 Km^2	Offshore	27 June 2019
Block 10 - Kyparissiakos Gulf	3,420.6 Km^2	Offshore	9 April 2019
Ionian	6,671.13 Km^2	Offshore	9 April 2019
Block 1 - North of Corfu	1,801.7 Km^2	Offshore	
Sea of Thrace Consession	1,600 Km^2	Offshore	from 1969
Prinos	153 Km^2	Offshore	

Lease Agreements - Lessees - 2019			
Start date -Official publication	Law	Lessees - Shares - Operators	Project stage
3 October 2014	4299/2014	Hellenic Petroleum 50% (operator), Edison International 50%	Exploration 2nd phase
3 October 2014	4300/2014	Repsol 60% (operator), Energean Oil and Gas 40%	Exploration end of 1st phase
3 October 2014	4298/2014	Energean Oil and Gas 100%	Development pending
15 March 2018	4524/2018	Repsol 60% (operator), Energean Oil and Gas 40%	
16 March 2018	4527/2018	Hellenic Petroleum 100%	
16 March 2018	4526/2018	Hellenic Petroleum 100%	
15 March 2018	4525/2018	Total 50% (operator), Edison 25%, Hellenic Petroleum 25%	
10 October 2019	4628/2019	Total 40% (operator), ExxonMobil 40%, Hellenic Petroleum 20%	
10 October 2019	4631/2019	Total 40% (operator), ExxonMobil 40%, Hellenic Petroleum 20%	
10 October 2019	4630/2019	Hellenic Petroleum 100%	
10 October 2019	4629/2019	Repsol 50% (operator), Hellenic Petroleum 50%	
		Hellenic Petroleum (preferred)	
		Calfrac Well Services 75% (operator), Hellenic Petroleum 25%	
	98/1975 2159/1993 2779/1999 4296/2014 4585/2018	Energean Oil and Gas 100%	

Furthermore, it should be noted that the hydrocarbon extraction programme in Greece has persisted across six governments, ranging from right-wing, neoliberal or centrist administrations to SYRIZA, which at least initially and declaratively claimed a left-radical orientation. This continuity underlies the role of the state and a political legitimisation process with theoretical implications. Svampa identifies a transition from the notorious Washington Consensus to the commodities consensus that implies greater flexibility in the role of the state, concluding that "[t]his tendency towards exportation allows for the coexistence of progressive governments, which question the neoliberal consensus, with governments that continue to deepen a neoliberal, conservative political framework" (Svampa, 2015, p. 66). This is a crucial factor for the extractive megaprojects, despite the differences between governments in the exact legal, technical, environmental and economic framework in which those megaprojects take place. The most significant impacts of those extractive megaprojects can be summarised as follows:

- revenues and export profits accrue mainly to large corporations, while local economies and societies bear the negative externalities,
- intense land-use conflicts arise, displacing and undermining existing productive activities,
- long-term, often irreversible, environmental impacts,
- hydrocarbon extraction is highly capital-intensive, generating low levels of employment relative to investment,
- once activities with monocultural characteristics cease, future development alternatives are effectively foreclosed or "mortgaged",
- hydrocarbon extraction exacerbates social inequalities and further worsens the primary distribution of income,
- continuous pressure mounts to dismantle institutional

frameworks for environmental protection, spatial planning, taxation, and oversight,
- a permanent source of pollution through continuous leakage,
- risk of catastrophic accidents with irreversible consequences for societies and ecosystems,
- escalating defence expenditures and militarisation to protect infrastructure, intensifying regional geopolitical antagonisms and the risk of military conflict,
- intensification of state authoritarianism towards the local communities that oppose, curbing political freedoms and imposing authoritarian practises to safeguard the "rights of multinationals".

From 2019 to 2021, significant changes occurred due to the pandemic, falling oil and gas prices and financial difficulties. As a result, many companies a) withdrew from licences; b) repeatedly requested extensions in the exploration or development phases; and c) engaged in buy-offs and repurchases. However, the programme has not been entirely cancelled. Remains still active in a reduced form. The rebound in energy prices after 2022, combined with the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis in Europe, the escalation of imperialist antagonisms and the rise of far-right and neofascist governments and parties in Europe, in US and South America, has reinforced the push for further fossil fuel extraction. According to the state-owned Hellenic Hydrocarbons and Energy Resources Management Company (HEREMA), there were eight active concessions for hydrocarbon exploration and production in Greece in 2024. The active companies are the domestic ones, i.e., Helleniq Energy and Energean, and one multinational, ExxonMobil.

FIGURE 12.

Licenced, open special blocks in 2024 in the Greek extraction programme.

Source: HEREMA, n.d.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN CRISIS-RIDDEN GREECE AND BEYOND

05

The main structural factor driving social mobilisations and solidarity actions during the Greek crisis was the implementation of ultra-austerity policies, which caused severe material deprivation in daily life and a breakdown in democratic accountability. Together, these conditions fuelled widespread anger and a strong sense of injustice. In this context, several social movements that emerged after 2008 brought a range of contentious claims to the public's attention, including: a) Economic claims – protests against unprecedented austerity laws and measures, wage cuts, tax hikes or the introduction of new taxes, neoliberal structural reforms, job cuts, pension reductions, privatisation of public services and of education; b) Societal claims – concerns about the dramatic consequences of unemployment, poverty, inequality, social divisions, children's futures, rising crime rates, and an increase in suicides; c) Democracy-related claims – a focus on the growing disregard for the Greek constitution, the indifference to labour and social welfare laws and the threats to the right to peaceful protest; and d) Accountability claims – assigning responsibility for the crisis and its aftermath to a broad array of actors, including the two major political parties, the Greek state and government, bureaucrats and managers, political parties in general, the EU, banks, investors, capitalism, the wealthy and "the 1 percent". Greek police records indicate that between March 2010 and March 2014, there were over 20,000 contentious incidents across the country, with 31 of these being large-scale protests (involving over 5,000 people) (Diani & Kousis, 2014).

The socioenvironmental movements, as integral components of this wave of social unrest, were equally significant. After all, the austerity project was inherently a socioenvironmental one. Consequently, numerous mobilisations emerged around environmental issues. While some of these mobilisations were direct responses to the socioeconomic hardships induced by the crisis and austerity policies, others represented the culmination of long-standing conflicts that gained momentum and national prominence within the austerity context. Despite their inherent diversity and localised origins, these movements collectively constituted subversive practices and contestation emanating from the grassroots level.

This chapter aims to explore some of these emergent forms of socioenvironmental resistance. While an exhaustive analysis of the multitude of socioenvironmental movements that have emerged in Greece over the past two decades is beyond the scope of this work, we will focus on emblematic cases and conflicts that illuminate alternative "ways of understanding and using nature" (Armiero, 2008). By examining these diverse movements, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between crisis-induced development, environmental conflict and social mobilisation in contemporary Greece. Through this lens, we seek to derive broader lessons and insights. Specifically, we investigate:

- mobilisations against onshore and offshore oil exploration activities across Greece;
- the anti-gold mining movement in Halkidiki, northern Greece;
- the water antiprivatisation movement, primarily in Thessaloniki;
- waste management-related movements, particularly focusing on the Fyli landfill in the Athens metropolitan area, Europe's largest landfill;
- urban movements resisting privatisation efforts of public spaces of neighbourhoods, mainly in the centre of Athens.

Several key observations emerge from the outset. Firstly, socioenvironmental movements in the post-2010 period have operated at various scales, ranging from local and independent initiatives to nationally and internationally networked organisations, forging strong political and social alliances. Secondly, these movements display a paradoxical character: they are simultaneously highly uneven and internally diverse, yet exhibit striking similarities. While responding to concrete applications of neoliberal austerity on the environment, which vary in form and intensity across different locations, they are also distinct, place-specific militant particularisms, resulting in uneven actions and outcomes. Conversely, shared activist experiences across Greece, including the exchange of tactics and knowledge, have resulted in common demands, actions and spatialised politics. Thirdly, although the unique historical and spatial contexts of Greece during the crisis must be acknowledged, it is crucial to recognise that such forms of action have recurred throughout history. Economic crises and stringent austerity measures tend to amplify their frequency and intensity, with social movements drawing on and perpetuating traditions of protest and solidarity embedded in the collective memory of societies.

In alignment with political ecology scholars and radical environmental activists, we posit that socioenvironmental movements are not merely blueprints for "saving the environment" or "overcoming capitalism". Rather, they constitute "insurgent practices" (Andreucci et al., 2024), encompassing the strategies, actions, alliances, camaraderie, solidarity and visions of those striving for emancipatory transformations.

Our contention that we are living through multiple, intersecting crises underscores how planetary ecological devastation and the climate crisis are both produced by and, in turn, exacerbate, other social crises: inequality, precarity, gendered, racial and colonial violence, the erosion of de-

mocracy, and the rise of neofascism (Fraser, 2022). In this context, it is imperative to comprehend and actively support socioenvironmental movements as integral components of a broader transformation beyond capitalism. Equally important is the encouragement of critical reflection on the diverse experiences of societies, social groups and political actors, particularly those engaged in emancipatory struggles. These experiences must be contextualised within a broader framework to facilitate dialogue on the complexities and power dynamics inherent in our world.

