



From Struggle to Innovation - Ecological Transition in
Hands of the People: the Case of Croatia
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Landscape

- Democracy inherent to ecology?
- Can we have ecology without democracy?
- Rise of authoritarian rule
- Technological (over)optimism
- What kind of economy is compatible with democratic and ecological principles?
- Majority and Greens?
- Emerging municipalism





Ecological struggles - South Eastern Europe

- Ecological struggles/resistances
 - 1) Enclosure of the commons;
 - 2) Privatisation of public infrastructure;
 - 3) Extractivism

Citizens between usurpated and corrupted public sector (state capture) and speculative privatisation projects of local, public and common resources.

Point of departure for political action and innovation.





Ecological transition – with(out) people?

- Risks – elite driven, finance driven, technology driven ecological change without citizens
- Urgency of environmental change; planetary boundaries, climate change
- Achieving or maintaining “good life”
- Losers and winners/ survival?
- Green capitalism to degrowth
- Scale of ambition





Research background

- Experimental and political dimension of strengthening relations between public and civic;
- Public companies in the area of natural resources and public infrastructures under powerful pressures;
- While very often they are inefficient and corrupted professional environments, on the other side the only plausible solution which is portrayed as a succesful model is – privatisation ??!
- Building and developing third model – ECOPUBLIC 2.0. - democratic governance coupled with ecological modernisation





Research background 2

- ▶ Stagnation in comparison to Europe
- ▶ Centralised and slow governance model
- ▶ Vulnerable to political change - discontinuity
- ▶ State capture – non transparent governance and business model
- ▶ Absence of permanent and public control over public infrastructure and public companies
- ▶ False choice between policy options – unsustainable business as usual and privatisation
- ▶ Underused public functions or social benefit
- ▶ Absence of broader social debate





Research focus

- Ongoing research (2015...)
- Water (public water management company) - 2015
- Communal services (water and waste) in 4 cities - 2017
- Railways sector – 2017/2018
- Electricity production - 2017/2018
- **MAIN PURPOSE** – to develop arguments for social movements and initiatives (in cooperation with them) that will back up (after attempts to privatise highways and detrimental PPP's) demands for change in public sector.





Methodology

- Desk research – legal and institutional analysis
- Contextual, historical and political trajectory
- European case studies
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus groups
- Feedback sessions
- Recommendations

*** PARTICIPATORY AND INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH





Public sector

- ...is under announced pressure to be privatised for the short-term purpose of budgetary deficit and debts
- ...is example of state capture both at local and national level
- ...is public sphere that needs to be reclaimed and democratised
- ... is place where progressive political forces can and need to demand institutional innovation (public-civic partnerships)
- ...is necessary to be driving force of the ecological modernisation (political power, resources, legitimacy)



Case of Croatia

- Research is identifying at least four areas where change has to emerge
 - A) quality of service for consumers and citizens (price, access)
 - B) governance of public infrastructure (public, transparent)
 - C) ecological dimension of services (CO₂, efficiency, pollution)
 - D) social impact of public companies for society





Direction of recommendations

- Bringing various forms of public and civic partnership in the action
- Developing forms of participation in governance structures and supervisory bodies
- Introduction of mechanisms to decrease space for corruptive practices
- Introduction of digital tools to be able to monitor transactions of public companies, tenders results and ad-hoc donations
- Strengthening and diversifying supervisory role of bodies in public companies

