

*the ruling classes
will never willingly
give up their power*

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FIGHT THE FIRE

ECOSOCIALIST MAGAZINE

we have to take it from them

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We will carry on your fight

editorial note

Manuel Terán
"Tortuguita"

Let's be clear, the second decade of this century has come to take us by surprise and, as we go deeper into it, it appears that it will keep on trying to do so every time we let our guard down. When the pandemic finally seemed to recede by the end of 2022 in an economically and collectively depressed world, the drums of war have beaten the planet.

The NATO - Russia conflict has undoubtedly marked the beginning of a new stage in international geopolitics, directly victimizing the Ukrainian people and indirectly the rest of the world economy. However, the king is more naked than usual, the great speeches of decarbonization have been dropped to demonstrate Europe's real addiction to Russian gas and polluting energies. The sustainable discourse of unsustainable countries now has to pay for its endless

delay towards the energy transition.

Despite this, it seems that politics is going the other way, far from ecosystemic changes. The resistance to dialogue and the escalation of U.S. aggressiveness have also sought to fuel the U.S. conflict with China, in this case the scapegoat Taiwan, as well as the trade war for technological supremacy that is externalized in the ban on trade in microprocessors. This seems to define that the war (and its minor conflicts) will be multiple, and in that way the sides will have to start measuring each other.

Despite the usual international alignment with the historical powers, it seems that loyalties and fears could waver in the face of the expansion of the BRICS coalition, led by Russia and China which propose to expand with economic

alliances without the classic political, social and cultural subjugation imposed by the former colonizers. This may obviously make one more than doubt the intentions for this, but countries as different as Argentina, Iran, or Algeria seem to be interested in the new BRICS coalition.

Meanwhile, regions such as Latin America have fighting a new battle all of last year to define what the region's second wave of progressives will mean, giving a distant hope of counting on these governments in the fight against climate change. In 2022, we have reached new peaks of greenhouse gas emissions and an even greater number of millions of barrels of oil burned into the atmosphere. It seems that we have never been so far away from a real collective response to face the greatest crisis in the history of mankind.

This magazine is born in the midst of all this chaotic turmoil of global capitalism, between pessimistic scenarios that call for direct collective action, to raise our voices, to build new economies and to move for solidarity among peoples. With the publication of this issue we are preparing for a 2023 in which the pieces of the geopolitical chessboard will move faster than ever, and it is up to us to be prepared and, from this trench, to continue fighting the battle of ideas.

We cannot end this editorial without

launching a call for solidarity for the hard times that democracy and the Peruvian people are going through, considering the parliamentary coup d'état and the massacres that are taking place in the territory as we go to press. We know that, as Allende prophesied in Chile, also in Peru, much sooner than later, the great avenues will open again where the free man will pass.

Likewise, all our solidarity with the Ukrainian people, the Kurdish, the Iranian, the Palestinian, the indigenous peoples and all those who have suffered more intensely the yoke of this oppressive system and its murderous and polluting elites throughout 2022.

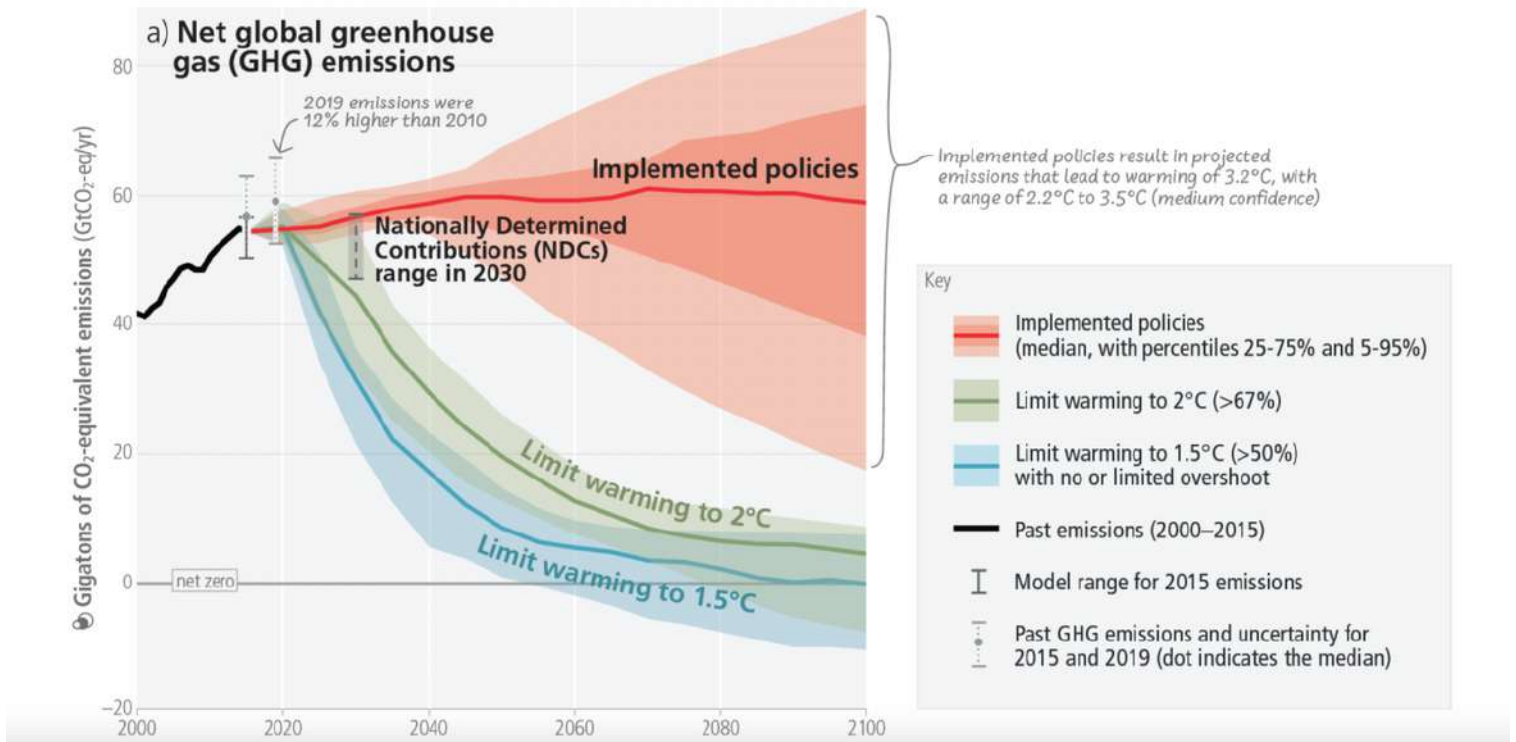
António Zambrano

ADDENDUM

Contrary to our plans, our number four magazine was delayed for a few months. We apologise for the fact and will strive to improve our planning, as well as our commitment and accountability to everyone that reads the magazine. In the meantime, many things of note happened. We would like to pay homage to Manuel Terán, "Tortuguita", a climate and environmental activist who was executed in the US by the police this January with 13 shots, while sitting down with their hands raised. Tortuguita was protesting against the destruction of a forest to build a police training facility, known as "Cop City". Rest in Power.

Limiting warming to 1.5°C and 2°C involves rapid, deep and in most cases immediate greenhouse gas emission reductions

Net zero CO₂ and net zero GHG emissions can be achieved through strong reductions across all sectors



IPCC AR6, March 2022

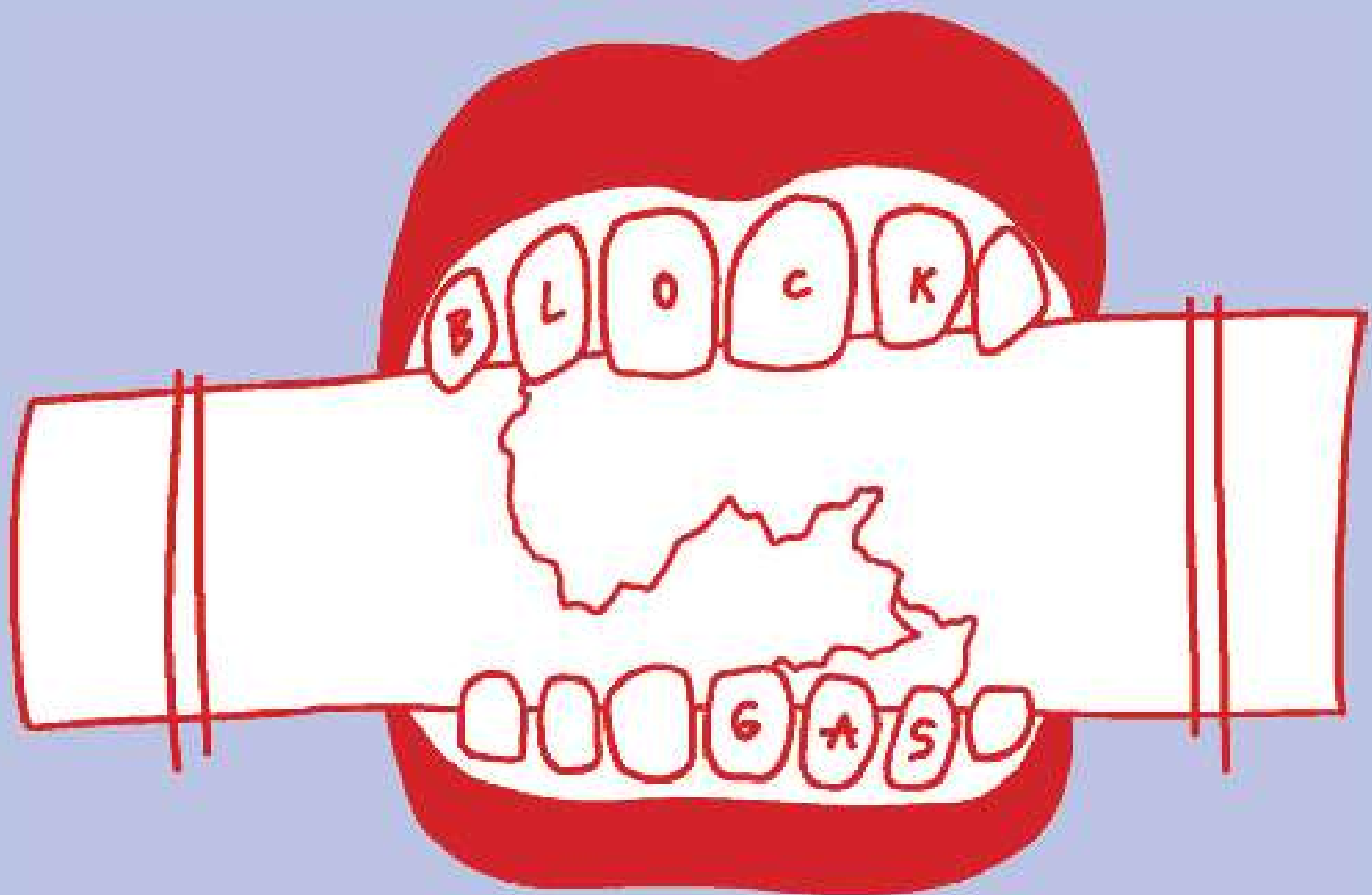
The political plan defended by capitalist elites is

Collapse.

Block European Gas Conference: Let's break the grip of the fossil gas lobby! Power to the people

BY VERENA GRADINGER

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**26-29. MARCH 2023
VIENNA**

From the 27th until the 29th of March, Vienna becomes the centre of attention for the European climate movement. At the European Gas Conference, all important players in the gas industry come together with politicians and investors to “promote dialogue between Europe and its main suppliers”. Behind closed doors, top lobbyists will hold their private meetings in order to advance and settle deals on new fossil infrastructure that will make Europe dependant on gas for decades to come. There, they will discuss projects such as new pipelines all across the continent and beyond, the expansion of LNG terminals and the promotion of hydrogen as a “green” source of energy. Whilst many of these projects face huge criticism and resistance on the ground, at the European Gas Conference companies and investors have been coming together without much attention from media and local critics for years. An alliance has formed across Europe to make sure that this year will be different. We see this conference as a central leverage point in our fight against the expansion of fossil infrastructure.

Focusing our fight on energy infrastructure

Energy is what keeps our economy going and growing. Through the usage of fossil-intensive energy, not only have we entered a new stage of exploitation of nature, but also of humans. Fossil energy has made it possible to increase productivity whilst

at the same time decreasing the need for human labour power. This is the fundamental basis of the capitalist economic system as we know it today.

This makes the energy sector a strategically valuable point from the perspective of climate activists. If we are to solve the climate crisis, we have to ask ourselves three questions:

- Where do we get our energy from?
- Who uses energy and what for?
- Who decides that some get more access to energy than others?

This is where the question of infrastructure becomes pressing. As long as there is no sufficient infrastructure for renewable energy, calls for individual behavioural change will be worth little more than a band-aid trying to fix a broken bone. At the same time, the millions and billions that have been spent in fossil infrastructure prove to be a serious obstacle in our fight against climate change. Once they are in place, they promise to be lucrative for years. If they are to be shut down early, this means huge losses both for the companies operating them and the financial sector betting on profits and dividends. This is why we must resist the construction of new fossil infrastructure with all means necessary.

