The Routledge Handbook on Ecosocialism

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Preface

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Ecosocial rationales for ecosocialism

Current struggles for egalitarian and ecologically just futures have emerged as responses to the long history of social and environmental miseries wrought in the global expansion and intensification of capitalist relations (Isla 2019; Kovel 2002; Sarkar 1999; Turner and Brownhill 2006; Wall 2010). Ecosocialism has arisen from and informs many of these struggles. It represents resistance and alternatives to the concentration and centralization in the hands of the few of the wealth produced now by most of humanity (Marx 1867 [1992], 776). Among the many sustained dire repercussions of capitalism are chronic hunger and malnutrition for more than a billion people, bloated militaries and ever-deadlier wars, mass human warehousing (incarceration, refugee camps), a third of the world population having little to no access to safe potable water (in both the global South and North), forced migrations, and the denial of shelter to millions, while vast riches and political privileges accrue to a small fraction of humanity.

Intimately tied to and undergirding this social disaster are the continuing ravages that capital is imposing on the rest of nature. Capitalism has meant the constant growth of greenhouse gas output. This has promoted more frequent and deadly extreme weather (Herring et al. 2020) and the expansion of the melting of glaciers and ice sheets, with steadily rising sea levels and the submergence of coastlines and islands. Although all aspects of the ecological crisis are linked, climate change is a political issue of primary importance because it is leading, at an inexorable pace, to a situation in which not only will most towns of human civilization disappear under water, but also the basic conditions of human life itself may be threatened. But this capitalism-caused planetary disaster is hardly the only one. The more widely acknowledged climate chaos has been historically preceded by and concurrent with the precipitous decline of many species’ populations and a geologically unprecedented rate of extinctions (Ceballos, Ehrlich, and Dirzo 2017; Sánchez-Bayo and Wyckhuys 2019; WWF 2020). Just as importantly, capitalism is a mode of creating prodigious amounts of waste and of producing an increasingly more contaminated environment with mounting volumes of plastics, persistent toxic substances (PCBs, lead, radioactive waste, etc.), oil spills, and much else. Capitalism is the destruction of millions of lives to benefit the endless profit thirst and the debauched profligate lifestyle of the ruling capitalist classes.
We live in a capitalist world economy that some have named “fossil capitalism” because it is dependent on natural gas, oil, and coal. But endless capital accumulation, which is inherent to capitalism, means the endless extraction of resources generally. No path is available or conceivable within capitalism that would allow for the development of ecologically unsustainable modes of living. A transition away from fossil fuels (Malm 2016) will result in displacing harms onto people and ecosystems elsewhere from the communities benefiting from that energy system transition. To prevent further ecological destruction and have a chance to reduce the now decades-long climate chaos, capitalism has to go. Much of the historical and ongoing damage from capitalism, like species extinctions, world deforestation, lead contamination, and radioactive waste, is either entirely irreversible or irreversible relative to multiple human lifespans. The issue is then to prevent further social and ecological devastation. Leftists set themselves up for failure if they think that just transforming a social system solves the vast ecological destruction that has accumulated and intensified thanks to capitalism. Capitalism will only worsen and widen its destructive effects and create even more, novel forms of ecological damage, including via “renewable” energy systems.

To be ecologically sustainable means to free ourselves altogether from capitalist relations, which are exploitative by definition. This is why system change towards ecosocialism is essential. In contrast to capitalist systems, cooperation, mutualism, solidarity, and life support are among the main founding principles of ecosocialism. Lasting or irreversible ecological damage, especially at the planetary scale, can only be addressed through the cooperation of all communities dedicated to finding reciprocally beneficial solutions. This is a most practical matter. Communities assaulted and scarred by the social inequalities and multiple forms of oppression that inhere capitalism cannot tackle problems requiring close, mutually respectful collaboration and egalitarian decision-making processes. In this light, as ecosocialists, we have much to learn from existing and resisting oppressed communities, especially Indigenous peoples. Ecosocialism is already alive in ancient and Indigenous worldviews and prefigurative experiments. Indigenous struggles for a non-capitalist, anti-extractive, and solar-based commoning offer crucial lessons and inspiration for those of us seeking to building a vibrant egalitarian and ecologically sustainable world.