It is through this lens that we interpret contemporary socioenvironmental mobilisations within Greece. These movements transcend a mere oppositional stance between the forces of "development" and localised environmental protection concerns. They constitute an active and ongoing challenge to austerity-driven development paradigms, enacted in ways that profoundly affect both individual lived experiences and subjectivities (Velegrakis et al., 2022). Their transformative potential resides not solely within the realm of ideology but is materialised through spatial practices, identity formation and the exchange of knowledge and lived experiences, thereby generating spaces for the articulation and enactment of subaltern politics.

"NO OIL EXTRACTION": MOBILISATIONS OPPOSING HYDROCARBON EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES

Since 2010, new onshore and offshore hydrocarbon explorations have been presented as solutions to the Greek crisis. To actively promote Greece as an "attractive oil and gas destination for international investors", HEREMA, a state-owned company, was established in 2011. In late 2016, HEREMA initi-

ated bidding rounds for both onshore and offshore blocks, as well as lease agreements with oil companies for oil and gas exploration and exploitation, in a marine area covering almost the entire surface of the Ionian Sea (western Greece) and extending to the western and southwestern parts of Crete (southern Greece) as well as land in Epirus (northwestern Greece) and northwest Peloponnese (central-southern Greece). Oil companies that have agreed to concessions include well-known international corporations such as Total, Repsol, ExxonMobil and Eni. Ironically, the oil exploration projects are presented as a means of meeting energy transition goals towards sustainable development and a circular economy.

Local movements have emerged to resist these projects in specific areas of interest like Ioannina, Arta, Preveza, Corfu, Kefalonia, Ithaca, Kyparissia, Lefkada and others. The primary concern of these movements is the environmental damage caused by the proposed activities. "We are facing epic damage to many rich ecosystems, pollution of the groundwater and, of course, all the impacts that hydrocarbon exploitation has on public health. While the European Union focuses on a strategy of Blue and Green Growth, a large proportion of Greek politicians persist in focusing on 'Black Growth'" (Athens Stop Mining, 2021).

These movements have also questioned the Greek state's undemocratic procedures, characterised by fast-tracked permits and bypassing environmental legislation, which are typical under austerity regimes. Activists also doubt the proclaimed benefits of the projects for strengthening Greece's economy and state revenues. According to them, the enclave nature of the oil industry, combined with its capital intensity, fosters weak linkages to the broader economy and does little to create employment. In the face of this universalistic view, the Stop Oil Drilling movement has managed to go beyond particularistic and limited local interests to bring for-

ward alternative ideas and practices of land use, local development and society-environment relations.

FIGURE 13.

Photo from a mobilisation in Ioannina against oil exploration in the area in 2018.

Source: https://www.babylonia.gr/2018/06/02/poreia-sta-giannena-enantia-stis-eksorykseis-ydrogonanthrakon-fotovinteo/

The movement launched a campaign in 2018 for the "Alternative Conceptualisation of Energy", a bottom-up initiative to confront current megaprojects for energy production, produce alternative thinking and propose solutions. The campaign has been organising at least one nationwide meeting of local initiatives per year and producing materials, reports and specific studies for the development of energy as a "social good rather than a commodity". To this end, a common declaration of nine priorities for the energy sector was drafted, including: the need to challenge the "growth logic" in energy demand and consumption by promoting energy reduction; the fight against energy market liberalisation processes; the protection and recovery of the natural

environment wherever needed; bottom-up energy planning and management; local development plans for energy production and consumption that serve social needs; and radical socioecological transformation to tackle climate change (Athens Stop Mining, 2021).

The Stop Oil Drilling movement emerged in the aftermath of the austerity period in Greece. However, it is a movement of the same era, as it is part of a prolonged period of sociospatial transformations and social antagonisms born in the crisis as a result of austerity politics. The "aftermath" does not signal a break but a continuation of austerity in the postcrisis period. Not only are the effects of austerity measures prolonged in time, but postcrisis policies replicate the same discourses and logics of austerity, grounded in deepening social inequalities, poverty and exclusion, and intensifying environmental degradation, solely to benefit capital interests together with an increasingly coercive state. The austerity period helped reinforce neoliberal hegemony over the environment in the long run. It is precisely against the entrenchment of austerity and "neoliberal natures" in the postcrisis period that Stop Oil Drilling is acting on the ground, helping to politicise and mobilise the subaltern to build an alternative hegemony from below.

"SOS HALKIDIKI": THE ANTI-GOLD MINING MOVEMENT IN HALKIDIKI

Halkidiki, a regional unit in northern Greece, has a long history of ore mining. Over the last 40 years, this has been a direct source of contestation and conflict for local residents. In 2011, the government approved a large-scale private project for the expansion and intensification of gold extraction in the area. It granted Eldorado Gold, a Canadian mining company, rights over land, mining permits, fiscal incentives and access

to fast-track approval procedures. Eldorado Gold's most controversial project has been the development of an open pit/underground mine in the middle of Skouries forest. Despite delays between 2015 and 2020, the company received a renewed permit in early 2021. The signed agreement stipulates that state policies must always be evaluated to best serve the interests of private investors.

Eldorado Gold's project has faced significant local opposition since 2011. Aside from health and quality of life concerns, in a region heavily reliant on tourism, farming, beekeeping and fisheries, increased gold extraction seriously jeopardises the sustainability of existing local economic activities. The local movement known as SOS Halkidiki, or Save Skouries, grew into a national movement with global connections between 2011 and 2015, despite facing harsh state violence. In early 2011, the villages of Megali Panagia and Ierissos organised small protests, formed assemblies and initiated legal battles against the mining permit. In March 2012, the first mass mobilisation took place at Skouries forest. Since then, more local assemblies have formed, while solidarity committees were created in Athens and Thessaloniki, and a nationwide campaign developed.

During the crisis period, the government propagated the idea that mining was the only way to create jobs and develop the region. At the time, it portrayed SOS Halkidiki as a localist and antidevelopment reaction, attempting to socially isolate the movement and sow divisions among residents. This discourse was particularly directed at the local workforce, mainly composed of miners. The objective was to enforce the project's acceptance and make workers internalise the idea that there was no alternative. In a general context of unemployment, low wages and precariousness, Eldorado Gold promised secure jobs and high salaries for miners and several ministers visited the miners and assured them that the state was committed to securing the project.

FIGURE 14.
Mobilisation in Skouries forest against Eldorado Gold's operations in the area in 2014.
Source: https://antigoldgr.org/2018/08/08/eksoryktiki-apoikiokratia-stin-evropi-i-periptosi-tis-elladas-skouries/

A discourse of "mining as the only possible future" influenced the movement's approach. Opponents of mining ranged from the long-term unemployed, low-income unskilled workers and seasonal employees in the local tourist industry, to young people with no local job opportunities. This diverse group united to fight for their livelihoods and future lives in the region. Therefore, local activists have problematised issues of development and elaborated alternative proposals for the development of the area, critically approaching austerity-driven development pathways.

The proposed alternative is based on creating jobs within a sustainable economy and environment by promoting small-scale agriculture, ecotourism, local fisheries and forestry activities as well as establishing a network of local cooperatives. By creating a space for experimenting with alternative visions of local development, SOS Halkidiki has integrated

into its struggle a philosophy of praxis to forge an alternative conception of the world beyond austerity and the furthering of neoliberal natures.

This broader context also directed the movement's strategy towards establishing alliances with other local struggles against large-scale projects in the country. Through alliance-building, the movement reinforced the legitimacy of its struggle and amplified its scope and capacity to influence decision-making processes affecting people's lives. The participants in the SOS Halkidiki movement became acutely aware that their struggle was not isolated but part of a larger opposition against an antidemocratic development pattern. Therefore, the movement established solidarity relations and joined forces with struggles such as the water antiprivatisation initiatives in Thessaloniki and Pilio (central Greece), the anti-mining movements in Thrace (northeastern Greece), the movement against large-scale landfills in Keratea (near Athens) and the initiatives against renewable energy industrial projects in Crete.

The movement has also extended its international linkages. It has organised protests jointly with significant international socioenvironmental movements of the same period, such as the No TAV initiative against the construction of a high-speed railway in northern Italy or the Roșia Montană movement against gold extraction operations in Romania. The movement's strategy resulted in increasing international recognition, media attention and the support of international NGOs. SOS Halkidiki has implicitly sought to create "subaltern geographies of connection" (Featherstone, 2013) with several anti-austerity struggles across the country and abroad to constitute strong alliances and expand their struggle. Solidarity-making is embedded in a philosophy of praxis that empowers participants to critically approach and actively struggle against an undemocratic and violent development pattern that overlooks social needs and local practices.

In the process, it goes beyond particularistic and limited local interests and brings forward alternative ideas and practices of land use, local development and society-environment relations.

Thus, the SOS Halkidiki struggle goes beyond a simple standoff between the forces of "development" and environmental-local protection concerns. It is an active and ongoing challenge to austerity-driven development patterns, undertaken in ways that transform people's everyday life and subjectivity (on this subject, see, e.g., Velegrakis & Liodaki, 2024). The social movement itself and the alliance-building with other movements give content to the "dynamic geographies of subaltern political activity and the generative character of political struggle" (Featherstone, 2013, p. 66). Geographies of solidarity are therefore constructed not merely on ideological terrain but on spatial practices, identities, exchange of knowledge and experiences, and subaltern alternative politics.