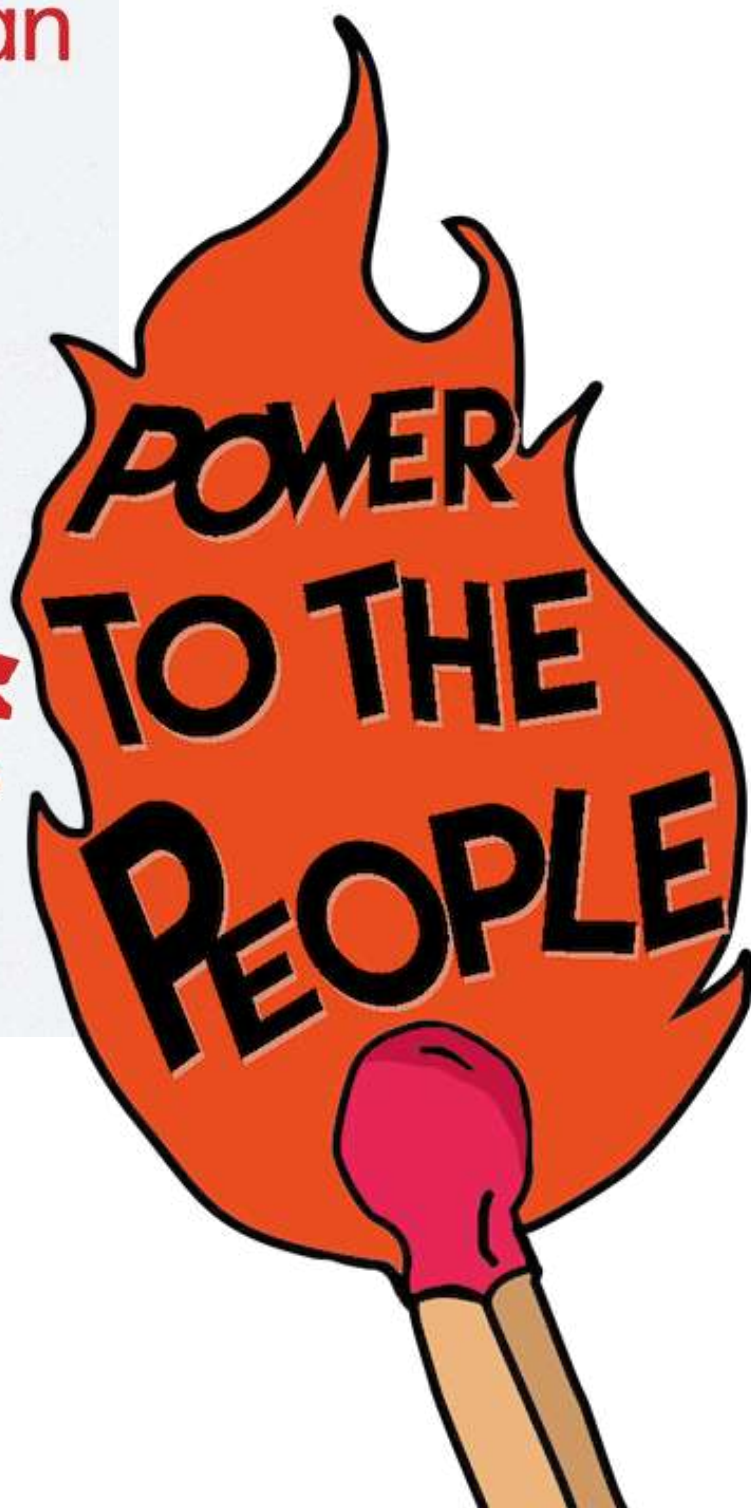
To focus on (energy) infrastructure also means acknowledging that it is in the sphere of production and productive capacities where changes

burn capitalism,
not gas.
block the european
gas conference!

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are most pressing in order to reduce the amount of CO₂ emitted. Calling for "system change" means calling for a fundamental change in the way our energy is produced and then used across industries in the productive sector.

Over the last few years, the climate movement in Europe has focused its fight against fossil infrastructure at on-the-ground action at so-called "places of destruction", where big infrastructure was already in place or in the process of being built. This strategy has had the advantage of showing people the enormous

destruction that fossil companies are causing around the world, by bringing pictures of large coal pits and power plants onto peoples TV and smartphone screens. However, it is also necessary to include in our strategy those projects that have not been built yet.

The Cost-of-living crisis increases the importance of energy for our fight

As has rightfully been pointed out in this magazine before, the current “cost-of-living crisis” is far from unpreventable. Rising energy bills and food are still the main drivers of inflation in the Euro zone. To understand the fundamental role that fossil fuel prices play in this, it is worth noting that the EU uses about 25% of its gas consumption in agriculture and food production. Both food and energy costs are sectors in which price changes disproportionately affect those who already struggle to meet their basic needs, which is why the current inflation hits them the hardest. This is why many people have started to name the current phenomena “fossilflation”, drawing analogies to the oil crisis and implicating that it is our all-encompassing dependency on fossil fuels that makes us particularly vulnerable to sudden price surges and their consequences.

Whilst many struggle to pay their bills this winter, energy companies are making record profits. Shell has just reported that they have doubled their profits to \$40 billion in 2022. BP has made “all-time high” profits of \$27.7 billion. In the light of the current situation, discussions around windfall taxes and price controls have been growing in many countries. However, so far there seems to be no political power willing to implement

these measures on a larger scale. The so-called “Iberian exception”, put into effect in Spain and Portugal seems to be the only policy that at least partly shows possible short-term solutions to the crisis. Still, both countries show little initiative to tackle the underlying problems and put an end to our dependency on fossil energy – especially when it comes to gas. Meanwhile, the price caps on gas discussed by the European Commission amount to little more than a nice publicity stunt. Opponents of measures that would limit energy companies profiting from the war (and wild speculation on the market) argue that the profits currently made should instead be used to ensure a rapid transition towards renewable energies. So far, one keeps on waiting for these investments in vain.

Instead, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the fossil industry has launched a massive campaign to take advantage of the situation. Using the argument of independence from Russian oil and gas, they now call for an even bigger and faster expansion of gas infrastructure such as LNG terminals and pipelines. Europe is facing a massive increase in fossil infrastructure projects, many of which have originally been shelved due to climate concerns before the war. We now see a push from the fossil industry to increase capacities for LNG terminals and build new gas pipelines across the continent and beyond. At the same time, certain players are using the current situation to try and

keep coal and oil in business for longer – or even bring it back in places where power plants and mines have already been shut down.

Inflation is in its core the consequence of a distributional conflict between different fractions of society, leading to a redistribution of wealth. Even some rather conservative economists are starting to acknowledge that this is what is currently the case. For the climate movement, this means that our fight against energy companies is also a question of class conflict, currently being carried out at the back of workers.

This conflict has different consequences in different countries. Whilst in some countries, governments have been spending huge amounts of money to mitigate the impacts of rising energy bills, this has not been the case everywhere. At the same time, the “solutions” to the crisis implemented in some European countries have made the situation in many other parts of the world even worse, for example in Asia, where the buy-up of LNG by countries like Germany has led to a significant shortage in gas available. However, this does not change the fact that all over the world, we can see clear differences within countries on who suffers from the crisis and who doesn't.

LET'S CRASH THE FOSSIL CHAMPAGNE PARTY

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Connecting struggles

We see crises are an integral part of capitalism that will only become more frequent in the future due to the impacts of climate change. Likewise, we see the inability of a profit driven economy to find adequate solutions in the wake of the imminent climate crisis. While this crisis has many faces, our enemy stays the same: it is the global capitalist class that ties us to fossil energy and raises our bills. That continues to exploit us at the workplace and destroys our environment. Therefore, overcoming the capitalist system must be our main goal as a climate movement that fights for and with workers, women and racially discriminated people.

This should however not mean that there is nothing that can be done against the current situation. Crises can also be seen as moments of weakness for those in power and their legitimacy. It is therefore our responsibility to use moments like this to step up and present alternatives. The energy crisis has made the true cost of cheap fossil energy visible for the first time for many Europeans. This offers an opportunity to connect our fights with many people that have not seen climate as an issue so far. It is our responsibility as the climate movement to make clear that the issue of climate change is one that is fundamentally rooted in class struggle. We need to fight together with those who are most affected by the crisis.

This means fighting for affordable and clean energy. This means having discussions on how our energy systems should be organised. It also means having discussions about the amount of energy we can use as a society and who gets to use energy and what for.

The role of the EU in current infrastructure expansion plans

The current situation also raises the question of democracy and accountability. Currently, the energy market at times seems so complex that even experts struggle to explain both it's functionality and (price) dynamics when pressed about it critically. Prices for energy are calculated for and by the companies trading them on the financial market, using secret computer algorithms that aren't monitored by any independent agency whatsoever. Calls for measures against ever-rising prices have in many cases been dismissed by national governments with the claim that "nothing can be done", and if anything could be done, it would be the responsibility of the EU to do it. Whilst there might be some truth in this argument, at least from a legal perspective, the European Commission has a long history of serving pro-business interests and being reluctant on legislation necessary to tackle climate change. There are many structural reasons for that. But there are also very concrete companies spending huge amounts of money and people



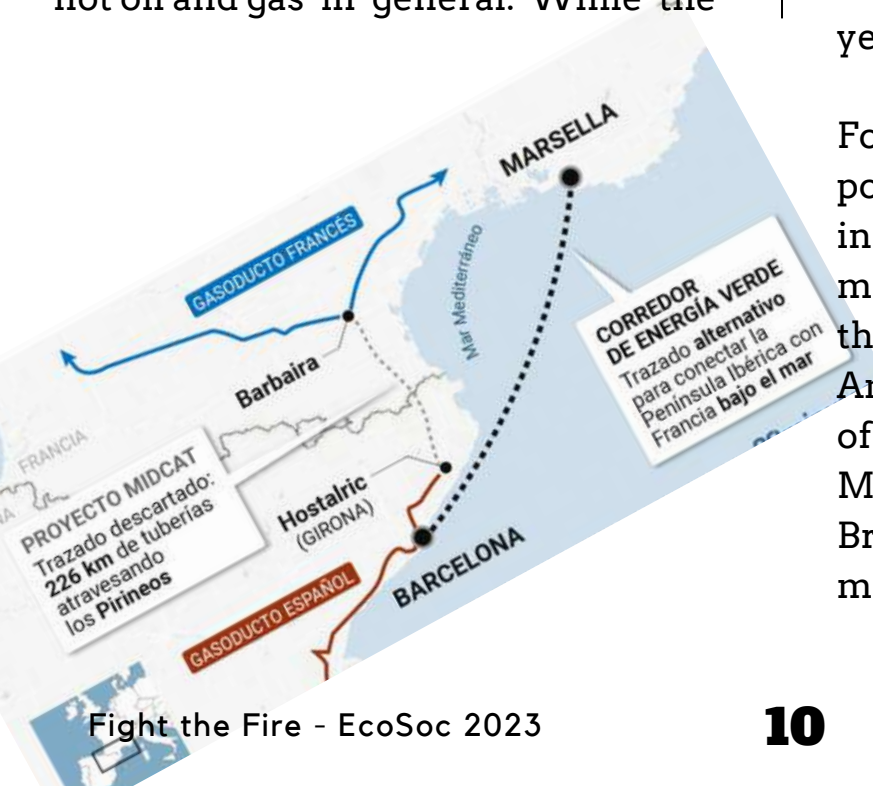
whose job it is to make sure that the interests of the fossil fuel industry are well represented when the Commission makes decision. “Well represented” of course also means much better represented than the interests of ordinary people. One of the most striking examples of this is the Energy Platform’s “Industry Advisory Group”, which is supposed to advise the Commission on their way to reduce the EU’s dependency on Russian gas and even monitor its joint purchasing mechanism, which effectively translates to companies overseeing whether countries are buying the right amount of gas from them. In the past, the gas industry has successfully proposed a strategy that includes both renewables and gas in the European plans for their future energy mix.

Accordingly, the REPowerEU plan by the European Commission has the intention of making Europe less dependent on Russian oil and gas – not oil and gas in general. While the



official target for renewable energy for 2030 has been raised to 45%, the European Commission’s saving proposals are to switch off your lights and heat your houses less. They don’t mention that more than half of Europe’s gas is used in industry. They also don’t mention that expansion plans for gas infrastructure have increased when compared to previous years.

Fossil industries are using the current political insecurities to bring back infrastructure projects that social movements and science had swiped off the table in the last couple of years. Amongst those projects are expansions of the highly contested TAP Pipeline or MidCat Pipeline, the LNG terminals in Brunsbüttel and Wilhelmshaven and many others.