Capitalism’s threat to planetary life is evident from the major examples cited earlier, along with the profit system’s reliance on racist and misogynistic violence from officials, including law makers and law enforcement, as well as from supremacist political forces. Against and despite these threats, ecosocialist experiments are striving to overcome capitalism-induced calamities, not by reforming at the edges but by doing away with capitalism altogether. As this volume of collected works demonstrates, overcoming capitalism now may not resemble precisely the earlier visions of global revolution, led by unions, national liberation movements, and vanguard parties. Instead, capitalism’s successor society is emerging right now, among us, in a multitude of prefigurative efforts, involving myriad moments and movements of transformation, building, and reinforcing the foundations of ecosocialist alternatives globally.

A brief survey of the history and multiple meanings of ecosocialism

A history of the ideas of ecosocialism is, in the historical materialist tradition, a history of the social movements whose actions, claims, and demands have shaped the theory and politics of ecosocialism. For us, ecosocialism is not primarily a theory or party line that rains from above, but rather the convergence of resistance and anti-capitalist movements from below, and their practices and critiques, that together articulate opposition to relations of exploitation and dispossession and the defense, establishment, and elaboration of praxes of an alternative political
An introduction to ecosocialism

economy and way of being, rooted in social and ecological justice. Indigenous Amazonia’s experience with Spanish and Portuguese colonization and evangelization, which incorporated them into global commerce, and the early twentieth-century boom of rubber, which linked them to industrial capitalism, made them among the first inhabitants rejecting and resisting colonization and capitalism to this day. They stuck steadfast to their ecologically sustainable mode of production, which is characterized by its high degree of autonomy and freedom in the organization of work. Sociability is obtained in the interaction between human beings (group work) and in the synergy with the elements of the biophysical environment, where the dialogue with the rest of nature follows the rhythm given by the cultural system based on Common Rights Usages; they do not divide life in two periods – utilitarian work and pleasant leisure; their activities bring together the useful and the pleasant, and life is built in the exercise of solidarity, according to social rights and obligations (Gashe and Vela 2012).

Ecosocialism, briefly put, is a movement, a perspective, a practice, and in some cases an institutional politics that gathers together socialist and ecological principles and objectives. It is socialist in the sense of identifying capitalist relations as the ultimate and systemic cause of structural inequalities and environmental destruction. Politically, this means struggling for social equality by establishing social control over the means of life and ending all forms of exploitation of nature, which includes people. This struggle embraces decolonization and cross-generational justice as well as overcoming the gendered and racialized class hierarchies that capitalism depends on for the exploitation of the unwaged majority of the world’s people, notably women. It means developing respect for differing knowledge systems, striving to combine them to the benefit of all. Ecosocialism is environmentalist in calling attention to the biophysically destructive character of currently conventional power relations and their imposed ways of living. Ecosocialism premises the understanding of biophysical processes on diverse forms of systematic knowledge and inquiry, institutional and otherwise. Ecosocialism, in other words, stands for the development of ecologically sane egalitarian communities worldwide (Kovel 2014; Löwy 2015; Sarkar 1999; Turner and Brownhill 2006).

Environmental concern was part of early socialism, expressed in the writings of Marx, Engels, Reclus, Kropotkin, Luxemburg, and Lenin, among others. But it was not until the 1960s that socialist movements returned to and elaborated on those germinal ideas within the socialisms of the 1800s and early 1900s (Foster 2000; Gare 1993). The global 1968 revolts are a particularly important juncture in this recovery and elaboration process because they brought to the fore the ecological aspects of socialism that had been buried in much of the institutional Left. The past few decades have witnessed the increasingly explicit linkages made between development, social justice or self-determination, and environmental preservation. Ecosocialism is associated with a great diversity of Left-wing political currents involved in such linkage making, some of which contrast with each other in crucial ways. Within these currents one may find variants of Marxism, feminism, anarchism, Indigenousism, decolonizationism (national liberationism), abolitionism, syndicalism cooperativism, spiritualism, and sometimes aspects of certain strands of social democracy, technocratic statism, and religious philosophies, like liberation theology, Buddhism, and Daoism (Baer 2018; Pepper 1993; Wallis 2018).