"SAVE GREEK WATER": THE WATER ANTIPRIVATISATION MOVEMENT

Water and sewerage services in Greece are primarily under public management. However, in 2011 the government included Thessaloniki Water Supply & Sewerage (EYATH) in a list of state-owned enterprises slated for privatisation under the pretext of the financial crisis and austerity measures imposed by the Troika.

EYATH was established in 1998 and went public on the Athens Stock Market in 2001. At that time, the government divided the enterprise into two parts: EYATH, responsible for management and service provision, and EYATH Fixed Assets, a public body responsible for managing, maintaining and operating the company's fixed assets as well as overseeing the state's rights to water provision and supporting in-

vestment plans. The state was the majority shareholder of EYATH, holding 74.02% of the shares. Since March 2012, the state's shares have been gradually transferred to the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (TAIPED) for sale. As the enterprise went public in 2001, several grassroots groups and trade unionists saw this as a first step towards privatisation, even though the state still held a majority stake. In 2011, when the government announced its intention to fully privatise EYATH, a civil society movement was initiated. One of the first active groups was Initiative 136. As public awareness of the privatisation issue grew, a coordination group of citizens and stakeholders, SOSte to Nero (Save Water) was formed in April 2013.

FIGURE 15.
Mobilisation and concert in Thessaloniki against the privatisation of water in 2023.
Source: https://www.koutipandoras.gr/article/thessaloniki-terastia-i-proselefsi-tou-kosmou-stin-synavlia-kravgi-enantia-stin-idiotikopoiisi-tou-nerou/

Through intensive campaigning and public awareness efforts, various actors and groups, including political parties, grassroots organisations, academics, municipal authorities and trade unions, united in the struggle against privatisation. Initiative 136 worked on establishing a cooperative company owned by its users, aiming for a more democratic and cooperative management model. The initiative took its name from the cost of a water meter (€136). The idea was that each resident with a water meter could participate in a local cooperative (district or municipality). All these cooperatives would form the Citizens' Union for Water, a union of nonprofit water cooperatives in the Thessaloniki area. The union submitted an expression of interest to acquire 51% of EYATH. However, in June 2013, TAIPED excluded the union from the second phase of the process, citing no specific reasons for its decision. The union appealed to the courts and was vindicated. In May 2014, the Council of State, the country's supreme administrative court, ruled in favour of Athens residents' demand to prevent the privatisation of Athens Water Supply and Sewerage Company (EYDAP). At the same time, it rejected EYATH's trade union's demand to cancel the privatisation, as it deemed the union lacked the standing to intervene.

In March 2014, the Regional Association of Municipalities of Central Macedonia accepted SOSte to Nero's proposal to hold a referendum in Thessaloniki alongside the municipal elections on May 18. A major public information campaign was launched to inform voters, raise funds and mobilise volunteers. Two days before the elections, the government prohibited the referendum. Despite this, civil society movements, along with volunteers from Greece and abroad, organised a grassroots referendum. Tens of activists set up tables and ballot boxes outside polling stations, obtained electoral lists from the Regional Association of Municipalities, and counted the votes to announce the results. A resound-

ing 98% of the 218,002 voters who participated voted "No" to privatisation. Furthermore, the municipalities in the Thessaloniki metropolitan area that receive water from EYATH decided to reclaim control of the networks, pumping stations and reservoirs that had been transferred to the state-owned company in 2001.

Despite the clear victory of the 2014 antiprivatisation movement, the current government continues to seek ways to circumvent the binding decisions of the Council of State and privatise water facilities nationwide. This began with the inclusion of water under a new regulatory authority, the Regulatory Authority for Energy, Waste and Water (RAAEY), a successor to the Regulatory Authority for Energy (RAE), known for "regulating" electricity prices in favour of energy cartels. In 2024, the government announced increases in water tariffs with a new pricing calculation method, mergers of municipal water companies into larger public-private regional entities and large-scale projects to address water scarcity in Attica. Under the pretext of the climate crisis and drought, the government is pushing for the creation of a water market with increased private-sector participation in water management and distribution, effectively leading to privatisation. The goal is to pass the costs of any measures onto consumers and farmers while allowing private companies to profit from water scarcity.[32]

32. For more detailed information on the water antiprivatisation movement, see Environmental Justice Atlas, n.d.).

DYTIKO METOPO: THE MOVEMENT FOR THE CLOSURE OF THE FYLI WASTE LANDFILL IN METROPOLITAN ATHENS

The metropolitan area of Athens, home to nearly half of Greece's population, depends on the Fyli landfill for the daily disposal and treatment of its waste. Situated at the base of Mount Parnitha in the Fyli municipality, approximately 12 kilometres west of Athens, this massive landfill originated as a local open dump in the 1960s. Over the decades, it underwent various technical and legal transformations, eventually becoming the sole formal landfill for the entire region in 1991. Since then, thousands of tonnes of waste have been buried at the site daily, creating an artificial mountain of accumulated garbage that is visible from a considerable distance. The European Committee on Petitions, which assessed the site in 2013, described it as a symbol of environmental degradation, warning that the damage caused by the landfill could result in environmental, health and social suffering for at least three generations unless significant restorative actions are taken (see European Parliament, 2014).

Finding suitable locations for new waste management facilities has always been a challenging and contentious process for Greek authorities. As a result of the crisis, new waste-related controversies emerged across the country, while long-standing issues have remained unresolved. It is important to note that the Greek state's difficulty in finding suitable sites for local landfills and waste treatment facilities predates the crisis. However, since 2010, this issue has been reframed within the context of the crisis, acquiring new meanings and practices shaped by evolving social, cultural, economic and political factors. New conflicts surrounding landfills have emerged as part of a broader resistance movement against austerity, re-

flecting a deep and widespread legitimacy crisis. A prime example of this ongoing contestation occurred between 2010 and 2011, when the town of Keratea, in eastern Attica, mounted a vigorous three-month campaign against the government's decision to build a landfill in the region (Kallianos, 2017). One way or another, the Fyli landfill remains the only official waste disposal area for the whole of Athens.

FIGURE 16.
View of the inside of Fyli landfill in 2024.
Source: https://www.fairville-eu.org/post/inside-the-landfill-a-community-visit-to-the-waste-management-facilities-of-west-attica

The continuous flow of waste to Fyli has also facilitated the transfer of other "matters" that have sparked ongoing disputes. While the landfill operates with relative consistency, ensuring the uninterrupted transfer of waste from the urban centre to its periphery, its impacts have not gone unnoticed. Service disruptions are rare and often imperceptible within the broader cityscape, yet the landfill's consequences and governance remain highly contested (Kallianos and Dalakoglou, 2022). The landfill not only exacerbates environmental and public health challenges but also deepens urban inequalities. It perpetuates marginalisation by disproportion-

ately affecting vulnerable communities near its location, reshaping their everyday experiences while allowing the rest of the city to remain relatively insulated from its negative consequences. In doing so, the Fyli landfill has become a symbol of both environmental and social injustice, reflecting broader patterns of inequity and exclusion in urban governance and infrastructure management.

Dytiko Metopo ("West Front") is a socioenvironmental movement that has been active in West Attica for over 20 years.[33] Its members focus their efforts on opposing the current waste management policies and advocating for significant reforms. Their primary demands include the immediate and permanent closure of the Fyli landfill and the establishment of decentralised waste management systems in the Athens metropolitan area, with a strong emphasis on minimising waste disposal. The movement highlights the uneven waste management practices in the Athens region, drawing attention to the resulting social inequalities. They also express concern over future government policies, which they believe are likely to worsen the situation rather than bring about meaningful improvements for the affected areas. Among their actions, Dytiko Metopo frequently organises symbolic occupations of the landfill site, especially when new expansions are proposed. It sees its opposition to the harm caused by the landfill as being intrinsically linked to exposing its operational processes. This approach extends beyond direct actions, as it also engages in infrastructural education. The movement consistently publishes updates on the landfill's operations, the challenges posed by its continued use and the financial and technical dynamics surrounding its management, including issues related to concessions and agreements. In 2019, to further mobilise opposition against

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33. See Dytiko Metopo. (n.d.). Δυτικό Μέτωπο [Dytiko Metopo]. https://oxixytafilis.blogspot.com/

the landfill's expansion, Dytiko Metopo co-organised a conference on waste management, which brought together collectives from across Greece. This event underscored its commitment to combining protest with educational and collaborative practices. By integrating these approaches, the movement has effectively gone beyond symbolic acts to build awareness, foster accountability and advocate for sustainable alternatives to the current waste management system.

Exposing the harms caused by the landfill is a crucial step in fostering public accountability, which is an integral aspect of opposing infrastructural damage and its broader socioenvironmental consequences. By shedding light on how the landfill operates and its far-reaching impacts, these efforts serve not only to inform but also to mobilise communities and stakeholders to demand change. These contestations fulfil two essential objectives. By revealing the inner workings of infrastructure, they provide a foundation for collective accountability. Transparency in how systems like landfills function allows the public to critically assess whether these infrastructures serve the common good or perpetuate harm. This process helps align the material realities of infrastructure – such as their environmental, social and health implications – with moral and ethical considerations. It forces governments, corporations and other responsible entities to answer for their decisions and actions, creating a collective ethos that prioritises fairness, justice and sustainability.

