

Alyssa Mendez
Mediterranean Ecologies Workshop
31 January 2024

Saving Agrafa: an ecological defense of life and freedom in an age of climate change

The announcement of the European Green Deal by Ursula von der Leyen's European Commission in 2019 signaled the acceleration of attempts to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Europe, centrally through the transition from conventional to alternative energy sources. This acceleration has been especially pronounced in Europe's Southern and Eastern peripheries, which, though not early adopters of these technologies, are now major sites of investment for renewable energy development. In Greece, the result has been an explosion of permits for new solar and wind installations, most recently including offshore developments in the sea and floating installations in inland lakes. Yet, despite the celebration by policymakers and environmental activists of such efforts towards a green transition, these projects are frequently contested on the ground. The most emblematic ongoing struggle against renewable energy infrastructure in Greece is taking place in the Agrafa mountains, where over 600 wind turbines are planned to be installed along over 80% of the region's peaks. Activists participating in this struggle include peasant highlanders, mountaineers, members of the urban extra-parliamentary left, and professional conservationists. In this paper, I attend to the activists' attempts to thwart wind developments in defense of the human and non-human inhabitants of the mountains, who are, respectively, uprooted of ancestral land and forms of life and threatened with ecosystem fragmentation through the construction of many kilometers of new road through forests. I suggest that this struggle complicates regular assumptions about the compatibility of contemporary environmentalism's solutions to climate change with ecological commitments to saving the Earth.