There have been socialist ideas infused to some extent in environmentalist movements as well, especially since the late 1980s. Arguably, more advanced environmental understandings in socialism emerged in areas of the world where struggles for self-determination and sheer survival (e.g., decolonization) involved the protection of ecosystems, such as forests, as means of production and subsistence and their spiritual and intrinsic value. Indigenous people’s existential requirements for subsistence and needs for reproducing their ways of life have been a major source of their empowerment and resistance. The more-than-Brazilian Seringueiros movement
led by Chico Mendes was among the first to combine ecological and socialist approaches in an explicit manner (Löwy 2015). Chico Mendes tied the rights of rubber-tappers together with the defense of the Amazonian forests against the rapacity of large landed and financial concerns. For such organizing against logging companies, he was assassinated in 1988, as other such activists have been in different South and Central American countries (Méndez 2018). In so-called Honduras, we remember Berta Cáceres, who was assassinated for standing up against mining and dam projects that threatened to destroy her Lenca people’s ancestral rivers and homelands. She ignited a wave of solidarity and resistance as the story of her struggle and commitment to life travelled around the globe:

Let us wake up! Wake up, humankind! We’re out of time. We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction. The Gualcarque River has called upon us, as have other gravely threatened rivers. We must answer their call.

(Cáceres 2015)

In so-called Perú, Indigenous peoples are resisting fossil capital. The Peruvian state has declared war on Indigenous peoples living near petroleum concessions known as Blocks 1AB and 8, as their territory and economy go unrecognized or invisibilized. The concept of territory as a place of dispute is part of this struggle: how oil fields have gone hand in hand with encroachment on Indigenous people’s land, water, and health; how subsistence confiscation resulted in the incorporation of indigenous people into discriminatory and poorly paid jobs; how a protest against poor wages placed Indigenous people into the judicial court in Loreto in 2009; and how the court verdict recognized Indigenous people’s collective rights in opposition to state criminalization (Isla 2019). These are but a few examples of resistance involved in the building of ecosocialism.

An ecosocialism for the present has germinated significantly in Indigenous resistance against capitalist violence, enclosure, and exploitation of people and nature: a resistance that was, at the same time, a defense of already existing as well as aspirational ecosocialism, or egalitarian political economies, values, and relationships built on social and ecological justice for all. Exemplary among such movements are the Zapatistas, the largely Tzotzil Mayan Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), founded in 1983 and launched into global recognition on 1 January 1994, the day NAFTA was signed, and Mayan corn farmers, who rose up in arms to stop neoliberalism and spark a global movement of social movements.

The 1990s saw the wide emergence and spread of red-green movements. In some cases, green parties have incorporated selected traditionally socialist issues as part of their platforms, as in the United Kingdom (Wall 2010), where environmental concerns have been interwoven with calls for greater social welfare provisions and more worker protection in the workplace, among other things. Already in the early 1990s, Saral Sarkar, as local Green Party secretary in Köln (Germany), was integrating the aspirations of the peace and environmental movements with socialist principles and was among the first to employ the term “ecosocialism” to that effect (Sarkar 1999). Anarchist groups and Trotskyist and other communist parties have increasingly adopted environmental platforms of their own, such as in the IV International (see chapter by Löwy and Tanuro in this volume). At a minimum, what different ecosocialist approaches share is the striving to contribute to practices and/or to establish theoretical foundations for the attainment of a society founded on the cooperative (or at least coordinated, socially planned) use of resources for the benefit of all and in ways that do not compromise the ecological conditions of
our existence. This is also one way to describe the meaning and practice of the multifarious and rambunctious nature of “red-green” politics.

Movements and organizations emerging from these eclectic groundings have been among the most important in the formation and development of existing anti-systemic movements, through the World Social Forum, among other international groupings like La Via Campesina. The latter is constituted of small- and medium-size farmers, peasants, Indigenous peoples, landless workers, migrants, fisherfolk, and women and youth seeking to defend systems of shared control over the means of life and food production. There are also revolutionary movements and communities drawing inspiration directly from communist and socialist histories and ideas. Salient examples include the Brazilian Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST, or Landless Workers Movement, formed in 1984) and the South African Landless People’s Movement (founded in 2001).

