



System Change not Climate Change

an ecosocialist coalition

systemchangenotclimatechange.org

What is ecosocialism?

Ecosocialism brings together two complementary ways of thinking about humans and the environment they live in. The “eco-” in ecosocialism comes from the science of **ecology** and its emphasis on the complex and dynamic interactions among the living and non-living components within an **ecosystem**. In particular ecologists understand how the life-supporting functions within an ecosystem can be disrupted by the behavior of one organism, for example, humans. But ecology lacks a social analysis; it has no way of understanding how economic and political forces drive human behavior and social change can take place. Ecosocialism combines the insights of ecology with the rich tradition of socialist thought and action, especially that associated with **Marxism**. Marxism shows that the ecological crisis is rooted in a destructive economic and political system, **capitalism**, and it provides ways of understanding how capitalism works and of envisioning a system beyond capitalism, in which production is driven by human need. At the same time, environmental disasters like Chernobyl and the Aral Sea remind us that challenging or even eliminating capitalism is not enough. Whatever else we may think of the “really existing socialisms” of the 20th century, we can agree that with few exceptions, they failed miserably in ecological terms. Thus ecosocialists are fighting for a new sort of socialism, one that takes into account the place of human beings in the planet-wide biosphere.

Ecosocialists start with the premise that **environmental degradation** and **social injustice** stem from the same source: a world where **profit** is the highest goal. We believe that the **emancipation of people** from capital and its masters goes hand-in-hand with the **emancipation of the earth** and its biosphere from the cancer of capitalism. Thus, unlike most branches of the environmental movement, ecosocialism provides an over-arching framework that see links between different struggles. See the pages on racism, imperialism, feminism, indigenous sovereignty, and working class power for examples.

Ecosocialism is not a monolithic framework. In fact a lively and healthy debate goes on among ecosocialists, especially concerning short-term strategy. All ecosocialists agree that capitalism has to go, but they also recognize that the only way forward is through collaboration with more mainstream organizations that are not socialist. They also agree that a range of environmental reforms must be pursued, especially those that radicalize the people fighting for them and that bring together disparate branches of the environmental movement.

Besides System Change Not Climate Change, several organizations, coalitions, or political parties, especially in North America and Europe, are explicitly ecosocialist. These include Ecosocialist Horizons, the Réseau Écosocialiste in Quebec, and the Green Left and Socialist Resistance in the UK. Beyond these groups are many organizations around the world that can be called environmental justice or food justice organizations --typically grassroots groups organized around local campaigns, often fighting environmental racism. Within North America there are many such groups, especially in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Oakland and within indigenous communities. Another wing of the larger environmental movement that shares the anticapitalism of ecosocialism is one that may be called green anarchism, including social ecology, primitivism, and green syndicalism, depending on the particular organization or philosophy. These groups usually emphasize direct action, and unlike ecosocialists, they may downplay or reject the idea of challenging, and ultimately, taking over the state.

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