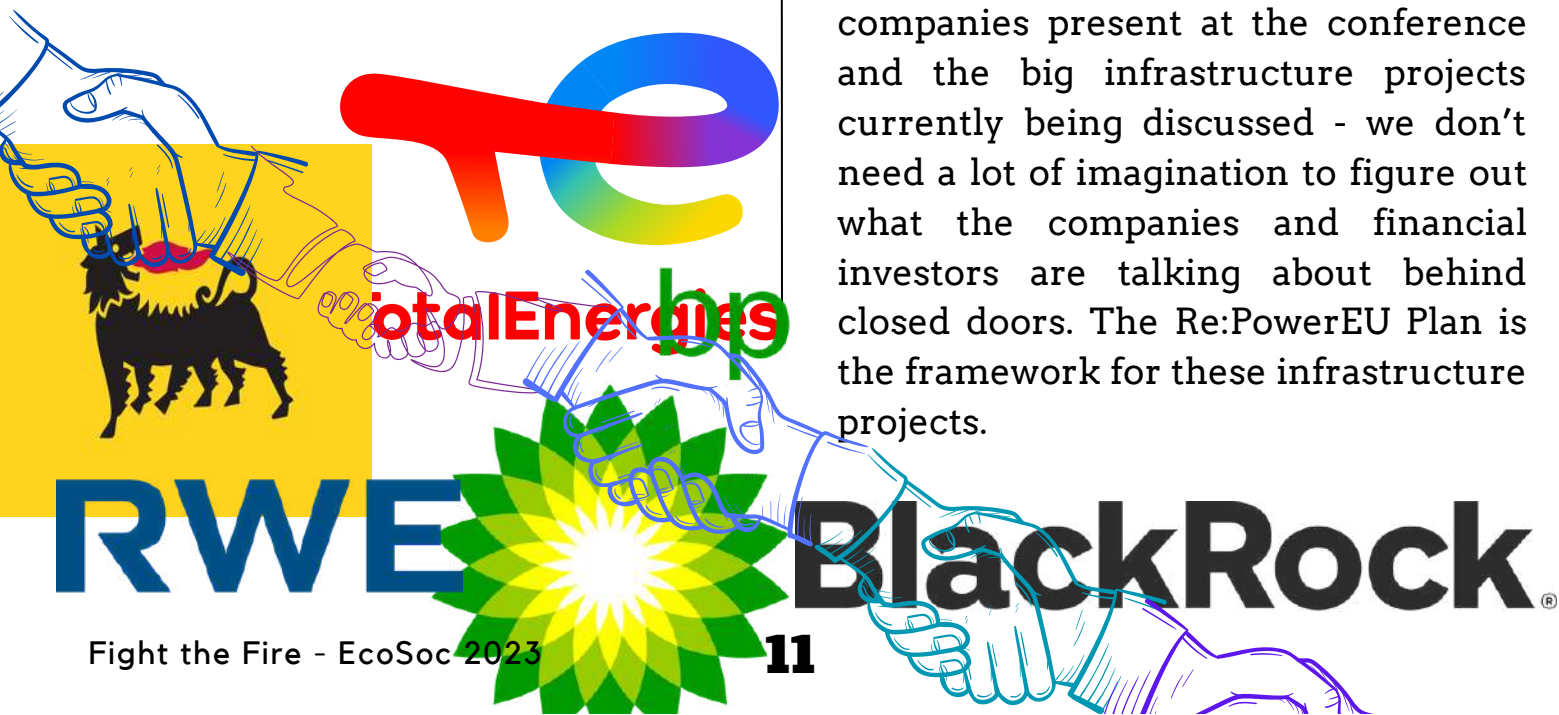
Once this new infrastructure has been built, it will become even harder to accomplish a clean energy transition. At the same time, gas is causing massive destruction in the areas where it is produced. Current plans by the European gas industry in the Global South threaten to extend colonial injustices by exploiting local resources, dispossessing their communities and irreversibly damaging ecosystems.

The European Gas Conference

Decisions to maintain and lock us onto our fossil-fuel driven capitalist system are made behind closed doors at events like the European Gas Conference. This March, the European Meeting of the "Gas Council" – a global network of senior energy lobbyists and financial investors, will take place in Vienna. At the European Gas Conference, gas companies, financial institutions and politicians come together to settle on the future of our energy bills and the planet. There, the CEOs of all the big names from Shell to BP, Total and RWE come to Vienna at the invitation

of Austria's second biggest polluter and climate killer, OMV. In addition, the big European gas companies Enagás, Fluxys and Snam are represented. At the conference they meet with big financial investors such as BlackRock and high-level European politicians. The website even proudly announces more than 100 private meetings for the lobbyists. While there is hardly any public record on the results of last years' conferences, we know so much: at the European Gas Conference 2022 the "end of Russian gas in Europe" was discussed, as was the "rise of LNG". This tells us that behind closed doors the gas companies, investors and politicians settle for diversification of gas instead of reduction, more gas from the global South with all the impacts of extractivism as well as LNG and hydrogen expansion instead of renewable energy.

Where does this lead us? To more fossil dependency, to high energy bills and less capacity to tackle the climate crisis. Further, if we look at the gas companies present at the conference and the big infrastructure projects currently being discussed - we don't need a lot of imagination to figure out what the companies and financial investors are talking about behind closed doors. The Re:PowerEU Plan is the framework for these infrastructure projects.



For Europe, becoming independent from Russian gas also means exploiting more resources from the global South – especially in Asia and Africa. Both by extracting gas and then transporting it via boat or pipelines, social and environmental injustices are being done in addition to the accelerated impacts of the climate crisis in the global South through more Co2 emissions in the global North. It is our responsibility to raise our voices in central Europe where decisions are being made that affect those living in areas where the climate crisis is already causing death and destruction. Projects are being built for the profits of European companies at the cost of marginalised communities and the environment, leaving those areas at even higher risks for natural catastrophes and conflict.

These are all projects that social movements have been and are fighting against on the ground. Now the same companies come together to Vienna to avoid publicity and decide on our future without much attention from media and local critics. We won't let that happen. We must now put an end to this climate destruction, energy injustice, and neo-colonialism.

People from all over Europe and beyond are coming together in Vienna at the end of March during the European Gas Conference to say: Power to the people, down with corporations, overcome capitalism!

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We call on all people fighting for a just and sustainable energy system that is in the hands of all of us to join our struggle - in Vienna and in solidarity with other struggles around the world. We fight for the right to clean and affordable energy – together with all those who have been struggling to heat their homes this winter and all those who are denied basic access to energy globally. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the communities on the front lines suffering from the destructive energy regime that is made and imposed on others to a big extent by European corporations and politicians – many of which will be present at the European Gas Conference!

We will be disobedient and take action to show that there is no business as usual in the face of the multiple crises we face - and that we will not accept false solutions that put profits before people's needs. We will be many, because many are suffering under this system. We will be colourful because this struggle affects everyone. We will be loud because we have no voice where the decisions are made. We will not be stopped by unjust laws and rules that shield injustice.

Let's come together in Vienna and initiate the beginning of the end of this fossil gas madness! Let's show that we can reclaim the power! Let's make this European Gas Conference the last one!





Rise up for Rojava!

BY HERNANDO QUISPE (PSEUDONYM)

The first salient reflex of the privileged is the tendency to distort and put all the “complex” questions into a simple and equitable position with the others, which are more understandable (also known as status quo). My humble opinion is that the first output of this common reflex deriving from the unbearable lightness of not thinking shows itself as degrading the emotions. Therefore, from the very beginning of this little piece of writing, I start with asking you to take this point into consideration because for this topic, all the non-subject persons have possible privileges not to understand.

This article is about a very short piece of a centuries-old history of oppression

and resistance of a “stateless” nation in the middle of one of the geographies that have been destroyed by the rulers of the modern world. It is about a revolutionary nation, namely the Kurds, who have been subjected to all sociological, cultural and materialistic deconstructions, never to be brought together again. Most importantly, it is about a borderless, status seeker nation which was able to realize an ecological, feminist and anti-fascist revolution in Rojava (also known as the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria), one of Kurdistan's four parts. Therefore, this struggle not only represents a party in the Syrian Civil war with an equal position and





demands with the others, but it is also party in a war of existence against all the hegemonic powers deriving from the patriarchy, Turkish and Arabic racism, political Islam and capitalism.

Now

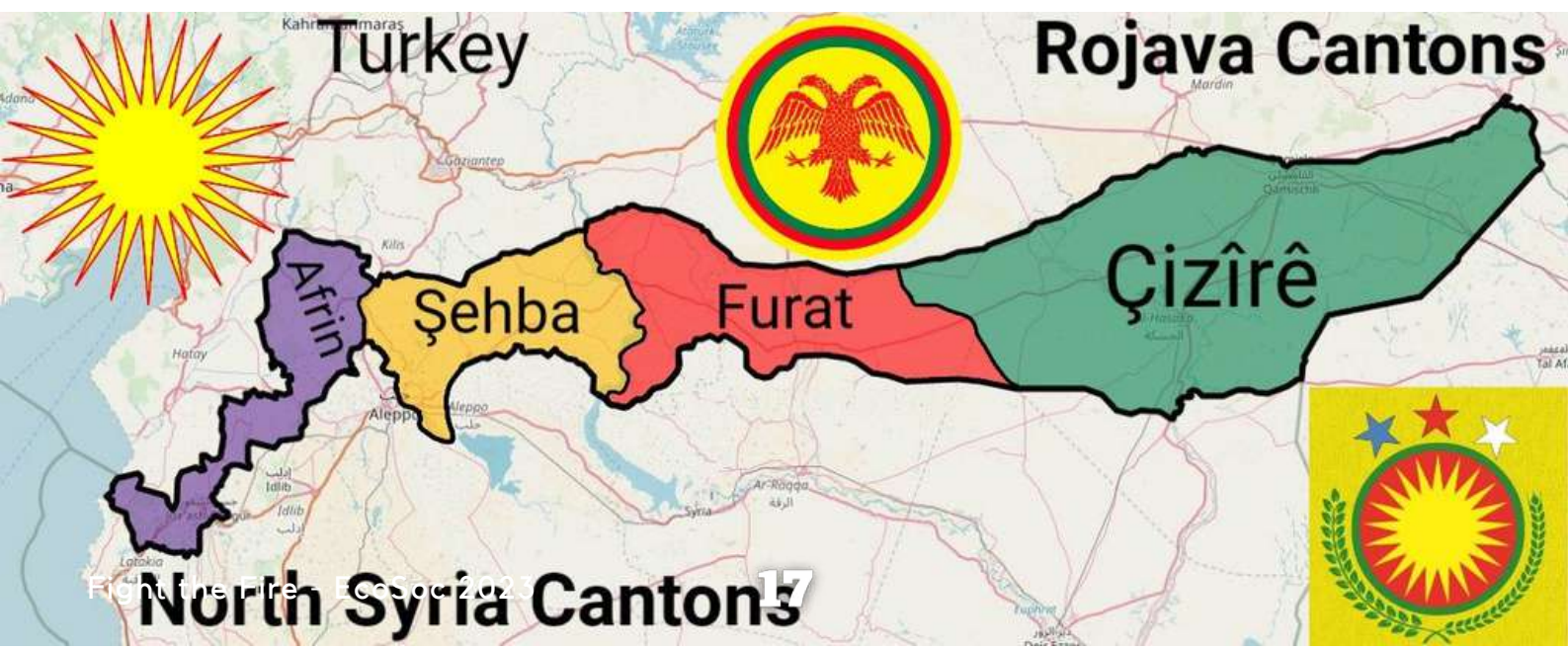
On 13th November 2022, a bomb attack targeted a very central street in Istanbul called İstiklal. Six people were killed and almost ninety were injured. Immediately after the explosion, high ranking officers of the Turkish state blamed the YPG (Kurdish People's Defense Units) and PKK (Kurdistan Worker's Party) and arrested numerous members of these organisations. The defamation campaigns and the arrests are still under a cloud of suspicion. Even the physical appearance of the main suspect of the explosion was very unusual, with various Syrian NGOs declaring that the person didn't look like a Syrian but rather had an African appearance. Later on, during the investigation, connections between the main suspect and one of the officers of MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), which is in a very fascist coalition with AKP, were detected. PKK and YPG denied their involvement in the explosion, but after defamation campaigns on social media and mainstream media, the first Turkish airstrikes over Rojava began.

While the warplanes were dropping bombs over Rojava, many social media

and politicians were pointing out the similarities to previous election times, especially the period between the elections on June 2015 and November 2015, when the peace process was brought to an end by the Turkish state and Erdoğan because they had been electorally defeated by the pro-Kurdish leftist party HDP (People's Democratic Party). These attacks and defamation campaigns are the electoral strategy of the fascist coalition and canvass the Turkish nationalist votes, as is very well known by the leftist opposition, in which there are numerous Kurdish, feminist and socialist groups. In light of this short history, the Turkish warplanes have been bombing strategic points, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians in Rojava since 19 November, six days after the bomb attack in İstanbul.