In core capitalist countries, there are or there have been the likes of Occupy, the Anarchist Black Cross, and Cooperation Jackson in North America and various communities in Italy struggling to re-establish the commons (e.g., NoTav in the Piemonte region), as well as long-standing squatters’ movements in many metropolitan areas (Akuno and Nangwaya 2017; Cattaneo and Engel-Di Mauro 2015; De Angelis 2017). This is in addition to the continuity of relatively small political formations and periodically erupting popular demands for more democratic-socialist provisions, such as universal basic income, workplace rights, unemployment benefits, and socialized healthcare.

Aside from movements taking up these diverse ideas, as expressed in Kovel and Löwy’s Ecosocialist Manifesto (2001), there have been several countries where ecosocialism has been incorporated into state platforms and policies, as in Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela (with the latter having a ministry dedicated to ecosocialism), Iceland (Left-Green Movement), and Brazil (Partido Socialismo e Libertade). Since 2006, activists led by campesino revolutionary Hugo Blanco, who participated in the signing and propagation of the Ecosocialist Manifesto, have founded an organization and publication called Lucha Indígena (www.luchaindigena.com), dedicated to documenting and analyzing ecosocialist struggles, especially in Peru. More recently still, since 2011, Kurdish-led communities in Rojava (Northern Syria) have adopted the ecosocialist principles of democratic confederalism, according to the thought of the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Öcalan (in part by way of social ecology). These communities have devised and implemented, as much as feasible, ecologically sensitized, ecofeminist, and participatory democracy ideas in the midst of war (saed 2015). What is also novel to these popular state and institutional developments is their attentiveness to and promotion of feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial egalitarian outlooks, which remain core to ecosocialist principles and transformations (Baer 2018).

Not all of these perspectives could be encompassed in this Handbook. Nor would it be possible to accomplish a comprehensive sweep of a still-evolving panoply of ecosocialist movements and worldviews. Instead, what this Handbook does offer is a representation of key historical and more recent works that have propelled and shaped ecosocialist thinking and action over the past four decades, when self-described ecosocialist perspectives emerged. This collection can thus be a reference point for international work in the field, including in social movements and institutions of the state. Specifically, the Handbook is a way of acquainting people with the varied roots of and sometimes conflicting approaches to ecosocialism. There is no attempt at any unification of ecosocialist currents. Rather, the aim is to provide a resource that is as comprehensive as possible with respect not only to theorization and ideological framing, but also and especially to existing projects, practices, and movements. The Handbook also gives a sense of the geographical reach that ecosocialism so far represents.
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Outline of the Handbook

The Handbook is divided into four topical parts. Each part covers ecosocialism’s historical precedents and reference political philosophies, especially from ecofeminism and Marxist currents, and many of the movements and institutional efforts that underpin the varied expressions of ecosocialism. This includes scholarship that extends Marxist foundations and reflects on contemporary political developments. These theoretical and practice-oriented ties are buttressed by discussions of movements, frameworks, and prefigurative processes as well as social struggles occurring within institutional settings.

Part I, “Historical and theoretical groundings,” includes works of major historical influence on the development of ecosocialism. Some of these works have been already published or harken back to already-published writings that have been crucial to the crystallizing of an ecosocialist paradigm. A foundational text is from Jim O’Connor (1930–2017), a major figure in the development of ecological Marxism, a main pillar of ecosocialism. In his 1988 introduction to the journal he co-founded, Capitalism Nature Socialism, O’Connor articulates a modification to classical Marxist thought that can account for the ecological crisis as well as the emergence of new social movements. He does this by delineating two kinds of contradictions characterizing capitalism: one between the relations and forces of production and a second contradiction between those processes and the conditions of production, which are undermined through the regular workings of capitalism. Succeeding O’Connor in editing the same journal, Joel Kovel (1936–2018) complements and extends the second-contradiction thesis by underlining the crucial role of specifically materialist ecofeminism in forging the necessary alliances and unity across movements to overcome capitalism and forge an ecosocialist society.