By exposing these harms, they pave the way for the development of strategies to resist and mitigate both present and future damage. The awareness and understanding of infrastructural operations empower communities to devise informed solutions that address immediate challenges while also preventing long-term negative impacts. These strategies might include advocating for policy changes, promoting sustainable alternatives and mobilising grassroots actions to counter harmful developments. Furthermore, mak-

ing these harms visible also challenges the normalisation of environmental degradation and social inequality often perpetuated by such infrastructures. It reminds the public that the consequences of harmful systems are not confined to the present but extend far into the future, influencing the ability of communities to organise their lives and build equitable, sustainable environments. In doing so, these efforts create a ripple effect, fostering a culture of accountability and resistance that transcends the specific context of the landfill, offering lessons applicable to other struggles against unjust infrastructures.

"NO METRO STATION IN EXARCHIA SQUARE": URBAN MOVEMENTS AGAINST VIOLENT TOURISTIFICATION AND GENTRIFICATION

Exarchia, a neighbourhood in the heart of Athens, has long been recognised for its distinct identity and complex history. Known as a vibrant hub of political activism, solidarity networks, social movements and antiauthoritarian uprisings, it has been celebrated by locals and grassroots initiatives as a powerful symbol of resistance and solidarity. This characterisation highlights the neighbourhood's role as a community-driven space, fostering mutual aid and defiance against oppression. However, this positive image is countered by a contrasting narrative perpetuated by mass media, mainstream public discourse and conservative politicians. These groups frequently depict Exarchia as a dangerous area characterised by violence, drug activity and property damage, often blaming these issues on radical groups. From this perspective, the neighbourhood is portrayed as lawless and segregated, a

space where only specific social groups can thrive. This narrative has fuelled calls for increased policing and redevelopment, framing Exarchia as an area in need of "cleansing" and "sanitisation" (Apostolopoulou and Liodaki, 2025).

In recent years, Exarchia has undergone significant economic and social transformations. Its unique and vibrant character has drawn not only solidarity networks but also researchers, digital nomads and tourists. This influx of outsiders has contributed to the neighbourhood's emergence as a new tourist destination, driving up rents and leading to the gradual displacement of economically vulnerable residents. This phenomenon has placed additional political pressure on the district, further threatening its distinctive identity. Meanwhile, the mainstream media has continued its negative portrayal of Exarchia, reinforcing the government's narrative of the need for "regeneration" and intensified policing. These developments reflect broader efforts to reshape the neighbourhood's character, prioritising commercial and tourist interests over the needs of its longstanding residents.

A particularly contentious issue in Exarchia has been the proposed construction of a metro station in the neighbourhood's central square. The plan dates back to 2009, when the Regulatory Plan for Athens first designated the square as a site for a metro station. However, construction was initially delayed due to the prioritising of Athens' connection to its airport, leaving the Exarchia station project on hold for eight years. Work eventually resumed in 2017, but the consultation process was deeply flawed, failing to adequately involve or engage local residents. In 2021, plans for the metro station were revived and by August 2022 the square was cordoned off with imposing metal barricades to prevent resistance. The project is being financed by Elliniko Metro, a private limited company fully owned by the Greek state, though up to 49% of its shares can be transferred to private entities and listed on the Athens Stock Exchange. This financial arrange-

FIGURE 17.
A banner on the fence protecting the metro station construction site at Exarchia Square, 2024.
Source: https://x.com/NExarcheia/status/1864982299139322052/photo/1/

ment has further fuelled opposition from residents who view the metro station as serving private interests at the expense of the community.

Local residents have organised a grassroots collective to resist the project,[34] arguing that the metro station's design will destroy one of the few public spaces in central Athens and the only square in the neighbourhood. They contend that the project disregards the needs of the community, undermines their quality of life, diverts taxpayer money to advance ideological and corporate agendas, and normalises police brutality and repression.

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34. See No Metro on Exarchia Square. (n.d.). Όχι Μετρό στην Πλατεία Εξαρχείων [No Metro on Exarchia Square]. https://oximetrostinplateiaexarcheion.wordpress.com

The planned metro station in Exarchia Square is emblematic of a broader pattern of gentrification and touristification affecting Athens' city centre. These changes include the forced displacement of residents, the conversion of socially significant buildings into commercial properties or museums, the increased policing of public universities and institutions, the erosion of public spaces, the destruction of green areas and skyrocketing rents. Collectively, these trends are transforming Athens into a tourist hub, stripping its neighbourhoods of their residential character and social fabric. These developments are unfolding in the context of ongoing austerity measures and state neglect, which have left essential public infrastructure for social welfare in disrepair. At the same time, the state has increasingly prioritised profit-driven urban development projects, creating a stark contradiction. While construction activity has surged following the stagnation caused by the 2008 financial crisis, critical public infrastructure continues to be overlooked. This neglect reflects a shift in public spending, where resources now seem to serve private interests rather than the public good. The struggle over Exarchia encapsulates a larger battle over the future of Athens. On the one hand, there is the drive to commercialise and redevelop the city centre in pursuit of profit. On the other, there is the fight to preserve neighbourhoods as spaces of community, solidarity and grassroots activism. This tension highlights deeper questions about who has the right to shape the city and whose interests urban development ultimately serves (Apostolopoulou and Liodaki, 2025).

MORE THAN THE AUSTERITY FRAMEWORK

Why focus on Greece? Why should we prioritise an examination of Greek socioenvironmental movements during and after the economic crisis?

It is evident that the crisis period precipitated profound transformations within the Greek political, economic and social landscape. Processes that typically unfold over extended periods in other contexts were dramatically accelerated within Greece. This accelerated transformation engendered significant shifts in governing sociospatial and socioenvironmental relations. A new paradigm emerged, characterised by large-scale foreign and domestic investments, land appropriation through privatisation schemes and efforts to extract monopoly rents. This paradigm supplanted previous regimes predicated on small-scale land ownership and a broader distribution of rent across diverse social classes (Velegrakis et al., 2015).

Concurrently, the environment underwent rapid reconfiguration through an intensification of legislative processes. Most of the enacted legislation was a direct consequence of the monetary and fiscal policies imposed by Greece's EU creditors. As is often the case, the general guidelines determined by these fiscal arrangements and austerity measures were subsequently "spatialised". This spatialisation unfolded without a coherent strategy for the urban and natural environment, rendering land vulnerable to controversial legislative transformations that systematically dismantled longstanding policies. The objectives of spatial cohesion, environmental protection and socioeconomic justice, along with efforts to mitigate the uneven development inherent in capitalism, were categorically rejected. Instead, the crisis was strategically leveraged as an opportunity to facilitate new investments and the enclosure of common and natural resources.

The socioenvironmental movements examined herein, and numerous others that remain unexamined, have emerged over the past two decades not solely as a direct response to austerity measures but also as a culmination of long-simmering environmental conflicts. Our objective extends beyond merely documenting resistance against environmental de-

struction due to the Greek crisis and austerity programmes; we aim to critically examine the potential for radical transformation that such resistance engenders. Consequently, we utilise contemporary socioenvironmental movements in Greece as a lens through which to explore questions of strategy and engagement in the pursuit of profound societal and ecological change, which is crucial in the current conjuncture of multiple and intersecting crises.

To do so we first need a shared vocabulary. This initial step enables us to subsequently address the critical question: "Why are radical emancipatory transformations so elusive? What factors contribute to the success or failure of emancipatory movements?"

Martínez-Alier (2002) defines environmental conflicts as arising from the unequal distribution of environmental and social costs associated with processes such as natural resource exploitation, land grabbing and waste management. These processes necessitate comprehensive analysis, considering both their causes and consequences. They are not merely technical or technocratic challenges amenable to expert solutions, technology or indicators. Instead, they are inherently political, encompassing power relations, class dynamics, gender dimensions and the demands and rights of marginalised groups. In essence, environmental conflicts are the product of two interconnected processes: capitalism's capacity to exploit disasters for the further commodification and financialisation of natural resources, coupled with its propensity to generate such disasters.

In the case of Greece, this is profound. Local communities in most of the cases have demonstrated an acute awareness of environmental challenges, recognising them as critical junctures for the defence of common goods and the preservation of their quality of life. Consequently, they have readily mobilised around specific demands, engaging in protracted struggles that often span months or even years. These move-

ments are characterised by broad-based participation and exert significant influence within their respective communities, as exemplified by the notable cases presented above. While these localised struggles may not always originate with explicitly antisystemic objectives, they nevertheless challenge large-scale development projects that are frequently intertwined with powerful business interests and entrenched government agendas.

These struggles have already transcended a mere opposition between proponents of "development" and those advocating for localised environmental protection. They have constituted active and ongoing challenges to accumulation-driven development paradigms in Greece, enacted in ways that profoundly affect both quotidian experiences and individual subjectivities. Therefore, they have imbued meaning and brought into public discourse the representations, demands, claims and, most importantly, actions of those seeking to understand and transform socioecological relations.