Certainly this is not the first Turkish attack on Rojava. In January 2018 the first full-scale attack happened, 4 years after the declaration of the Rojava Cantons. The Turkish army

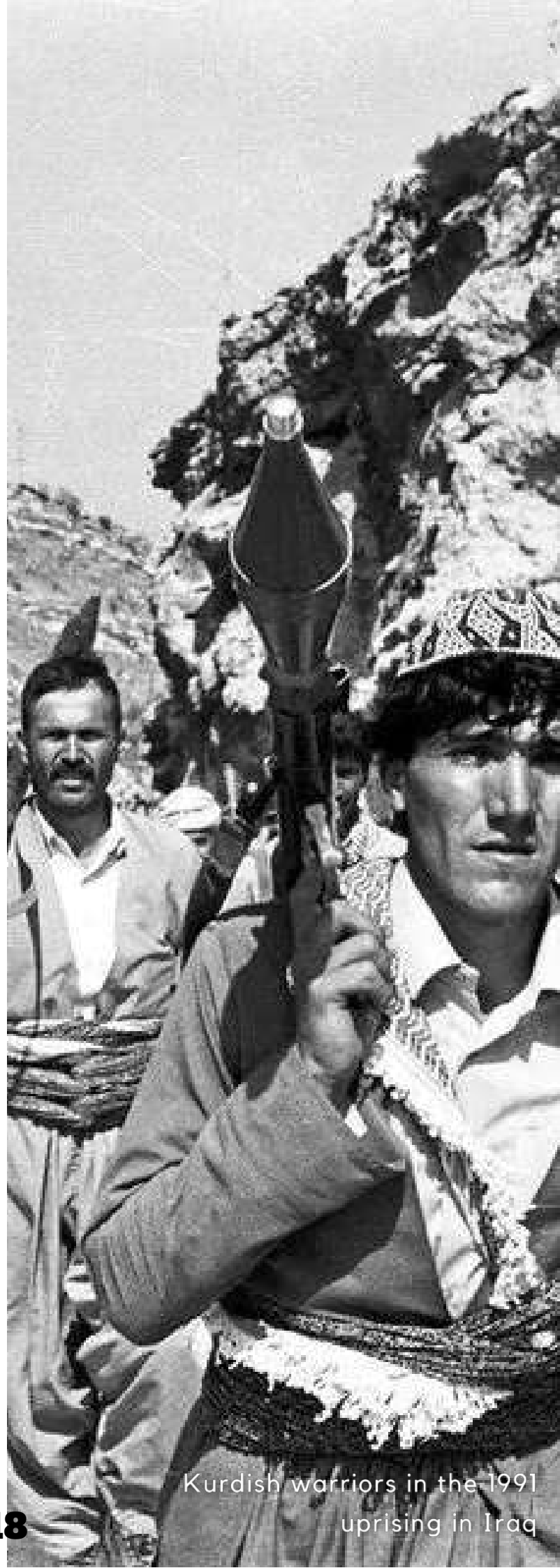
and proxy forces attacked the Afrin Canton and, since then, Afrin, one of the three cantons of Rojava, has been under Turkish occupation. Together with the Turkish forces, some radical Arab opposition groups have been imposing sharia law and committing numerous human rights violations and war crimes, quite similar to the previous ruling of ISIS, which was pulverized by YPG (People's Defense Units) and YPJ (Women's Defense Units), which currently compose the Syrian Democratic Forces. Later on, Turkey organized its second full scale attack on Rojava, in October 2019. After this military operation, more than hundred thousand of civilians were forcibly displaced, hundreds of people were killed and more regions have been occupied by the Turkish regime. Additionally, Rojava is a concern not only for the Turkish regime but also for ISIS, Syrian parties including the Assad regime and the opposition groups, the Barzani administration in Iraqi Kurdistan (which has strong connections with the Turkish state in the ongoing war against PKK) and Iran.



Rojava, Kurdistan and the hegemonic powers around it

There is a historically internalised and institutionalised discrimination imposed on the Kurds by the coalition of Turkish-Arabic and Persian states, which is supported by their own populations. With the establishment of nation-states after World War I, Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq put their assimilation and hatred politics in place against all the minorities. This materialised as “Kurdish-phobia”, since the Kurdish population is one of the biggest minorities in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. There is a tendency to read the Kurdish issue, and in particular the case of Rojava, as a power war of the hegemonic powers. However, this perspective ignores the long standing struggles for existence, such as the Kurdish, and the feminist struggle.

The “Kurdish-phobia” that was imposed by the states is not taken into consideration as one of the bases for the conflict, always being replaced by geostrategic “big pictures”. If we look into the history of the Kurds in Syrian territories, Rojava goes a long way back. The history of the Kurdish population in Rojava is a history of discrimination, segregation and destruction of identity. Following French colonialism and its impacts on the region, the independent Republic of Syria, which was built on



Kurdish warriors in the 1991 uprising in Iraq

pan-Arabist ideology, was declared on April 17th, 1946. As had happened in Turkey after its independence in 1923, the policy of exclusion of minorities was one of the main stays of the Syrian nation-state.

In the 1960's, Arab racism had become completely visible. In 1962, the "census committees", representing the Syrian authorities, stripped thousands of Kurds of their Syrian nationality, through legislative decree No. 93. After the implementation of the decree, tens of thousands of Kurds living in Hasaka, a city in Rojava, were deprived of their nationalities in just one day. Beginning in the 1970's, the "unregistered" Kurds and their land were subjected to another round of Arabization policy. In 1973, large fertile agricultural areas owned by thousands of people were given to Arab families brought in from Aleppo and Raqqa. This continued for decades. Even in 2007, over thirty years later, settlements were still being established (by the same ruling Baath regime) in the Kurdish regions, with many Kurdish families forcibly displaced to other regions, effecting a change to the demography of Rojava and the property of fertile land (to guarantee the "Arabization" of the economy and geography). While all this was been happening, the Kurdish language and culture was "banned", the Kurds were wiped away from Syrian history as well as from the

curriculum books, and deprived of fundamental public services, such as healthcare or education. Unquestionably, this is not only the history of Kurds of Rojava, but of all the Kurds, since when it comes to the Kurds all these nation-states have always had a strong and structured fascist coalition built on gentrification policies on Kurdistan.

The Rojava Revolution

The *status quo* and all privileged identities of the four colonialist nation-states surrounding Kurdistan are explicitly threatened by the success of the Rojava Revolution because it's now globally known that Kurds can succeed in having independent territories and, more importantly from the perspective of democratic confederalism, that there can be a democracy in the Middle East, where all the identities, from racial or religious minorities to women or LGBTIQ+, can live together in an ecological lifestyle with dignity.



MAKE ROJAVA GREEN AGAIN



THE INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNE OF ROJAVA

Rojava, or the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES) is a democratic confederalist autonomous region in northeastern Syria, which was declared as an independent region in January 2014 and later on as an autonomous federal region. As one of its main principles is pluralism, Rojava is a multicultural region where Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Yezidis, Turkmens and Chechens live together. In practice, one of the main institutions of Rojava is the decentralized communes, which are very active in decision-making processes. 70% of the total budget of the Rojava administration goes to

the regional and local institutions. In these communes, there are several committees (such as the committee of economy, women, health, self-defense, education, reconciliation, art and culture or youth) which all residents are entitled to participate in. As it is also mentioned by “democratic confederalism”, patriarchy is one of the main grounds of the state-centralist, capitalist and nationalist modernity. Therefore, an attempt at an inclusive life model for all genders has been tried in Rojava. As a success of the Kurdish movement all over Kurdistan, women’s participation from the war to daily life has been magnified, breaking

the patriarchal order in one of the most conservative geographies of the world. From the very beginning of the revolution, feminists from all over the world, notably the feminist movement in Turkey, have been saluting and recognizing the revolution as theirs.

“This may be the first time in history that women have played such an active role in organizing a revolution. They fight on the fronts, they serve as commanders, and they participate in production. There’s no place in Rojava where women are not to be seen. They’re everywhere and part of everything.” Zübeyde Sarı, “Women of Rojava,” Özgür Gündem, September 8, 2013.

After the revolution, the main aim and ideology of Rojava was the realization of a concept called “democratic confederalism”. Democratic confederalism is a model of living, similar to federational structures, that suggests a multicultural, feminist, ecological and anti-monopolistic framework that believes in people’s right to self-determination and an alternative, anti-capitalistic model of economy. Through a critical approach, we must assume that not all of these objectives were realized in Rojava, since from the beginning of revolution the Rojava cantons have been threatened by numerous states and groups such as ISIS, the Assad regime, Islamic and



pan-Arabic Syrian opposition groups, Turkey, the Barzani administration of Kurdistan, Iran and many others. However, even the realized model of Rojava up till now is significantly hope-inspiring and encouraging for all anti-fascists, anti-capitalists and feminists all over the world.

In the light of this, Rojava is not only a Kurdish revolution but a hope in this modern times, when fascism, racism and hatred have been rising all over the world. While I am writing these words, the Turkish state continues to attack and we don't know what is waiting for Rojava in

the future, but I know that defending Rojava is defending human dignity against all the distortions derived from capitalism, patriarchy and fascism. I can not withhold myself from asking one question: following a century of discrimination and a war that has plundered nature and people for more than fifty years all over Kurdistan, do we have any other option but to defend this victory and rise up for Rojava, that has been raising our hope for a world where all identities can live under an honorable peace?





Lützerath - on the edge of the 1.5 degree target

BY PHILI KAUFMAN

Profit interests and climate targets - the future of future generations lies beneath the small village of Lützerath.

Not even a hundred meters from the edge of the Garzweiler open pit coal mine, climate activists have been occupying Lützerath for 2.5 years. Like so many other villages, it is soon to disappear in the hole of the Garzweiler open pit mine. The village in Nordrhein-Westfalen has been reported on by international media over the last few months because on November 24th 2022, it was announced that Lützerath is to be cleared in a large-scale police operation and excavated.

An estimated 280 million tons of brown coal lie buried beneath the site. According to studies, burning any more than 100 million tons would make it impossible for Germany to fulfil the Paris climate agreement. Therefore, mining coal under Lützi is a bill that doesn't add up. The Garzweiler coal mine is over 300 square meters in size. This means that an area as large as the city of Munich has been dug up completely and made unusable for both humans and nature. And the Garzweiler coal mine is not the only open pit mine in Germany; in fact, there are 10 active opencast brown



Across the globe, these are coal mines currently in use in the country. Officially, Germany aims at exiting coal altogether by 2038. Far too late, according to many climate activists. But with the rising gas prices before and during the Russian war of aggression, eliminating fossil fuels as sources of energy has dropped further and further down on the list of priorities. Decisions to phase out coal are being revised. Again and again, it is claimed that the coal under Lützerath is needed in order to guarantee energy security. A line of argumentation that is simply not true. In 2022, the Technical University of Berlin published a study that clearly showed that the coal under Lützerath is not needed for Germany's energy security.

But, in reality, energy security is not the relevant issue at all: the RWE corporation is behind the clearance. For years, its executives have been pressuring the village's residents to sell their homes, and those who refuse to comply are sued and evicted. It is a battle between David and Goliath. In Lützerath, the local farmer Eckardt Heukamp was the last one to remain stubborn. He tried to sue the state of Nordrhein-Westfalen, which had expropriated his land for RWE's benefit, but had to give up the case in the summer of 2022. A court had rejected his objection, thus allowing the coal company access to Heukamp's land and stables even before the expropriation proceedings were completed. He sold the land to RWE out of necessity.

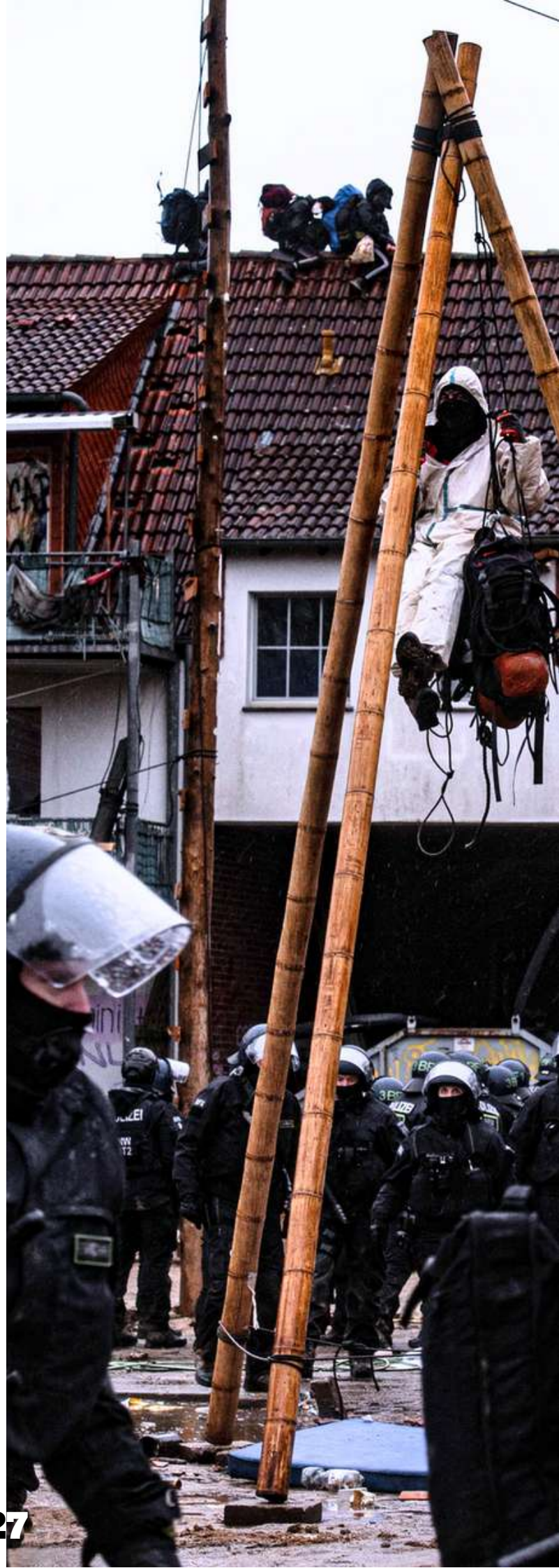




In December 2022 it became clear that the police would make an attempt at clearing Lützerath - and that sooner rather than later. At the beginning of the new year, police forces started official preparations: an extra parking lot for police vehicles and a storage area for equipment and food were established on the edge of the coal mine. Arriving activists were strictly controlled or not allowed to pass at all. Although a public vigil was legally registered to take place on site until January 9th, structures erected by activists were evacuated prematurely.