Terisa E. Turner elaborates and builds on this view by outlining a theoretical and methodological framework of “gendered, ethnicized class analysis.” Key to this framing is the understanding of unwaged people as part of the working class, who, in resisting exploitation, are resisting the power of capital. This in part reiterates and extends Mary Mellor’s analysis of the tight linkages between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women that form a main basis of capitalism as a simultaneously patriarchal system. Ariel Salleh shows yet another way that ecosocialism must be based on ecofeminism by highlighting the importance of eco-centred practices among the unrecognized workers worldwide. The worldviews and practices inhering their lived experiences provide the means to integrate multiple forms of struggles to overcome capitalism. The importance of this standpoint is illustrated by Ana Isla, who shows how different movements, especially based on the reality of women’s lives, are best placed to expose the institutional greenwashing of the brutality of extractivism in Central and South America and beyond.

Renán Vega Cantor, drawing from the work of Michael Löwy, takes us on a different yet interlinked path by exploring the complementarity of Marxist and romanticist critiques of progress, which, in its capitalist garb, implies extractivism. The section ends with an investigation into the roots of dialectical views of nature and a survey of historical and materialist dialectics among Marxists and ecosocialists, upon which he builds a dialectical ecology. He thereby also draws attention to the wealth of existing alternative philosophical frameworks useful towards ecosocialism, which pre-empt the reductionistic, ecological, and socially disconnected thinking prevalent in capitalism-friendly philosophies. Together, these works clarify how ecosocialism has been from the very beginning an intertwining of different worldviews characterized by major overlaps as well as tensions. Authors come from different starting points to understand the history and the way out of the crises of capitalism.
Part II, “Extending Marxist roots,” engages with the contributions Marxists have made in the development of ecosocialist frameworks. Marxist thinkers, as evident in Part I, have from early on endeavoured to recover the ecologically oriented aspects of the writings of Marx and Engels, as well as subsequent Marxist scholarship, which have historically been buried by the socialist currents that prevailed during much of the 1900s. The diversity of ecosocialism can be more easily gleaned by reading the first as well as later writings attempting to establish the nature of ecosocialism. This is where the varied intellectual influences from the approaches represented in the previous section become more evident in terms of how they have shaped and provided diversity in ecosocialist thinking from the start.

Accordingly, Elmar Altvater (1938–2018) shows how Marx conceived of the pressure for endless accumulation that was leading to the transgression of ecological borders and threatening the very survival of the human species. In particular, the chapter brings into focus an analysis of the contradiction between capitalist economy and ecology, as found in incessant efforts to compress the space and time necessary for people and the rest of nature to exist and reproduce themselves.

Addressing further the theme of reproduction, Leigh Brownhill addresses the central importance of women’s labour in producing the strategically necessary commodity of human labour power. She argues that capitalists’ control over women’s labour-power-producing capacities is essential to the continuity of the profit system. Under historic and contemporary capitalism, women’s alienation from nature and the commons undergirds their vulnerability to violence and control by men. The chapter’s ecofeminist-ecosocialist perspective affirms the transformational power and potential of popular struggles led by alliances with Indigenous women, peasants, and people of colour to establish the socially and ecologically just political economies of the future, free of the value chains and crises of capitalism.

Michael Löwy draws attention to the crises of capitalism, especially climate chaos, underlying the imperative for the development of a red-green politics of ecosocialism. He argues that socialists must heed environmentalist critiques of Marx’s productivism, and, at the same time, environmentalists must come to grips with the capitalist causes of productivism and adopt Marxist critiques of capitalism. Brett Clark and John Bellamy Foster explicate further the metabolic rift scholarship that has helped, since the late 1990s, excavate the ecological foundations of classical historical materialism. Their chapter illuminates this scholarship, in particular examining how capitalism creates an alienated social metabolism, which in turn produces ecological rifts by transgressing natural limits and fatally disrupting ecosystems. Kohei Saito complements this work by challenging the conviction, held by many environmentalists and Marxists, that Marx supported hyper-industrialization and the domination of society over nature. Saito addresses recent studies, including notebooks only recently available, that illuminate Marx as an ecosocialist. With this backdrop, he shows that Marxism in the twenty-first century continues to develop ecological critiques of capitalism and to envision a sustainable society beyond capitalism.

Closing out this section of the *Handbook* is Arran Gare’s tracing of the history of ecology and the concept of culture in the Soviet Union, particularly in the 1920s, to support the need for a radical socialist ecological civilization, to be developed globally and to transform every part of society, changing the way people relate to each other and to nature. He argues that with this notion being officially embraced within China, a tradition of socialist thought has been revived that has the potential to challenge and replace global capitalism.