Secondly, the socioecological movements in Greece during the crisis, together with other expressions of social unrest, have engaged in acts of decolonising the political (Swyngedouw, 2015) and challenging the hegemonic forces that seek to naturalise existing power structures and socioecological relations. The contemporary context of neoliberal governance, characterised by multiple crises and austerity measures, is marked by a pervasive depoliticisation. Within this framework, the public management of both human and nonhuman entities is frequently articulated through a discourse that naturalises the imperative of economic growth. This discourse posits the unquestioned mobilisation of market relations and forces as the sole legitimate mechanism for accessing, transforming and distributing resources and ecosystem services, thereby reifying capitalism as the only conceivable framework for organising socionatural metabolisms. However, the inherent dynamism of the political resists per-

manent suppression; it invariably resurfaces as an immanent practice, animated by the imperatives of emergence, resistance, equity and the performative enactment of egalitarian forms of collective existence. This resurgence manifests through a process of disruption and interruption of the prevailing sociopolitical and economic status quo.

These insurgent practices have effectively conceptualised and enacted the re-emergence of the political within an era marked by postdemocratic depoliticisation. While invariably situated within specific contexts and material realities, these acts of resistance possess the inherent capacity to transcend their particularity, embodying a universal yearning for a more just and equitable world. Moreover, they have catalysed the production of new egalitarian socioecological spatialities, both material and discursive. Numerous cities, towns, villages and landscapes within crisis-ridden Greece have been profoundly reshaped as arenas of environmental conflict and social unrest. For instance, in the case of Halkidiki, even today, nearly 15 years after the eruption of the social movement against gold mining, the everyday life and discourse of the local population across an expansive area encompassing 16 villages remain deeply influenced by this struggle.

This enduring impact is attributable not solely to the conflict itself but also to the persistence of the social movement, manifested through its organisational structures, community engagement and diverse practices. Struggle committees, for example, are a prevalent form of organisation within environmental movements in Greece. They serve as vehicles for the expression of local social practices in opposition to the practices of large-scale capital and the state. They explicitly challenge prevailing development paradigms, framing their resistance within an alternative "philosophy of action", as articulated by Gramsci. These committees rally and politicise residents, foster participatory decision-making, operate with regularity and function as spaces for delibera-

tion and strategic planning. They are embedded within the local community and remain, to a significant extent, accountable to it. Over time, they have become a primary form of expression and mobilisation for social movements.

Through their engagement with socioenvironmental movements, participants embark on a process of self-identification that is inextricably linked to a simultaneous process of de-identification with previously ascribed subject positions. This de-identification arises from a growing awareness of the limitations and denials inherent in being confined to those specific identities and roles. Whereas individuals in certain rural contexts were formerly perceived solely as miners, workers or farmers (e.g., in the case of SOS Halkidiki), they now venture into uncharted territory, embarking on a process of creating alternative worlds and self-conceptions. They become activists, ecologists, environmental scientists or even legal advocates within the arena of contestation that has emerged in Greece in recent years. Furthermore, they resist being confined to any singular form of identification (on this subject, see, e.g., Velicu & Kaika, 2017).

Consequently, geographies of solidarity and subaltern connection (Featherstone, 2013) are not solely constructed on ideological foundations but are also grounded in spatial practices, identity formation, the exchange of knowledge and experiences and the articulation of subaltern politics. By creating spaces for the exploration and enactment of alternative visions of local development, these movements integrate a philosophy of praxis into their struggles. This praxis is oriented towards forging an alternative conception of the world that transcends prevailing development paradigms and the relentless expansion of neoliberalised natures. Therefore, alternative ideas and practices pertaining to the environment are mobilised within the realm of popular culture and everyday life as a means of politicising and mobilising subaltern (and, in several cases, local) communities. Alternative ideas

and practices function as catalysts for a broader struggle against the normalisation of neoliberal orthodoxy imposed through austerity, so-called development or other measures. This struggle aims to forge an alternative hegemony that challenges entrenched elite power. In a process reminiscent of a philosophy of praxis, this entails a political practice grounded in the lived experiences and "messy" realities of subaltern communities. This practice seeks to transform subjectivities, foster political engagement (thereby generating a self-reinforcing dynamic), cultivate solidarity among subaltern groups and potentiate processes of self-organisation.

In general, socioenvironmental movements play a pivotal role in repoliticising social and ecological issues. By challenging the entrenched political order and power relations that generate social inequalities, these movements transcend the limitations of localised environmental conflicts and become catalysts for broader societal transformations. In essence, they are framed as potential acts of political transformation. As articulated by Hadjimichalis (2018), these movements underscore the agency of individuals engaged in resistance and solidarity, often coalescing around a radical left ideology, and emphasise the centrality of everyday life as the primary arena of struggle within specific urban and non-urban sociospatial contexts.

While the socioenvironmental movements and conflicts examined herein did not emerge abruptly within the context of the economic crisis, it is evident that the period between 2010 and 2015 witnessed a notable surge in social mobilisation as a direct response to the imposition of austerity measures. However, the strategies, practices, discourses and tactics employed by these movements possess a longer historical trajectory, deeply intertwined with the broader history of social mobilisation in Greece that unfolded in the post-1970s era. This historical trajectory is characterised, among other factors, by the prominent role of leftist and anarchist groups

within these movements, the prioritisation of strategic objectives over localised demands, and the rapid escalation of local conflicts into challenges directed at the government and the central political arena.

Therefore, these mobilisations can be interpreted as a strategy of "offensive defence", as articulated by Kouvelakis (2011), wherein diverse forms and levels of protest are employed, engaging an expanding segment of the population. This process unfolds through successive peak stages, exhibiting distinctly rebellious characteristics and contributing to a shift in the balance of power. It emerges organically "from below", driven by the internal logic of the mobilisations themselves, and reflects the inherent tendency for rebellious forms of action to manifest within protracted social conflicts. This tendency signals the participation of social strata typically situated outside the conventionally defined boundaries of traditional organisational frameworks. However, at a certain stage of their development, these forms inevitably encounter limitations. Despite these challenges, the transformative potential of political participation and the exercise of autonomous politics through praxis have been demonstrably affirmed.

Indeed, engagement in social movements often induces a heightened critical awareness of the state, political processes, media representations and institutional mechanisms, including entities such as the European Union. This participation fosters a certain radicalisation that reveals shifts in popular belief regarding forms of struggle, the legitimacy of protest tactics and the perception of intergroup interests. Furthermore, there is a deeper-than-anticipated trust in social mobilisation, an optimism regarding its transformative potential and a positive outlook on its meaning and efficacy. However, in terms of political function, translating these personal experiences into a concrete alternative political project remains a challenge, despite the widespread acknowledgement of its necessity.

ECOSOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION AND POLITICAL STRATEGIES IN THE ERA OF ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

06

This text has sought to provide a critical analysis of the global climate crisis and its intersection with capitalist development, particularly in Greece in the regional context. We argue that the climate crisis is not merely an environmental issue but a deeply political one, rooted in the structures of capitalism and the unequal distribution of power and resources. This obvious observation should be accompanied by a radical (Marxist) critique of sustainable development and green capitalism, which have become the cornerstones of mainstream discussions and practices about addressing the ecological crisis. These concepts are deeply flawed and serve to justify and reinforce the very system that is responsible for the crisis in the first place: capitalism. And they are doing so by perpetuating a set of myths critical for capitalism's ideological dominance.

THE COMMODIFICATION OF NATURE AND THE MYTH OF ENDLESS GROWTH

At the heart of sustainable development is the idea that economic growth can be decoupled from environmental degradation. This assumes that technological innovation and improvements in efficiency can enable continued economic expansion without harming the environment. However, as Saito (2023) recently showed, this is a fundamental contradiction within capitalism, which is inherently driven by the pur-

suit of infinite growth on a finite planet. Capitalism is a system based on the accumulation of capital, which requires constant expansion of production and consumption. Even when technological improvements increase efficiency, they often lead to greater overall consumption of resources, as the Jevons paradox (Jevons, 1866) shows. In parallel, by turning nature into a commodity, sustainable development reinforces the capitalist logic of exploitation and profit maximisation. It reduces ecosystems and natural resources to mere inputs for production by exacerbating social inequalities and undermining the very first goals of so-called sustainability.

Starting in the 1980s and 1990s, a remarkable array of new "ecological commodities" emerged. Ironically, their existence can be traced back, first and foremost, to the achievements of the environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Following this, environmental laws and regulations, which developed unevenly across various local and national contexts, aimed to curb the environmental destruction caused by capital. In doing so – whether intentionally or not – these measures created a form of scarcity in what might be termed "allowable natural destruction". This scarcity, in turn, gave rise to entirely new markets centred around ecological "goods" and, particularly, "bads".

Unlike the traditional commodification of nature, which primarily involved extracting use values as raw materials for capitalist production – such as wood for furniture, oil for energy, iron ore for steel or grains for bread – this new wave of ecological commodities operates differently. Whether these commodities become raw materials for future production is secondary to their creation. Instead, these commodities are, in terms of exchange value, extracted from pre-existing socionatural relationships and, as part of their production, are either reinserted or remain embedded within socialised nature – the more "natural" they appear, the better.