When the last evening of legally accepted protest in Lützerath arrived, more people than ever before had come to the village. It was a mixture of contrasting feelings. Proud of one's achievements and of how many one has become, frustrated that now everything that had been built here was to come to an end, and angry that, in the eyes of the decision makers, profits are worth more than the future of us all.

Not a day later, on January 10th, the eviction began. Police units were called in from 14 federal states for the operation; around 4,000 police officers were deployed. A fence was erected around the camp, while the first activists were forcibly evicted





with batons and pepper spray. The now unregistered vigil also did not decide to leave by choice. Throughout the day, activists repeatedly reoccupied areas that had already been cleared. Within minutes, a new tripod was in place. As police officers on the ground began pushing people backwards, it swayed dangerously. But the activists were, and still are, not ready to give up.

The police continued the eviction violently, by day and by night. Again and again, people's safety was put at risk and even journalists were denied

access to the events. Trees were cut down not 10 meters from occupied trusses.

On Saturday, 14th of January, four days after the start of the eviction, 35,000 people gathered at the alternative camp "Unser aller Camp" in Keynberg. Through roads and fields, people streamed to Lützerath to protest against the eviction.

The police proceeded with full force and brutality against the protesters. With baton blows targeted at the head, one message was made clearer than

ever: Whoever fights against big corporate profits will have to face state violence.

More than a hundred people were injured during the operation, over ten of them suffered broken bones. These actions have shown what measures are taken in order to enforce the interests of large corporations.

On Monday, 6 days after the start of the eviction, Pinky and Brain, the two activists who had held out in a tunnel beneath Lützerath, were the last people to voluntarily leave the scene. The area had changed completely since they had climbed into the hole: instead of countless colorful tree houses, green meadows and trasses, they were now surrounded by excavators, piles of garbage and excavated soil. They were walking through the dystopia they had

tried to prevent.

For several days after the end of the eviction, climate activists remained in custody. RWE also announced that they would sue for damages to the machines and objects used by the evictors – yet another attempt to intimidate activists and prevent them from taking further action against the open pit mine and the corporation.


But solidarity with all those who have experienced and still are experiencing repression is unbroken, be it through letters to prisons or through donations. The battle against legal penalties is also fought together.

Lützerath is now cleared. The 1.5-degree line, which surrounded the village, has been broken. And, rightly, one asks: What now?



"The important thing is that this eviction does not define our history here. We are so much more than the few headlines about police violence and allegedly thrown Molotov cocktails. And we will be back. Where and when, you will see. But this struggle is not over yet," said one activist when she arrived at "Unser Aller Camp" after the eviction. And she is right. The occupation in Lützerath was a place of resistance and a gathering point for international struggles. Even though Lützerath is now cleared - the struggle continues. Before, during and after the eviction, there were countless actions of solidarity and disruptions all over the world. Even if in the case of Lützerath a large corporation's greed for profit has won once again, the will to fight for a climate-just future remains unbroken.





What social agency can bring system change? Counter-publics generating climate-fix controversies and alternatives

BY LES LEVIDOW

System Change Not Climate Change has become an increasingly prominent slogan. 'The climate and ecological crisis cannot be solved without system change', declared Greta Thunberg at the 2020 UN Climate Action Summit. The slogan has helped to highlight the societal changes that are necessary for an environmentally sustainable, socially just future, while avoiding or minimising climate disaster.

The climate movement faces a lacuna. As Sinan Edén notes, it has taken more drastic actions as

governments and corporations lead us to societal collapse. Yet the movement has been 'strategizing under a framework that structurally blocks a system change perspective'. Thus the movement lacks credibility for means to achieve the necessary change (How to get from here to there, Fight the Fire no.2). More modestly, it lacks the means even to slow down GHG emissions.

This article explores these questions: What impedes a powerful social agency for societal decarbonisation? What can be learned from climate-fix controversies for climate alliances?

Institutions for system continuity

The constraints involve two related assumptions, often implicit.

1. Decarbonisation is economically rational, especially given the falling cost of low-carbon renewable energy; recalcitrant companies (or governments) are irrational and historically regressive, defying the progress of history.
2. Campaigners must demand that governments declare a climate emergency, accept their responsibility, impose climate-friendly policies and thus incentivise or implement decarbonisation.

Let us see how these assumptions both inspire and constrain action.

The climate movement has mobilised many people for increasingly bold action worldwide. In the global North, however, it has remained within a strategic straitjacket of capitalist

institutions and thus system continuity. Here are some examples.

For several years Extinction Rebellion has proposed to 'Go Beyond Politics' through citizens' assemblies, as the main instrument to formulate and achieve decarbonisation measures. According to the XR leadership, citizens' assemblies should use deliberative democracy, devise recommendations and demand their adoption by state authorities; this strategy would 'reclaim power from the bottom up'. Such change could happen 'if the pressure of a citizens' assembly is larger than the pressure of a government's supporters and funders'.

This scenario assumes that the necessary measures would come from citizens' assemblies; yet they have had an organizational dependence on Local Authorities, which have found ways to shield their most high-carbon activities from scrutiny (such as new incinerators, new tunnels, housing estate demolition,



etc.). The scenario also assumes that citizens' assemblies could push state bodies beyond their neoliberal policy frameworks and high-carbon production systems. By default of any political agenda, the slogan beyond politics' means accepting the continuity of high-carbon production systems and state collusion.

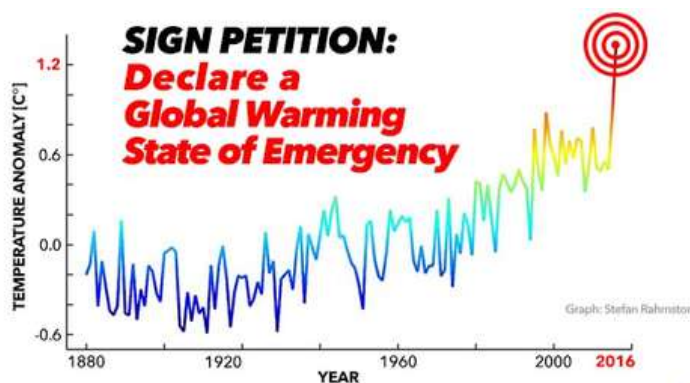
The climate movement also has sought to influence transnational state bodies, which constitute another straitjacket. The UN Climate Convention and the European Union have pretensions to global environmental leadership yet promote false solutions. The annual COPs still promote carbon-trading and future techno-fixes, rather than the necessary shorter-term actions to reduce GHG emissions.

To some extent, Western European economies have been decarbonised by outsourcing high-carbon production to the global South and then importing the products, while also buying carbon offsets. EU decarbonisation policy has relied on market-based incentives for techno-optimistic fixes. For example, proposed pipelines combining hydrogen with natural gas serve to justify its long-term perpetuation.

Several years since the climate movement has sharply grown, fossil fuel usage is still set to rise indefinitely. Indeed, the fangs of the fossil fuel companies are being sunk into the necks of people throughout the global South (NNimmo Bassey in Fight the Fire no.3). This high-carbon expansion is being driven by several forces, especially

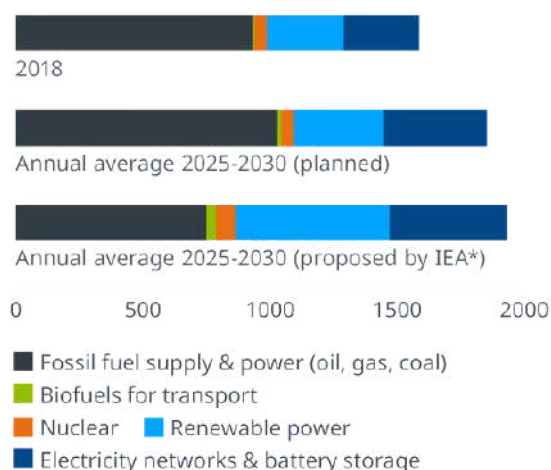
corporate profit-seeking, sunk asset-realisation and state policies that keep fossil fuels profitable. All this is facilitated by various false solutions for decarbonisation, including renewable energy, which has mainly supplemented fossil fuels as total energy usage has risen.

The overall climate movement has no coherent explanation for this trend, much less a strategy for reversing it. Some activists espouse wishful formulas: for example, if enough people sporadically mobilise, then their greater force can achieve the necessary policy and economic changes. Activists exhort people to enact mobilisation strategies lacking significant results or political credibility. When public participation remains weak or merely sporadic, this is misinterpreted as public complacency, whose putative remedy is stronger persuasion about imminent climate disaster and wishful action-formulae.



Global energy supply investment (by sector)

in billion USD





To get beyond the strategic impasse, the Climate Justice movement has been promoting its original meaning of 'System Change Not Climate Change' from nearly two decades ago. The system was understood as socially unjust, profit-driven investment, resource plunder, dispossession and labour exploitation. Together, these threats can generate widespread resistance beyond climate issues alone.

A mass movement can build alternative institutions which could confront and displace capitalist ones, bypassing their proprietary claims over resources. As the 2022 Ecosocialist Encounter declared, 'System change, not climate change' is not a request we make to the current institutions. It is our responsibility to make it happen. To achieve this requires that we be coordinated globally and regionally, that we define strategies and act together, and create spaces where we can build peoples' power and grow the movement.

Indeed, an adequate strategy would need a social agency with the political will, collective capacities and necessary resources to implement strong decarbonisation measures. It would need to link diverse political issues and social forces, much broader than the climate movement per se. As an entry point, let us look at controversies over climate fixes, which should be seen as techno-market fixes.

Techno-market climate fixes: perpetuating harm, while avoiding responsibility

As a general pattern, techno-optimistic promises have justified policy incentives for new markets as necessary means to stimulate future climate fixes. This pervasive linkage can be understood as a techno-market policy framework. It was initially elaborated through carbon credits and trading, especially under the 1997

Kyoto Protocol of the UN Climate Convention, and later under the EU's Emissions Trading System. This policy framework arose from merging two antecedents, ecological modernisation and neoliberal environmentalism.

The techno-market framework has generally promoted fixes most amenable to market-type incentives, while marginalising cooperative social arrangements. Political responsibility for negative outcomes can be conveniently displaced from states to anonymous market forces and/or to technological barriers: thus no one can be held accountable for failure or long delay in decarbonisation. In both ways, this framework favours a specific socio-political order.

Partly in response to popular demands, for example, in 2019 the EC launched the European Green Deal. This has extended familiar subsidies and market-type incentives for decarbonisation technologies, but imposed no requirements to reduce fossil fuels.



The EU has a long history of such techno-optimistic promises for environmental fixes and policy justifications. They have often implied that technoscientific advances will avoid or overcome negative effects of previous technologies. Sooner or later, their advocates have claimed that similar fixes would offer climate solutions. Examples include: 'climate-smart agriculture' claiming to sequester carbon through no-till cultivation methods, thanks to GM (transgenic) crops; 2nd-generation (or advanced) biofuels, claiming to reduce GHG emissions by replacing oil; Advanced Thermal Treatments of municipal solid waste, claiming to reduce GHG emissions from landfill and through bio-based fuel products; and Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS), claiming to decarbonise fossil fuels.

Indeed, some proponents have anticipated or celebrated a general 'climate fix': future technologies would avoid the need for major socio-economic change and so would be more smoothly, feasibly implemented. To reach the target of near-zero carbon emissions, 'I am told by scientists that 50% of the reductions we have to make by 2050 are going to come from technologies we don't yet have', said the US government's climate envoy John Kerry in 2021. His wishful expectation revealed the elite's long-term alibi, namely: awaiting hypothetical fixes and perhaps funding them, meanwhile continuing high-carbon production-consumption systems.