Part III, “Movements, prefiguration and frameworks,” gives examples of concrete grassroots movements and actions based on or linked to the diffusion and building of ecosocialism. This section is dedicated to discussions of ecosocialist theory and its potential application in political work, drawing from early ecosocialist theorization as well as from novel and ongoing
movements that link socialism and ecology in explicit ways. The section opens with Right Livelihood Award winner Nnimmo Bassey’s survey of the social and ecological destruction wrought by oil operations in Nigeria’s Niger Delta. Bassey illustrates two instances of the deep trauma caused by the oil industry, pointing to the urgent need for an ecosocialist transition. He sheds new light on the anti-oil activism of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni Indigenous leaders, whose courage and sacrifice have been sources of great inspiration for freedom fighters and land defenders around the world. In the same vein, Seth Tobocman, Leigh Brownhill, and Terisa E. Turner highlight the anti-oil and subsistence activism of women in the Niger Delta. The chapter illustrates, through a graphic narrative, eco-activists’ use of the tactic of simultaneous, cross-border, coordinated direct action involving the blockade of specific companies’ oil production sites and the boycott of their oil consumption outlets. These actions were inspired by Nigerian women, who threatened to use the curse of nakedness to impose extreme social ostracization on any men in league with Chevron and other oil companies. The simultaneous global women’s nakedness demonstrations that followed starkly contrasted the life-oriented, peaceful power of ecocentric women (and the men who joined them) against the destructive and exploitative operations of the fossil fuel industry, whose markets are protected and enlarged through warfare.

The chapter by Vishwas Satgar and Jacklyn Cock provides an overview and analysis of environmental and climate justice politics emerging from struggles against South Africa’s carbon capitalist economy and its “minerals-energy complex.” The authors present a framework for understanding the emergence of such struggles, relating them to an expanding process of carbon capitalist accumulation. They highlight the contribution of democratic ecosocialism and address some of the challenges facing democratic ecosocialist politics in South Africa.

Any volume on ecosocialism must include a discussion of the global 200-million-strong Via Campesina movement for food sovereignty and agroecology. Terran Giacomini, a scholar-activist involved in the movement, offers an ecofeminist analysis of the food provisioning practices and activism of specific women and gender non-binary food producers in the movement. She highlights the ways in which women’s life priorities and struggles are crucial to the transformative character of the movement for a “just transition” from capitalism to ecosocialism. Black liberation struggles are also crucial to a just transition towards ecosocialism. Benjamin Barson’s analysis of the politics of Black jazz musicians and activists in Louisiana’s Sugar Parishes in the nineteenth-century US South traces the emergence of an “eco-logic aesthetic” within the struggles of Black jazz musicians fighting for land, freedom, and the commons. Barson shows that nineteenth-century Black activists and musicians anticipated the ecological crisis which is now unfolding globally and how mass music making has served as a check against the unrestrained power of capital.

José Luis Haro García’s chapter offers an analysis of workplace democracy and its role in ecosocialist transformation. He argues that workplace democracy is both a socio-economic project and strategy to achieve ecosocialist objectives. Silvia Ribeiro explores the political economy of geoengineering with a focus on resistance to it. She highlights specific instances of struggle against geoengineering, arguing that these struggles are crucial to the formation of an ecosocialist politics that prioritizes the interests and demands of grassroots peasant and Indigenous communities around the world. Pritam Singh’s argument that the greening of capitalism and the rise of ecosocialism are inter-related makes an important contribution to ecosocialist praxis, particularly the role of “green reforms” and of individual action in the spheres of economy, politics, and culture. In the global North, Extinction Rebellion (XR) has emerged as one of the most active and prominent organizations fighting to defend life by challenging fossil fuels and extractivism. Samuel Alexander and Peter D. Burdon address the
potential for XR, especially their practices of non-violent civil disobedience, to contribute to
the realization of an ecosocialist society.

Part IV addresses “Power struggles on institutional terrains”: that is to say, strategies and
platforms that could be developed within and/or outside state institutional frameworks. Leftist
politics have always been diverse, and ecosocialism follows this pattern, particularly owing to
its multiple origins and geographical contexts. In this section, authors ponder over existing and
potential political strategies useful for spreading ecosocialism, within or outside state institutions
and on the basis of research and/or actual political organizing.