Green capitalism is often promoted to mitigate the envi-

ronmental impacts of capitalist exploitation of nature or criticised as merely a superficial environmental veneer masking continued exploitation. However, regardless of the validity of these claims, the significance of green capitalism runs much deeper. It has evolved into a major strategy for the commodification, marketisation and financialisation of ecology, significantly intensifying and deepening the reach of capital into nature.

GREEN CAPITALISM AND THE ILLUSION OF REFORM

The ecological crisis is not an accidental byproduct of capitalism but a result of its structural contradictions. Capitalism's drive for profit, its reliance on fossil fuels (see Malm, 2018) and its need for constant expansion are incompatible with ecological sustainability. Therefore, sustainable development often serves as a form of greenwashing, allowing corporations and governments to appear environmentally responsible while continuing business as usual. Additionally, green capitalism reinforces the myth of sustainability through market-based solutions, technological innovation and corporate responsibility. The carbon-trading and carbon-offsets mechanism, for instance, does not reduce overall emissions but merely shifts them from one place to another, as all the IPCC reports have showed (see, for example, IPCC, 2023). In so far as the site of mitigation may be kilometres or continents away from the site that benefits, this marketisation is more likely to deepen uneven development and intensify poverty. Accompanying the above are ideas of corporate responsibility and ethical consumption. The first is a modern engagement in greenwashing, through marketing and public relations. The latter is just deeply flawed: Under capitalism, consumers have limited choices, and the production of

goods is shaped by the profit motive, rather than ecological or social considerations.

The rapid expansion of ecological commodification and capitalisation has profoundly deepened the production of nature. In the 1990s, it became a popular notion within constructionist thought that "nature is discursive all the way down". However, the dramatic transformation of socionature today suggests something far more significant: it is the regulation and production of nature that now threatens to penetrate "all the way down".

Historically, factors such as currency rates, interest rates, credit markets and stock markets have influenced the regulation of raw material extraction to some degree. However, the deepening of nature's production today introduces an entirely new dimension. While this process is still in its early stages, it is accelerating rapidly. Financial markets are increasingly positioned to influence, if not outright orchestrate, a wide range of environmental policies: determining which forms of pollution are produced or eradicated, how much environmental degradation is deemed acceptable, where it should or should not occur, and who bears the costs.

The capitalisation of nature explicitly ties these social decisions to the dynamics of financial markets. For instance, when the price of ecological credits fluctuates, investment priorities shift accordingly. Changes in weather patterns can alter the price of pollution credits as traders anticipate variations in electricity generation. Similarly, shifts in interest and currency rates directly impact environmental policies as capital flows in or out of specific sectors. In this way, the financialisation of nature has become a powerful force, reshaping how environmental decisions are made and who benefits from them.

THE LIMITS OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL FIXES

The concept of "smart", often presented as innovative and modern, has permeated our lives in recent years. Technological giants leverage artificial intelligence and big data to develop automated solutions that promise to simplify our existence. Consumers, labelled as "dumb" users, are inundated with "smart" applications: our phones, watches, cars and computers have become intelligent devices. They automatically turn on lights, track our steps, monitor our health and collect data on our habits to shape our consumption patterns. Similarly, the concept of "resilience" has evolved from its ecological origins to become a cornerstone of environmental sustainability discourse. Initially defined as the capacity of systems to absorb change and disturbance (Holling, 1973), resilience is now invoked to describe cities and societies that can "resist, adapt, and recover from the consequences of any given hazard" (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2009), "cope with changes in performance, effectiveness, or legitimacy" (OECD, 2009), or "resist, respond to and quickly recover from shocks and disruptions" (NATO, 2021). International organisations like the UN, OECD, NATO, EU, and World Bank promote resilience to maintain stability and avoid transformative change within the neoliberal capitalist framework. The concepts of "resilience" and "smartness" go hand in hand with the umbrella term "sustainability". Since the mid-1980s, when the Brundtland Commission's report "Our Common Future" (United Nations, 1987) introduced the concept of sustainable development, it has become a central tenet of global policymaking. The goal was to establish regulatory frameworks, primarily for economic and production activities, in order to mitigate environmental and social costs. Sustainable development has subsequently emerged as a dominant programmatic imper-

ative for international, supranational and local organisations, as exemplified by the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Subsequently, sustainability, resilience and smartness form the guiding principles for all public policies, including development programmes, financing, education and research. Cities are increasingly encouraged to adopt "smart city" solutions to address environmental and economic challenges through the deployment of advanced technologies. Similarly, societies are urged to rebrand themselves as "resilient" to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis. We all must be "sustainable" to manage risks and changes perceived as beyond human control. These risks often include climate change, migration, infrastructure failures and social crises, which are seen as threats to the stability of existing systems.

While these technical solutions are presented as neutral and objective, they are ultimately management and adaptation tools that serve neoliberal agendas. Their inherent ambiguity and flexibility make them useful for promoting consensus, individualising responsibility and discouraging radical alternatives. Therefore, they exhibit several critical limitations.

First, they often prioritise technological solutions over social and political factors, leading to a technocratic approach that marginalises citizen participation. Societies are encouraged to embrace a "smarter" future without questioning the underlying market-driven approach to environmental and urban issues. As Vrasti and Michelsen (2016) argue, the focus shifts from envisioning desired futures to adapting to a world dominated by uncontrollable risks.

Second, they equate sustainability with the implementation of technical management systems, neglecting the broader social and environmental context. As Neckel highlights (2024), the discourse on sustainable lifestyles has introduced an ethical dimension that places individual responsibility at the forefront of climate action. For instance, the

concept of the ecological footprint, which measures individual, household and societal resource consumption, contributes to the individualisation of climate change. This shift from collective to individual responsibility has proven ineffective in addressing systemic challenges.

Third, they frequently exclude marginalised groups and social movements from decision-making processes, hindering the development of equitable and inclusive sustainability strategies. The impacts of climate change and development policies are unevenly distributed, disproportionately affecting marginalised and vulnerable populations. Social movements, grounded in specific local contexts, often offer alternative visions and strategies for more just and sustainable futures. These movements challenge the dominant techno-managerial approach and provide critical perspectives on sustainable development, exposing its potential to perpetuate capitalist accumulation. And that's why they are excluded.

"WAY OUT OF DYSTOPIA" CALLS FOR THE MATERIAL POWER OF IDEAS AND STRATEGY

In the opening sentence of this study, and specifically in the title of the first chapter, we offer our estimation of the era in which we live in, characterising it as "an unequal dystopia in the making". This estimation could be accurate, inaccurate or completely wrong; however, it was not made as a rhetorical exaggeration.

By 2025, a quarter of a century later, we are not in the same period as we were at the beginning of the 21st century. We are not in the period of the rise of the antiglobalisation movements, the World Social Forum, Seattle and Genoa, Cochabamba and Copenhagen, the first rise of left-wing governments in Latin America and broad left parties in Europe,

of the Communist Refoundation Party (PRC), SYRIZA and so on. We are now in a period of war, an escalation of imperialistic antagonisms, militarisation and the rearmament of Europe; a period in which nationalisms have returned, and neofascism, the alt right and climate denial are rising. It is a period in which the global average temperature increase has already reached the threshold of 1.5°C, COPs are taking place in Abu Dhabi and fossil fuels are reemerging. It is a period in which Trump was inaugurated US president for the second time. It is a period marked by Putin and the rise of Meloni, Orbán, Milei and Wilders, while, at the same time, the threats of Le Pen and Alternative for Germany (AfD) are ante portas. We are in a time when genocide is taking place in Gaza before the eyes of the whole world.

Certainly, class and political struggles are dynamic, with unexpected turning points and uprisings that are difficult to predict. That said, it is widely accepted that we are on a quite negative trajectory with no visible end. Nonetheless, the most important fact for those we fought over the past 25 years is that we were defeated. Our "class has been defeated", our political endeavours have been overcome, and our strategies and tactics have been proved to be mistaken, false, deficient and inadequate to the challenges. In all that we fought for, "for a different world", we were "defeated"; either we were on the "front lines", or we had a different tactic and chose to hold back; whether we were supported and participated in the prevailing political line, or we were in the opposition. Of course, acknowledging responsibilities, mistakes and inadequacies is a different issue. In that case, political stance, role and position matter the most.

Having been active in various socioecological movements at the social and political level, and especially as members of anticapitalist political organisations and the SYRIZA coalition, from the beginning until 2015, we were certainly "de-

feated".[35] We were defeated even though we were always anticapitalist militants and part of the opposition, in one way or another. Thus, feeling organically connected to that period in all its aspects, we acknowledge the new conditions and want to express some thoughts regarding the mistakes and the inadequacies of that time. One could say that many of these approaches and lines of thought were ones that we had always supported. Nevertheless, the catalytical impact of today's period gives them a new spin.