Market-type incentives are more than simply an instrument. Through this policy framework, the state manages or even intensifies market competition,



reinforcing links between the hegemonic neoliberal regime and a high-carbon economic regime.

Techno-market controversy from counter-publics

Fortunately, techno-market fixes have often provoked public controversy. Opponents have framed false solutions in pejorative ways linking several issues. This process has clarified the systemic sources of climate change and their evasion by fixes. As protest raised risk or sustainability issues, state bodies have framed them as direct, potentially avoidable effects of a product or technology (e.g. of GM crops, biofuels, incinerators, etc.) The fix is presumed fixable through appropriate management measures.

This official framing has often channelled dissent into specialist issues, thus obscuring systemic drivers of harm. Regulatory procedures have evaluated potential harm through implicit normative assumptions as regards what potential effects may be relevant, acceptable or worse than some standard. These norms are often disguised as 'science', as if they lay above politics. Counter-publics have identified and questioned such normative criteria, thus extending political controversy to regulatory expertise. Moreover, they have highlighted how political-economic interests and institutional commitments drive the fix. Those critical perspectives often have emerged through knowledge co- production between researchers and activists. This process can strengthen social agency for transformative aims.

Techno-market fix	Techno-optimistic climate promise	Pejorative slogans from counter-publics	Opponents' alternatives
Climate-smart agriculture, eligible for carbon credits	Carbon sequestration from no-till methods with GM herbicide-tolerant	Corporate-smart greenwash'. 'Monetizing Nature.'	Agroecology feeds the people and cools the earth.' Food sovereignty.
2nd-generation (advanced) biofuels from a mandatory market	Lower GHG emissions due to biomass (from 'marginal land') replacing fossil fuels	Agrofuels are no cure for oil addiction'. 'Carbon-emissions time bomb' will come from land-use changes.	Better public transport, mandatory fuel-efficiency, electric vehicles from renewable energy, etc.
Advanced Thermal Treatments (ATT) of waste with competitive subsidy	Waste-to-Energy conversion for high-value products such as vehicle fuel	ATTs are 'incinerators in disguise'. High-carbon linear economy of 'make anew, use-and-dispose', thus wasting resources.	Circular economy through re-usable components, greater recycling and Materials Recovery Facilities rather than incinerators
Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) with state subsidy.	Decarbonisation of fossil fuels, e.g. converting natural gas into hydrogen fuel.	CCS diverts resources and extends dependence on fossil fuels while awaiting an elusive fix.	Energy reductions and substitutes from truly low-carbon renewable energy.

Moreover, such counter-publics have highlighted the anti-democratic basis of technicized decision-making, which depoliticises societal choices. Counter-publics also identify 'undone science'; they demand or generate resources for new knowledge which could serve a broad public benefit rather than private interests. They mobilise resources to fill the knowledge gap, sometimes for alternative solutions through grassroots inclusive innovation. This involves solidaristic commoning, i.e. creating communities that defend commons or devise new ones, as non-capitalist means to appropriate resources. These forms contribute to eco-localisation agendas; they can build more enjoyable lives by creating lower energy forms of livelihoods and localising production-consumption circuits.

SAY NO TO FALSE SOLUTIONS!

A guide to greenwashed terms found in legislation and decision making processes

STOP CO₂ COLONIALISM



Labour movement: divergent roles

Amidst those agendas for system continuity versus system change, trade unions remain divided, at least in the global North. Trade unions in high-carbon sectors, sometimes calling themselves the 'Energy Unions', have generally sided with their industry bosses by embracing techno-optimistic fixes. In particular, they deploy a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) agenda, aiming to decarbonise coal or fossil fuels into hydrogen as supposedly a zero-carbon fuel. In the UK they have supported the 'Hydrogen Strategy Now' campaign, promoting a cross-class national interest in technological progress. It displays the Union Jack (Figure 3), which has been stigmatized by anti-imperialists as the Butcher's Apron.



By contrast, public-sector unions have been relatively more supportive of socially just, transformative decarbonisation agendas around the sufficiency principle. This perspective has been elaborated by a global network, Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED). It has denounced techno-optimistic false solutions for indefinitely perpetuating fossil fuels, while delaying or pre-empting low-carbon alternatives.

Decarbonisation agendas, whether called Green New Deal or Just Transition, have had such divergent versions. The capitalist high-carbon one has generally prevailed within trade-union federations such as the UK's TUC and the US' AFL-CIO, while ITUC has been ambiguous. Disrupting this cross-class alliance will be necessary in order for the labour movement to play a stronger role in socially just decarbonisation agendas and hence system change.

Conclusion

What social agency can bring decarbonisation through system change? The climate movement has proliferated various agendas in search of an effective social agency, which remains elusive. The movement has promoted scenarios whereby mass action will force the system to decarbonise, yet these lack credibility for mobilising broader populations. Meanwhile fossil fuels are clearly set to expand, alongside the rise of renewable energy.

As a broader entry point, this article has surveyed techno-optimistic decarbonisation fixes for various industrial processes and sectors. These serve to perpetuate high-carbon systems, with collusion by policy elites and many trade unions, especially in the global North.



Opponents have contested those fixes, building a broad multi-stakeholder base beyond climate issues alone.

As a pattern across those controversies, mobilisations have combined several elements: counter-publics contesting the fixes, pejorative labels stigmatising them, eco-localisation alternatives, grassroots low-carbon innovation and solidaristic commoning to generate or create the necessary resources.

Together these can go beyond futile demands on current institutions to deliver system change. Within a Climate Justice perspective, such mobilisations help build an effective social agency for the necessary transformation.

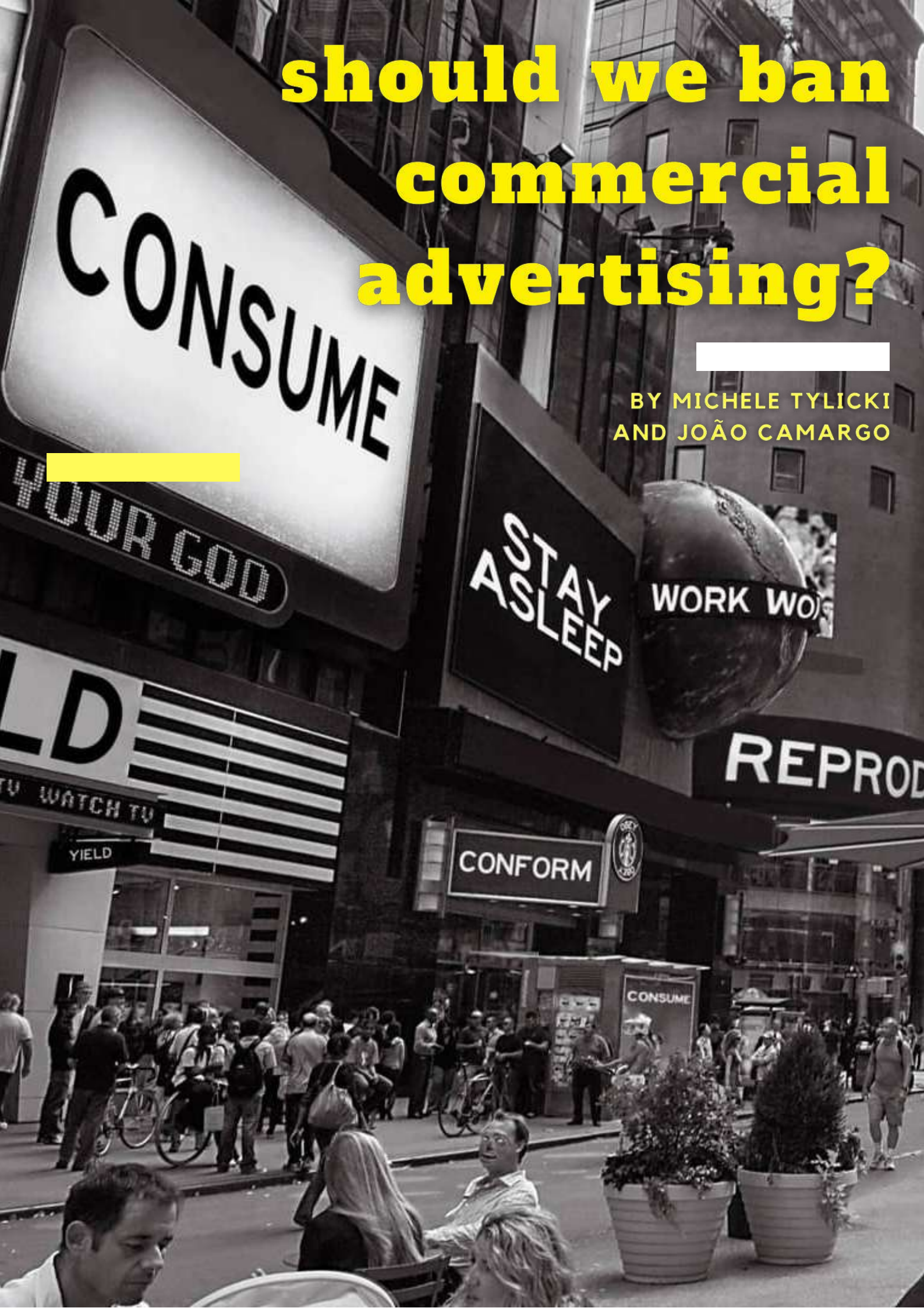


Note: This article draws on Les' forthcoming book: *Beyond Climate Fixes: From Public Controversy to System Change*. It elaborates the big picture above through case studies of techno-market fixes versus alternatives.



should we ban commercial advertising?

BY MICHELE TYLICKI
AND JOÃO CAMARGO



In the previous number of Fight the Fire, Emilie Tricarico's brilliant article **"Beyond the Hype: Advertising's True Colors"** introduced precious insight into the way in which the advertising industry operates, the pervasiveness of its activities and some key action currently being taken to tackle advertising and publicity as problem in itself. Initiatives focusing on tackling advertising of fossil fuels in the climate crisis in particular were exploited and an important angle of attack in this historical moment. In this article we aim to take a step back and make a very blunt question - should we ban commercial advertising altogether?

There have been partial experiments achieved my mobilisation and action, that are examples on how and why this could work. In 2006, the city of São Paulo, in Brazil, approved "Lei Cidade Limpa", which ordered the downsizing or removal of all billboards and most forms of commercial advertising in the city, taking down 15.000 billboards and banning advertisements on buses and taxis as well. It was a very popular initiative that some considered opened their eyes to a whole new city. In 2009, Chennai, in India, banned hoardings, billboards, digital banners and placards in public spaces. In 2015, Grenoble, France, becoming the first European city to ban commercial street advertising, removing all billboards and public advertising, replacing 326 advertising signs with

community noticeboard and trees. In the US, states such as Vermont, Main, Hawaii and Alaska are billboard-free.

We believe that application of ever broader bans on commercial advertising are not only useful but essential in a time of climate crisis. The reasons are many.

São Paulo before



São Paulo after





Practical effects - consumption and imagination

We have learned that advertising is responsible for a yearly increase of 7% of household consumption in the US. We have also learned that for a 30-year period, in France, advertising was responsible for a 5,3% additional consumption per person. In the UK, in 2019, it was estimated that advertising added an extra 28% to the annual carbon footprint of very resident. This is something we know from studies conducted in the field. We do know other things, much more empirically: that very little of the information of what we actually need to buy comes from advertising. Advertising essentially exists for two purposes:

- 1.To convince us to buy things, objects and services that we had not thought of as necessary in our lives;
- 2.To produce in our minds an imagery and an ideal of what happiness, beauty, life and success mean.

If the first purpose is mostly commercial, the second one is effectively cultural. When we hear the permanent claims of cultural wars, never ever is commercial publicity named as a weapon in such a conflict.