Based on his involvement in the climate justice movement and his life trajectories, Hans A.
Baer describes guidelines that can be helpful in developing a form of ecosocialism that is inte-
grated into a democratic-socialist perspective. Also explicitly grounding her thoughts in her life
experiences, Anitra Nelson addresses the main economic instruments of capitalism and, pin-
pointing structural weaknesses in money-based systems, formulates an alternative, money-less
economy in which what actually sustains us, socially and ecologically, is valued and prioritized.
Pat Devine reinforces the importance of developing such an ecosocialist economics, one that
focuses on ensuring coverage of basic needs in ecologically sustainable ways.

The ultimate goal may be expressed as ecosocialism for some. To others, it is formulated as
communism, as in David Schwartzman’s work, where the technical and energetic basis for a
transition to ecosocialism and then to solar communism is explicated. Victor Wallis comple-
ments this by examining the general decision-making processes that would need to inform
ecosocialist technological and infrastructural development and that would transform human
impacts on the rest of nature in ecologically constructive directions. As Miguel Angel Núñez
demonstrates, attempts at this shift are already underway in Venezuela by means of community-
based planning and an iterative methodology to transition towards ecosocialist practices, or
towards their strengthening and deepening.

On the mainstream institutional front, within core capitalist countries, Natasha Heenan
considers the opportunities presented by the emergent politics of the Green New Deal for
the wider dissemination and discussion of ecosocialist ideas and praxis. Nadia Singh cautions
against bioenergy schemes that may also form part of Green New Deal policies and describes an
ecosocialist framework to inform the development of sustainable bioenergy systems responsive
to human and ecological well-being, rather than capital accumulation prerogatives.

In the remaining chapters, Salvatore Engel-Di Mauro discusses the major ecologically bene-
ficial achievements of socialist states despite constant military and economic assaults from liberal
democracies and calls for ecosocialists to build on and learn from those historical and current
experiences. Huan Qingzhi follows with an analysis of the strides made in the People’s Republic
of China that can be conducive to building ecosocialism there. Analyzing the IV Interna-
tional’s historical self-transformation, Michael Löwy and Daniel Tanuro conclude the section,
and with that the Handbook, by demonstrating the way forward in forging concrete struggles
within and outside institutional contexts, including the fight for anti-capitalist reforms that fulfil
both social and environmental concerns.

The chapters described here address wide-ranging topics and cover multiple perspectives on
ecosocialism, but there is no claim here of being exhaustive. As alluded to earlier, this Handbook,
as with any work that is not encyclopaedic, can only give a partial overview of ecosocialist cur-
rents, but with the intent of whetting the reader’s appetite. There are as well ecosocialist thinkers
and movements who could not be represented herein, including as a result of challenges faced
by invited authors but also due to the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic. We would there-
fore like to take the opportunity here to recognize Cooperation Jackson (Akuno and Nangwaya
2017), the Red Nation (see also Red Nation 2015), ecosocialists in the US and UK Green
Parties, and members of the US-based System Change Not Climate Change, who could not complete the respective chapters for which they had been invited.

There are, moreover, not a few themes that regrettably could not figure in this collection. One is the relationship between ecosocialism and the abolitionist movements (but see saed 2012) and the Rojava revolutionary project, which has much affinity with ecosocialism (see, for example, Roelofs 2018; saed 2015). Doubtless other themes could be listed, but among them, we would like to highlight the long-standing but often under-appreciated importance of spirituality in the development of ecosocialism. That is to say, spirituality in the sense of understanding oneself as part of a larger whole of interconnected beings (Kovel 1991). As Frei Betto and Michael Löwy put it, without the spiritual dimension, which includes utopias,

there can be no mobilizations. And without the possibility of envisaging a different, a new and better world, no hope can exist. Hope favours the upsurge of new utopias, which have to be translated into political and cultural projects that signal a new society.

(Betto and Löwy 2010, 98)

May this Handbook be in some way helpful towards forging the necessary new utopias to overcome the current horrific capitalist impasse and build ecosocialist futures.

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