Although it is a completely different issue from the subject of that study, we have to make some crucial remarks when referring to "Left Strategies". Many left parties constantly recognise their appeal to the masses, the working class and the youth as their major challenge. They feel that their problem is a lack of contact and communication and, hence, their low percentages in elections. But when that problem, in Greece and elsewhere, was overcome, different, more important and difficult problems emerged, ones that were connected with political and strategical orientation. These problems were, in practical terms, largely forgotten for decades. For parties that are not in a position (i.e., limited political power) or do not take on the responsibility to confront the class opponent, the task is way easier: they just have to formulate a political agenda, demands and framework of policies with the objective to appeal to certain audiences. However, when you have to deal with the bourgeois state, the ruling class and its international allies, it is a whole different story; the theoretical, political, and organisational

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35. We use this specific term to emphasise the negative turn of an entire period and the failure of various political endeavours internationally and, above all, to highlight the worsening material conditions of the working class and the social majority of the exploited classes. We are not using the term "defeated" subjectively, in individual terms. As militants, we are referring to the negative balance sheet of forces in material, political and ideological terms.

deficiencies and weaknesses become critical. This was not just the case for Greece. In different conditions and to various degrees, similar problems can be found in Portugal, Spain, Cyprus and Latin America (e.g., example neo-extractivism) among others. Consequently, once the problem of appeal was "solved", other much more serious problems appeared.[36]

One of the most important challenges is the formulation of a political programme that entails and articulates the ideological and political orientation of a party, but also aspects of its organisational direction. The issue of a political programme has, of course, been a subject of intense debate since Marx, generating a wide range of methodologies, models and approaches. While this is not the place to revisit that discourse, we believe it would be useful to share some brief remarks drawn from our own recent experiences.

We had been both members of the secretariat of the SYRIZA Department of Environment and Ecology for many years and of the secretariat of the party's Energy Department. We also coordinated, with others, the lengthy process of developing the Ecology Department's political programme. These programmes, especially that of the Environment and Ecology department, took months to be processed, discussed and approved. The procedures were quite complex, involving different ideological, political and organisational dimensions. Yet, the most important questions concern the political and strategic implications.

For instance: a) what type of programme does a radical left party need? b) for what purposes and strategic/political imperatives (i.e., a governmental programme that follows the structure of the state, with the aim to govern a specific cap-

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36. These are certainly not problems for those who choose to alter their political orientation. Nevertheless, in that case we were still defeated politically both within the party and in society.

italist social formation, or a political programme that aims to overturn such an order)? c) how, and through what processes, does a party formulate programmes in each field or sector? d) how are those different, and perhaps contradictory, conflicting programmes integrated into the general political programme, given the considerable conflicts between different sectors with totally divergent backgrounds, approaches, methodologies and interests?[37] e) a central dichotomy: programmes organically connected to social movements (bottom-up), or drafted by experts and technocrats from state or private enterprises who often flock into opposition parties that are likely to govern in the near future? f) the harsh reality of the state structures, institutional framework, mechanisms, etc., that intrinsically preserve the dominant sociopolitical regimes and the unavoidable clash with public administration bureaucracy and officialdom; g) the issue of programme depoliticisation – becoming constrained by institutional, economic, ideological, or political "realism" (in effect, the TINA doctrine as an institutional barricade)? h) are programmes conceived as elements of political force dictated by class and political struggle or reduced to a managerial logic of marginal reforms aimed at "humanising" or remedying capitalism? i) what are the results and the actual impact of these programmes, as seen in case studies of Greece, but also Latin America and elsewhere, where left-wing parties actually governed?. These questions, along with many others drawn from actual experiences and endeavours, can be analysed in

37. The program of the Department of Environment & Ecology of SYRIZA, a document of about 120 pages long, faced significant opposition, to say the least, from many other departments, for instance from those related to energy policy, tourism, infrastructure and others. It is important to mention that the specific department, in a different form, was one of the oldest, with the most members with different areas of expertise, backgrounds, etc., who, most importantly, where connected with socioecological movements and struggles for a long time.

detail to provide useful insights and conclusions for the future, to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Following the government and state structure, the long process of developing extensive programmes per sector and field at SYRIZA had almost zero impact on the actual governmental policies that were eventually implemented, and this was not only as a result of the MoU.

In our case especially, it is difficult to identify important political targets, policies, immediate socioecological reforms or even emblematic struggles that were successfully achieved. There are many reasons for this, but let us refer to a crucial one, that of state and institutional continuity and resistance to anything other than marginal reforms. The case in point is the gold-mining project in Skouries, which was one of the most emblematic fights against a disastrous project in economic, social, environmental and public-interest terms. The project was, at the same time, legally, politically and economically vulnerable in numerous aspects and, therefore, could have been cancelled. Yet it was not. Gramsci warned us that developed capitalism has many lines of defence. If we fail to take this warning seriously, we will be unpleasantly surprised. For example, we suddenly discovered that, for example, the director general of the relevant ministry and other state officials related to the subject had signed several legal documents, licenses, decisions and official reports that institutionally approved the specific project. All these officials are not only personally connected to the specific policy in question – i.e. gold-mining – but they had scientifically, legally and technically approved it and, hence, they had to support it, otherwise, they would be contradicting themselves. Therefore, a huge institutional framework emerged, together with all the connected personnel, that cannot be simply reformed just by a new minister,[38] some experts and an action plan

38. We, definitely, are not claiming that the political decisiveness of the

alone. The entire institutional and bureaucratic state framework has to be cracked, destabilised and delegitimised. This can only be done under the social and political pressure of the people demonstrating en masse; to put it performatively, from the people on the streets at the front door of the ministry and not (primarily) from those who are presenting their arguments in meetings inside the building.

Moreover, we must point out that, as in many other cases, the workers' union fully supported the project and this is another crucial issue. The inner structure of capitalism presents the immediate workers' interests as contradictory to those of environmental protection. By splitting class interests into small groups or even individual specific interests, tied to a single available source of income, capitalism encloses workers in its own ideological and political horizon. Capitalism presents environmental protection or policies regarding sociological transformation as costs to the system. Not only that, but these costs have to be paid by the workers and society. This major antithesis cannot be resolved at the level of a specific issue or case. A political strategy that fundamentally challenges the capitalist status quo is needed to disengage social needs from the imperatives of capital and align them with environmental protection and the restoration of ecological balance. For example, important socioecological targets in the energy sector cannot be achieved as long as energy remains an outflow of an important commodity that has to be maximised; a commodity of a crucial capitalist sector, the "lifeblood" of capitalist accumulation in the direction of constant growth. Market mechanisms, simple technological fixes, outsourcing energy-intensive industrial processes

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party and the government was a given and the only problems were structural and institutional. On the contrary. We are arguing that a simple political intention is not a sufficient condition to accomplish a political target, even when you are in government.

to the Global South, carbon trading, geoengineering and, at the same time, competition for new fossil fuel discoveries (even for unconventional ones), the escalation of energy poverty and transferring the costs to the social majority, are aspects of the dystopian reality into which we have gradually been sinking.

Fernandes (2022) has eloquently described a political strategy in two tides that "interact and build from each other to form our strategy":

> One tide carries a faster transition from point A to point B, where we buy ourselves ecological time and offer glimpses into a better life while still under capitalism. The ecological transition involves a combination of transition plans and Green Deals that harness the limited power of reforms at first, with a focus on structural reforms that tackle immediate crisis, strengthen the public sector and management, encourage political participation at various levels, make informed use of campaigning and propaganda to build consciousness, empower socialist organizations to handle problems within their reach, nationalize resources, construct infrastructure that favours efficient use of such resources and more collective living, and reach across borders from a perspective of regional integration, reparations, and international solidarity.
>
> The other tide consists of movement building, whereby we strengthen class consciousness and democratic socialist standards that build collective power for a more radical rupture targeting all the pillars of private property, profit, and accumulation, in what will be the transition from capitalism to socialism. Movement building provides agency to the ecological transition but surpasses its timing, since it builds conditions for socialist power. Once under ecosocialism, movement building is essential to consolidate popular power, as one tide envelops the other and our strategy continues to be re-evaluated and adjusted.

From our point of view, this certainly represents a programmatic logic that tries to connect the minimum with the maximum programme, while maintaining a distinction between them. The problem is that even the first "tide" is never accomplished to a substantial degree and there is a reason for that. If, socially and politically, we had the power to implement an extensive programme of socioecological transformation and structural reforms, what would prevent us from moving beyond capitalism altogether, thereby addressing its critical contradictions? Conversely, if the class struggle and the balance of forces are not strong enough to challenge core aspects of capitalism, why would the dominant forces of capital give us ground for those reforms? In reality, they do not. In most historical cases, capitalism has made such concessions, as those described in the first "tide", in order to avert more radical changes and to safeguard the reproduction of the capitalist system and the continuity of the state.

We argue that, especially today, the distinction between these two tides does not align with the needs, the climate emergency and the political reality of the period. We claim that the "two tides", as defined in the previous scheme, are connected in a single, undivided process. The second "tide" is, in reality, a precondition for the first and the first is a temporary result of the latter's dynamic process. This is the approach of the "The Transitional Program" (Trotsky, 1938), which was developed in opposition to the division between minimum and maximum programmes. We argue that this is especially true in the case of the climate crisis which is directly related to the core of the capitalist relations of production and not to a single reform. Within that framework the issues of strategy and ideas are crucial, and for that reason we choose to refer to some central pillars as theoretical and analytical preconditions for a potential programme towards an ecosocialist transformation.