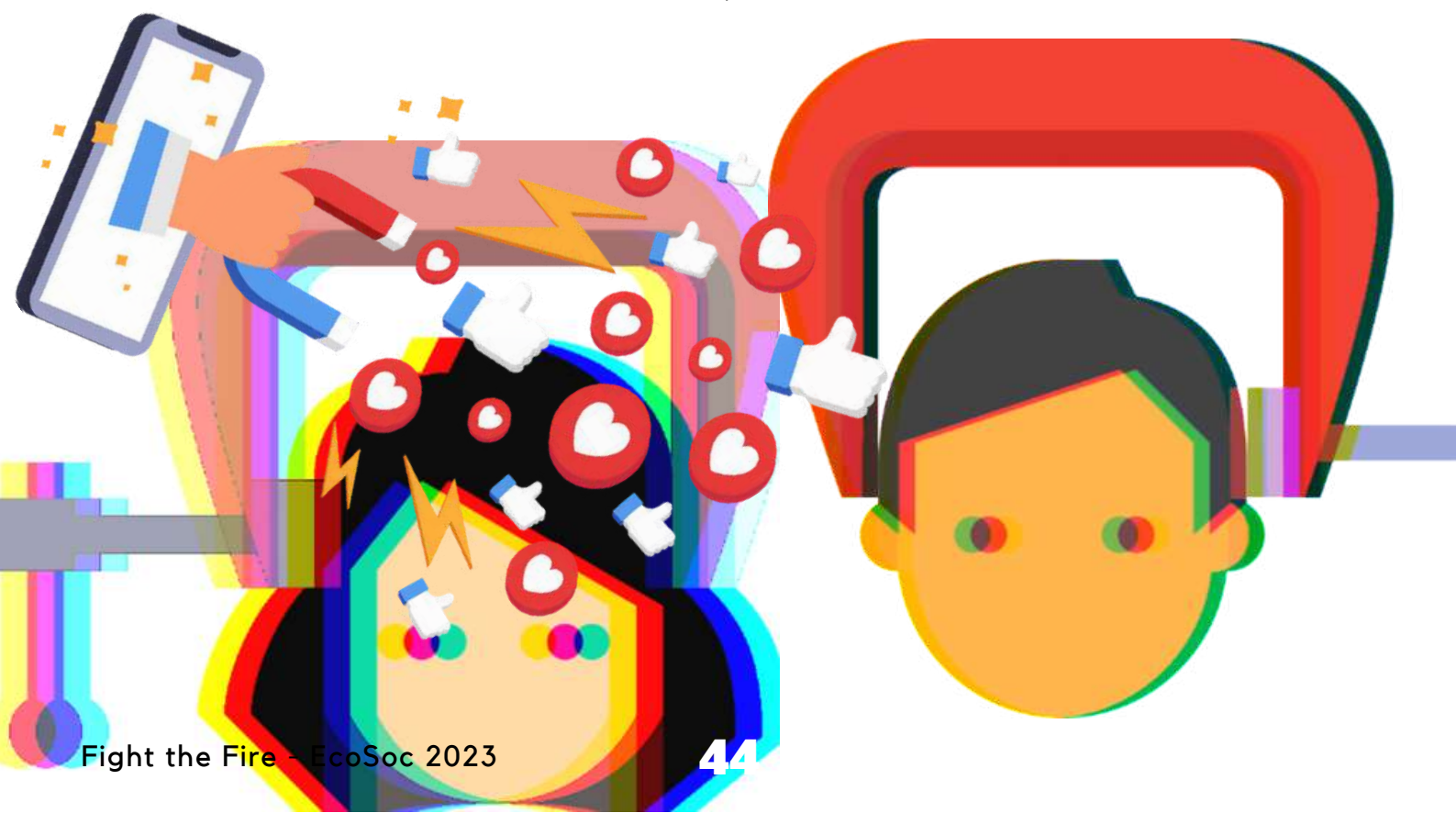
Advertising as the ultimate weapon of mass alienation

The power of advertising as a weapon can not be undervalued: an average person is exposed to 10.000 to 20.000 ads every day. Even the most conscious and aware person is able to defend oneself from the sheer volume of the attack. We are talking, in the lower end, of being exposed to 10 ads every minute, considering we shut down for the night. We may avert our eyes and cover our ears, but our brain will have read or heard most of them anyway, unfiltered by our will and conscience. We will have been bombarded. We will feel uncomfortable, inadequate, incomplete, because of this. We may even refuse to act on these feelings and on the urge to buy (often due to financial incapacity) but there will be an emotional and

physical price to pay. We are unequipped for and often unaware of the attack we are suffering daily.

Currently, there is very little possibility of opting-out of the permanent bombardment of publicity except if we opt-out of living in society nowadays. In 2019, the amount of money spent in advertising was about the same as the GDP of Australia: 1.371 trillion dollars. This amount is divided in leaflets and billboards for direct marketing, television broadcasts, promotion in commercial centres, internet, newspapers, radios, magazines, influencers, entertainment, among others.

With Covid, there was a massive shift towards digital advertising and marketing. They simply couldn't let us be and followed people when we migrated en masse to the internet as so many people were locked down. As soon as lockdowns ended, advertising



came back in full force, urging us to spend as much as we could, and suffer when we couldn't or wouldn't buy what they had planted in our heads.

The frequency and intensity of advertising and publicity is a key feature in leaving us unbalanced, unfocused and permanently uncomfortable. By filling our brains with pre-made imagery of what desire is, it effectively curtails and blocks our desires, substituting them with commercial capitalistic ones.

Here, we arrive at a key issue regarding advertising and publicity: It is a permanent tool of fabrication of desires and needs which are alien to ourselves. As such, it is a key tool of mass alienation, articulated with the cultural hegemony of capitalism. The permanent bombardment with advertising we suffer every minute in current modern society curtails our ability to imagine other worlds and makes us confound what we actually need with what we have been made to desire by violent and often unwanted exposure to publicity and advertising. It is not a small detail in the capitalist hegemonic apparatus: it is one of the key features of it.

With our current levels of exposure to commercial advertising, the debate about what are essential things and what are useless things, which is in itself a problematic debate, becomes completely muddy. There is a purposeful perversion of what liberty

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and freedom mean as they become anchored in advertising. While the industry claims that advertising and publicity are a means of information to keep the public aware of what is out there, it is in fact the presentation of the 'fait accompli' of capitalists determining what the people want.

Rationality in production and distribution, so necessary in any political and economic alternative in the moment we are living in, can not be achieved if our freedom to know what we actually need is overwhelmingly curtailed by advertising and publicity.

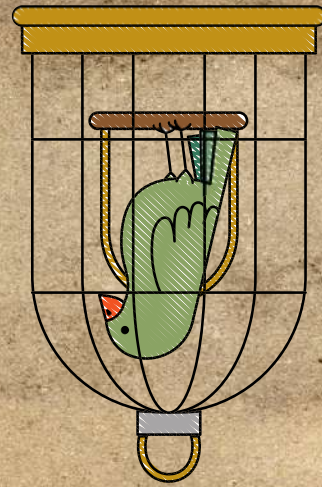
The debate over what we need vs what are superfluous desires is almost impossible in the presence of an industry whose sole purpose is the creation of mass consumption of whatever it is paid to sell.

Social license

It is brilliantly argued and quite clear that publicity has an overarching objective of granting social license for companies to operate. How can Shell or BP be planet killers if they have billboards all over the place? How can it be that Nestlé is destroying rainforest for palm oil if they have doves and children with chocolate milk in The New York Time's website? How can Coca-Cola be evicting communities in Latin America and Africa for decades to get their water

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and then be sponsoring football teams that proudly wear its brand in their shirts in the Champion's League? The massive amount of money they spend in advertising exists for them to be able to continue operating their crimes without punishment.

Even if a company is exposed for its crimes or malfeasance on a brilliant documentary, it will be seen by what? A couple of million people? What if it makes the news? Will it be seen by dozens of millions? Will they be taken to court over it? Where? Will any fine be even one tenth of their annual budget for advertising? How many people will have seen the exposé compared to billions who will have, willing or unwillingly, seen or heard their ads? That is how social license is acquired. There is obviously no democratic process involved, quite

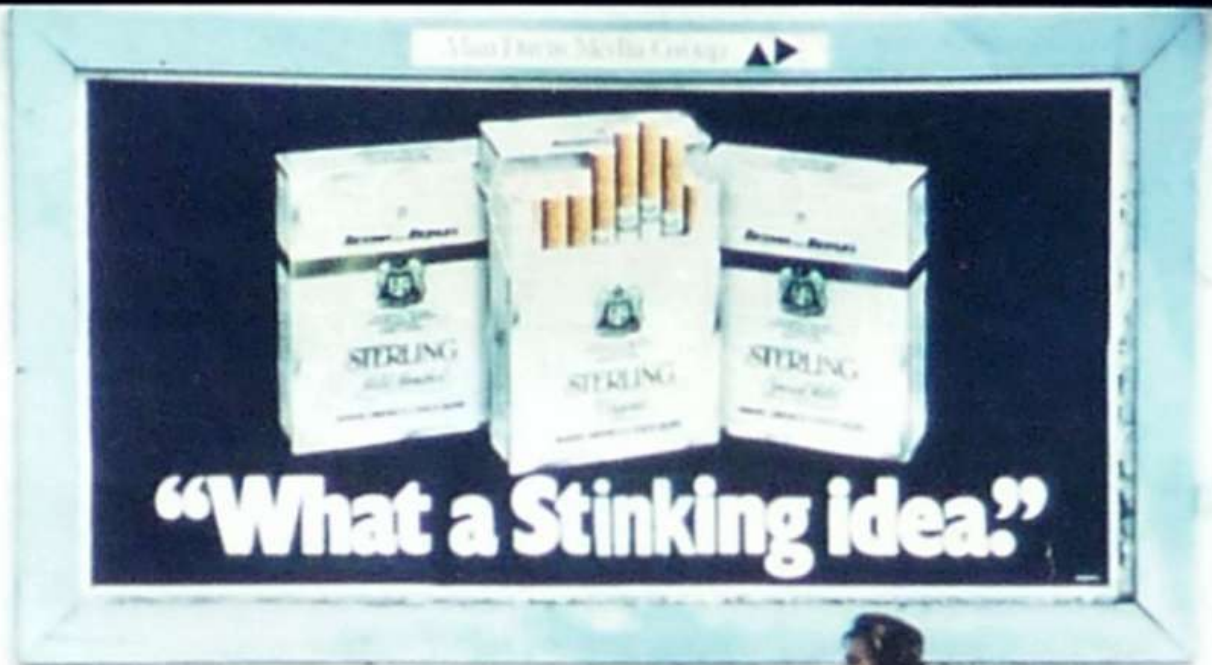
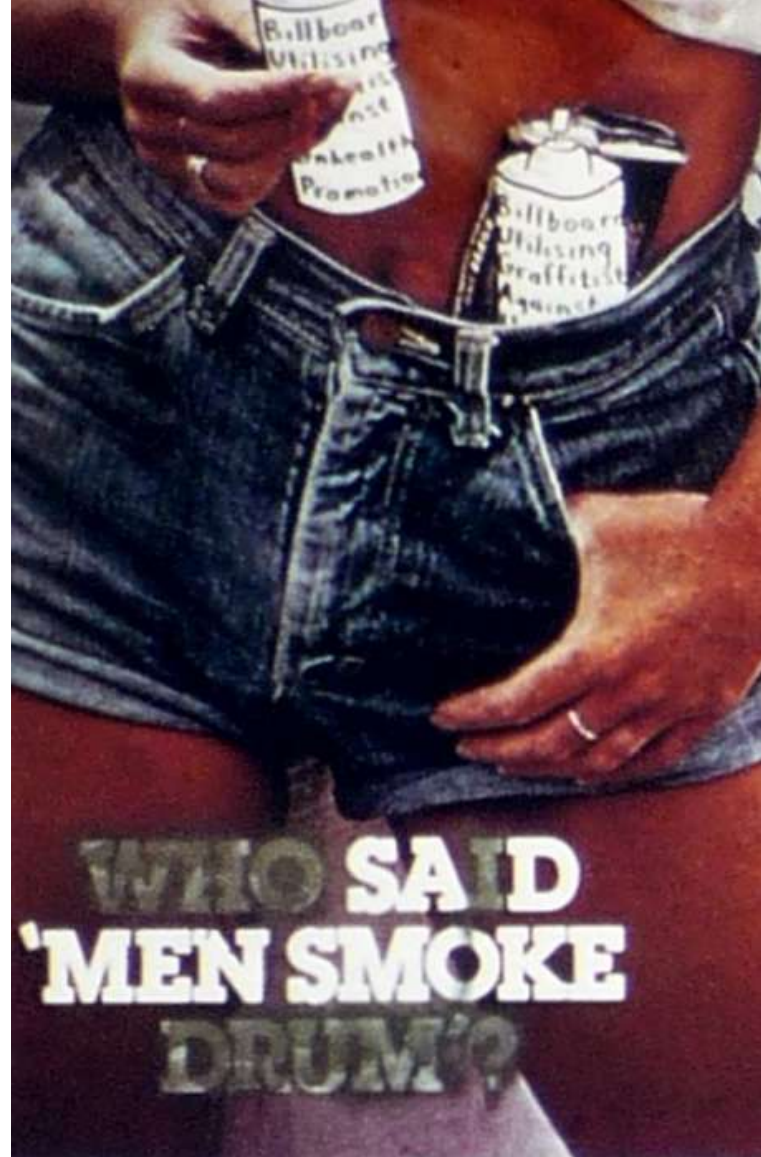
the opposite. These companies acquire the right to destroy and do what they want through, among others, massive advertising.

This is where many campaigns and movements have successfully operated. The aggressive campaigns against tobacco advertising set up by B.U.G.A. U.P., that started in Australia in 1979 were brilliant to that effect. Using the acronym for Billboard Utilising Graffitists Against Unhealthy Promotions, a crew of graffiti artists teamed up with doctors and aimed at cigarette and alcohol advertising, often blanking out letters and adding others to promote their view that the products were unhealthy. The BUGA-UP campaign "radicalised the advertising debate and made it suddenly more respectable for previously conservative medical associations and colleges to rattle the legislative cage", considered



the Cancer Council of Western Australia. Former Daily News reporter Joanne Fowler states that prior to the BUGA-UP campaigns of the 1980s journalists were unwilling to publish articles critical of the tobacco industry because they were seen to be mundane. Almost all forms of tobacco advertising were made illegal in Australia in 1992. Social license was revoked.