BEYOND AND AGAINST: GROWTH, EXPLOITATION, STATE AND CAPITALISM

As we have already noted, we began this study by characterising the new period we live in as a dystopia. If we are serious about that claim, it must be followed by specific consequences. Simply declaring "beyond", implying a distant future, is no longer sufficient, nor is it adequate for the gravity and urgency of the social and climate emergency. The sentence must be completed with the crucial word "against". This is even more pressing after Trump's second presidency, in which an alliance of the alt right, neofascists and neo-Nazis (who are, of course, climate-change deniers) has been waging a global political struggle, controlling many governments and parties with ever-increasing political power.

Capitalism is already dragging societies into climate warfare and it is preparing for generalised armed conflicts, both regional and global. Military budgets are skyrocketing, the rearmament of Europe on a large scale is well on track and the ideological mechanisms are working at full capacity to increase population availability for recruitment. In such a period, and despite the deeply negative balance sheet of forces, we have to "build and fight", as we noted in the introductory chapter. Declaring the urgent need to fight is something utterly distinct from routine social demands and political electoral campaigns. What is required is a clear and vivid strategic direction towards ecosocialist transformation in the 21st century – one capable of inspiring and mobilising society.

At the same time, we must afford special attention to two famous quotations from Marx: a) "Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing

premise" (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 49) and b) "the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself" (Marx & Engels, 1969, p. 104). Thus, mechanistic "recipes", top-down plans, ready-made expert solutions (including supposed class struggle techniques and experts), or socioeconomic transformations constructed ex ante, directly contradict the framework outlined in the above quotations. The same applies to any form of substitution of the real movement by so-called experts, parliamentary processes, state institutions and, of course, government-centred management. We are referring mostly to left governments but also to parties of the left that have significant parliamentary representation and, as a consequence, great involvement with state institutions.

These issues are central to any project of ecosocialist transformation and socioecological movements, as discussed in the last section of chapter 5. Ecosocialism and socioecological movements pose, among others, the question of scale, ranging from the spatial and technological levels to the concentration and centralisation of capital, the struggle for the commons, decentralisation processes and the creation of cooperative, collective forms of production based on self-organisation and self-management. Consequently, top-down processes, technocratic fixes and any kind of substitution are fundamentally contradictory, both in terms of practice and in objectives.

Unfortunately, in recent decades – and not only – we have experienced left parties move in precisely the opposite direction to what Marx outlined in the quotations above, with SYRIZA's experience in government in Greece serving as a typical example. While acknowledging the possibility and the necessity, within the historical and political horizon, of transitional programmes – and, therefore, transitional left governments (rather than long-term governments that manage the bourgeois state) – the crucial issue of the complex

relation between those governments and social movements arises. We can schematically pose this issue as a dipole. The first pole stems from the approach that views the labour movement, broader social movements and the subjugated classes as complementary forces that must intervene ex post to control and support left-wing governments in their political initiatives. The second pole is based on the opposite logic – reversed correlation and causality – that every transitional government must act as the expression of a real movement of the struggling social subject that steadily and radically transforms social relations, breaching the dominant system of power at all levels, from production to the institutional and ideological level, imposing the corresponding transformations and ruptures that will also be implemented at the level of the state as a result of this same social movement. These two directions outline two distinctly different processes and prospects, as much on a theoretical and strategic level as on a practical one (Psarreas, 2017, p. 147).

The commitment to the second direction is a matter of catalytic importance, with a plethora of consequences. One of the most important regards the bourgeois state. On the contrary, left traditions that consider the bourgeois state as the primary, if not exclusive, lever of political subversion are not insignificant. For them, the conquest of state power and its strengthening are viewed as both necessary and sufficient conditions for the prospect of socialism itself. A second, alternative, approach, which was common among left parties in Europe and Latin America, considers that the state can be transformed up to the point of its evolution in a "socialist" direction, depending on the balance of forces – and in many instances, depending simply and solely on the electoral balance of forces, as in Eurocommunism. Those approaches overlook the tradition that stems from the Paris Commune – and Marx himself. As Marx wrote: "This was, therefore, a Revolution not against this or that, legitimate, constitutional, re-

publican or Imperialist form of State Power. It was a Revolution against the State itself. [...] a Revolution to break down this horrid machinery of Class domination itself" (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 486). Likewise, Milios et al. point out that "the structure of the political element in capitalist societies, and more especially of the capitalist state (its hierarchical-bureaucratic organisation, its 'classless' function on the basis of the rule of law, etc.) corresponds to and insures the preservation and reproduction of the entire capitalist class domination" (Milios et al., 2002, p. 6).

Especially today, as forms and structures of transnational integration of capital have been established in parallel to the strengthening of the bourgeois state on all levels, as much in their internal structure as in their international connections, it is vital to focus on the critically important issue of the state. We are now dealing with state structures and functions that are increasingly complex and comprehensive in confronting movements and the left, and that use ideology more efficiently against socialist and communist ideas through ideological state apparatuses. In fact, as we have already mentioned, the recent experience of the SYRIZA is also directly connected with the issue of the state. Similarly, in totally different sociopolitical conditions, we can also examine the critique of neo-extractivism in Latin America.

The centrality of the growth imperative is apparent in every issue. Take the huge issue of energy as an example. As noted above with reference to Jevons paradox, every advance in energy efficiency will be surpassed by the dynamic of growth and, hence, of energy total production and consumption. Therefore, in the context of an ecosocialist transformation energy should be treated as an ever-decreasing "inflow" – a necessary condition – of social production and reproduction to meet collective social needs, in contrast to the capitalist conception that sees energy as a maximising "outflow" – an autonomous commodity – of a centralised

sector, that "fuels" exponential capitalist growth. In this direction, technological and social forms, social ownership and control of energy sources and planning to production, the determination of the appropriate social, environment and economic scales, spatial planning, and local community participation are fundamental criteria of such a transformation. A sine qua non requirement is the reclamation of social ownership, including social and workers' control, of public property, infrastructure and services; reclaiming the commons, while reaffirming the distinction between legal forms of state ownership and public-social ownership as well as the socialisation of sectors of production. This is essential to confront energy poverty, which continues to grow in parallel with aggregate energy production/consumption, in a dynamic that is not contradictory in capitalism. It is evident today that neoliberal green development ideas and plans, such as industrial-scale renewable energy projects – as an opportunity for "green profits" – have replicated every major form that characterises capitalist production, i.e., from the most fundamental of energy as a commodity that is produced and distributed through market mechanisms, to the forms of ownership (private or state), of the concentration of capital, with disastrous consequences both for society and for environmental protection.

As we have already shown in chapter 1, the green capitalist strategies of the last three decades – essentially strategies to greenwash capitalism while creating the illusion of green reforms – have proven to be lose-lose strategies both in terms of society and the climate crisis. Furthermore, they have also, at least partly, paved the way for the rise of the alt right, climate-change deniers and related movements. For 30 years now, the costs of the so-called green transition have been passed onto working and exploited classes, while climate target remain largely unmet. Facilities such as carbon markets, the emissions trading system (ETS), clean develop-

ment mechanism, biomass and energy land use (Euractiv, 2018), as well as mechanisms like the flexible mechanisms that were defined in the Kyoto Protocol, are perfect greenwashing examples as they: a) promote processes in favour of big polluters, enabling them to grow their profits; b) impede net reductions by allowing substitution through (to say the least) questionable "green investments" in third countries; c) maximise the environmental and climate pressures on a global scale through expansion and diffusion (i.e., greenhouse gas emissions); and d) shift transition costs to the vast majority of people and to the Global South, without affecting the share of private profits. As a result, we are now facing the consequences of the climate crisis while neofascists and climate deniers constitute a global political threat.

Finally, in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is a matter of urgency to build networks among socioecological movements of the region. Such networks can serve as a form of defence, solidarity and collaboration against the resurgence of nationalism, militarisation, environmental degradation and fossil fuel extraction (chapter 3). For instance, in Greece, where an extractive "imaginary" has been established, the abandonment of such programmes could be conceived as a "betrayal" of a specific nationalist imaginary, carrying a high political cost. Nevertheless, movements in Greece are fighting to stop oil and gas extraction plans and cancel the active lease agreements, aiming to keep fossil fuel resources in the ground. Such an outcome would potentially lead to the de-escalation of antagonisms for the control of the Eastern Mediterranean (oil and gas extraction, pipelines, transportation, geopolitical and military control) and, thus, to the abandonment of the demarcation of exclusive economic zones.

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ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND LEFT STRATEGIES

The contemporary Greek experience in a regional context

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WE ARE LIVING IN AN "unequal dystopia in the making". For decades, the mainstream answers to the climate crisis – namely sustainable development and green capitalism – have not only failed but have led to the deepening of the crisis. They are not solutions, but sophisticated strategies for commodifying nature, shifting costs to the poor and greenwashing a system hell-bent on infinite growth.

This book argues that the ecological crisis is not a technical problem but a political one, rooted in the very structures of capitalism. Moving beyond a critique of the failed status quo, it draws on the hard-won lessons from the front lines of socioecological struggles, particularly in crisis-ridden Greece, to ask the difficult questions: Why have our strategies been defeated? Where can we find the seeds of alternatives rooted in the power of grassroots movements and collective action?

Rejecting both technocratic fixes and reformist illusions, this book makes a compelling case for a radical ecosocialist transformation. It is a call to build, fight and reclaim our future from the logic of capital, towards a necessary vision of a political strategy that rises to the challenge of the emergency we face.