The proposal of removing social license from fossil companies by banning fossil ads and high emission's sectors ads is very good in terms of attacking the legitimacy of their business. Over 350 thousand people signed a European Citizen's Initiative to ban fossil fuels and sponsorships in



Europe and although it hasn't arrived at the necessary 1 million signatures to get it discussed in the European Parliament, it created a new debate and pushed some new realities into existence.

France has become the first European country to ban adverts for fossil fuels under a new climate law. Announced in August 2022, the legislation prohibits advertising for all energy products related to fossil fuels such as petrol products, energy from the combustion of coal and mining and hydrogen-containing carbons. In the controversial French national Climate and Resilience Bill there will be bans or limits on advertising for fossil fuel products, or anything that suggests "greenwashing": the practice of ascribing misleading eco-friendly virtues to fossil fuel products, or suggesting wrongly that a fossil fuel product is carbon neutral or has no negative climate effects.

This initiative opened up a new moment of change concerning fossil fuel advertisements:

- In December 2020, the City of Amsterdam banned fossil fuel advertisements.

- ClientEarth challenged a renewable energy advertising campaign by BP on the basis that it misled people into thinking BP were a renewable energy company, when at the time 96% of the company's expenditure was on oil and gas. This led to BP having to take their 'Advancing Possibilities' ad taken down in 2020.

- Local governments in Amsterdam, Haarlem, Utrecht, Liverpool, Norwich and North Somerset have already passed motions to restrict adverts for airlines, airports, as well as non-electric cars and fossil fuel companies.

- The Sydney council recently banned advertising for coal, oil and gas projects.

- Clean Creatives has gone against the "Ad Net Zero" trade group, a massive greenwashing initiative which describes itself as "advertising's response to the climate crisis".

- Subvertising has been adopted as a tactic in many countries all around Europe.

These are unequivocally good news.



Yet, when we look to advertising and publicity as a whole, maybe we should ask ourselves some questions. Isn't advertising in general providing the social license for the entire capitalist system, unrelentingly promoting the need for eternal growth, eternal consumption and substituting the value of being something by the value of owning as much as you can? Shouldn't we be questioning the social license of the advertising industry itself, as its only purpose is, in 2023, to force us into wanting things we don't need and that we can't afford?

Advertising as the opposite of freedom of choice and information

When attacked, the advertising industry will always hide behind the

fallacious argument that the protection of commercial advertising activity is fundamentally a matter of freedom of expression. It is the opposite. Advertising exists to prevent us as a society from making the choices we need to stop climate chaos.

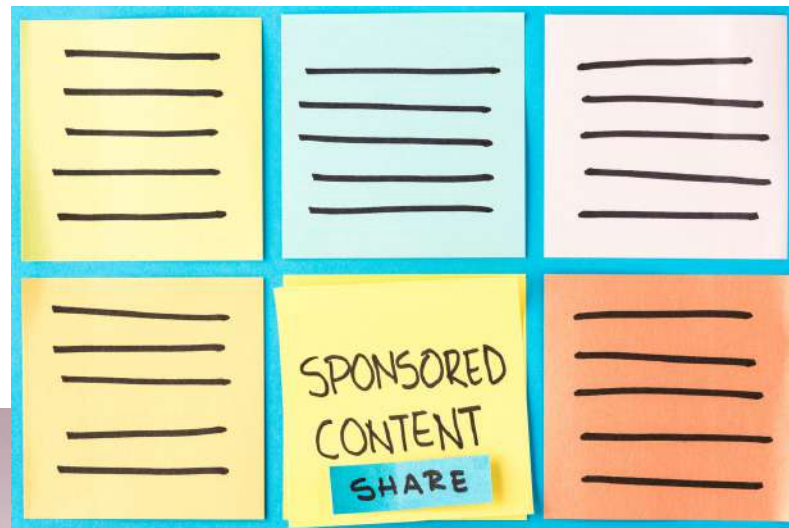
Advertisers advocate that the messages they pass on only reflect current cultural values, and in that they are reasonable: publicity and advertising exist to maintain the status quo, no matter how imaginative and colourful they are.

As with so many other regulatory committees and commissions, the advertising industry's regulatory bodies are the industry itself: foxes guarding henhouses.



Finally, the influence of advertising on the media and journalism is a constant constraint on the liberty and freedom of information. If in the 19th century someone said that news is what you publish in the back of advertising, in current days the difference between news and content is almost non-existent. The absolute decline in confidence on the press and media as of late is equally shared between the ascent of social media and the escape of advertising money from traditional media to social media. Journalism's dependence on the falling revenues of advertising are a guarantee that the quality of the information we receive is growingly worse.

Currently, the business model of journalism and information is in itself another commodity. With fewer sources of advertising revenues, information will bow ever lower to any sponsorship. The decommodification of journalism, opening the possibility of trustworthy and mostly credible information, can only be achieved by the removal of advertising from the media.



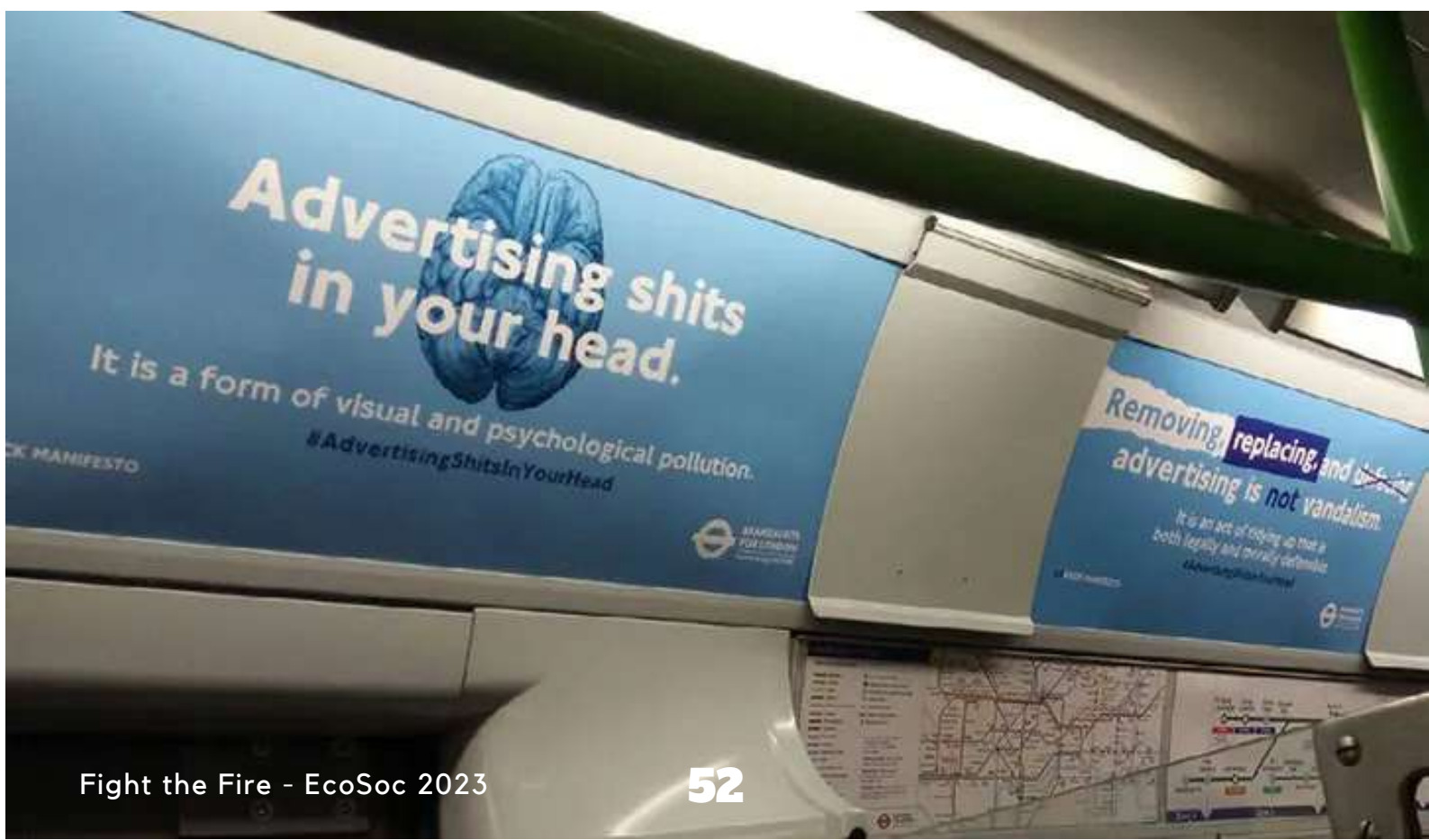
Advertising Shits in your Head': while advertising rules, collapse and blindfolded views will rule

So, why does advertising exist at all? Much more than to sell more stuff, It exists as a crucial mainstay of the fossil fuel industry. It exists as a mainstay of the entire capitalist system.

It is directly and indirectly responsible for an excess consumption that grows each year in all societies. In this regard, the abolishment of commercial advertising should be one of the key demands of the degrowth movement, as it will be providing a very objective political sense into what should immediately degrow: useless consumption fuelled by alienation. Advertising prevents us from choosing what we want. It sells us

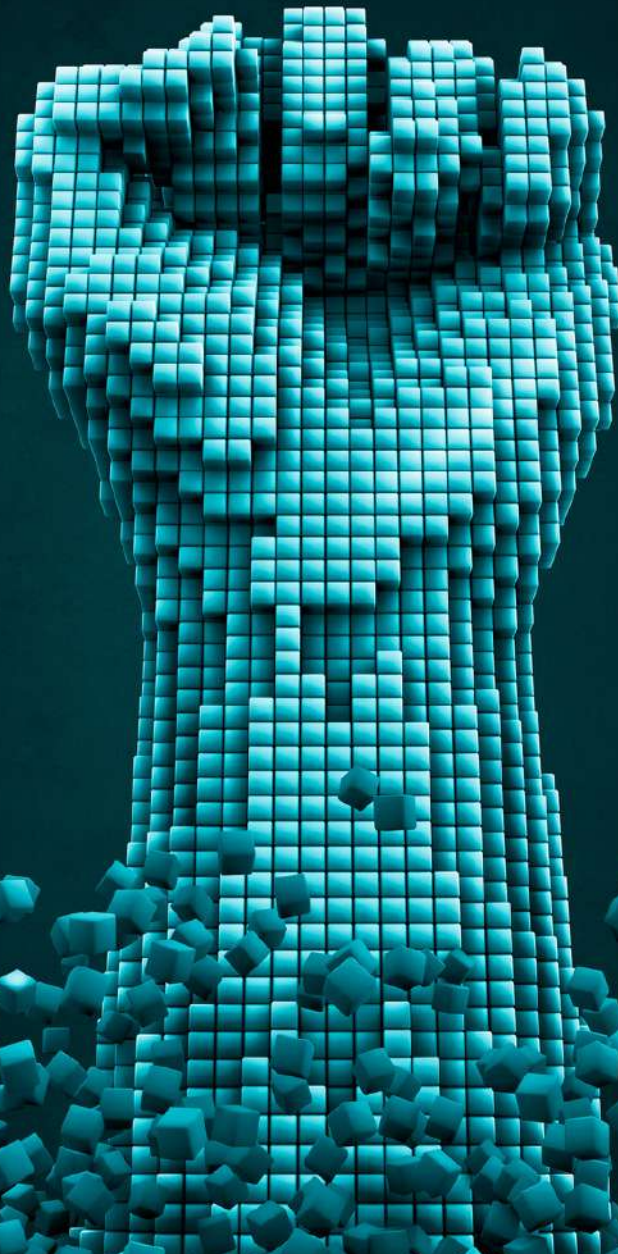
what is already made, *status quo* and aspirations which are alien to us. It is a concentrated form of pollution that affects our ability to think, to decide, to judge on our own, it affects the very anatomy of our brain. As Vyvian Raoul and Matt Bonner unequivocally illustrate in their book title, 'Advertising Shits in your Head'.

As it is a powerful and dangerous tool meant to keep the social structures and strata as they are and to propagate the values of the capitalist elites unto us, we must advance against it. Commercial publicity and advertising can have no role in a world where we stop climate chaos. It will be permanently used to defend the system it serves. Commercial advertising's existence is a insidious threat to Humanity and the climate and needs to be banned.



WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Fight the Fire, Ecosocialist Magazine is a militant project led by the work and good will of activists, militants and academics. There are costs, though. Servers, social networks and graphic design, among others, are costs we need to cover at all times to keep the magazine going.



We thank everyone that has contributed so far to our effort. We have received precious financial contributions that have improved our situation and guarantee the short term continuation of Fight the Fire.

We call on your solidarity, as readers, to make a contribution according to your possibilities on our [**Open Collective Page.**](#)

Issue number 5 will be out in May!

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