Eco-Socialism and Democratic Planning
Abstract

Ecosocialism is an attempt to provide a radical civilizational alternative to what Marx called capitalism's 'destructive progress'. It advances an economic policy founded on the non-monetary and extra-economic criteria of social needs and ecological equilibrium. According to O'Connor, the aim of ecological socialism is a new society based on ecological rationality, democratic control, social equality, and the predominance of use-value over exchange-value. I would add that these aims require: (a) collective ownership of the means of production ('collective' here meaning public, cooperative or communitarian property); (b) democratic planning, which makes it possible for society to define the goals of investment and production, and (c) a new technological structure of the productive forces. In other words, a revolutionary social and economic transformation. For ecosocialists, the problem with the main currents of political ecology, represented by most Green parties, is that they do not seem to take into account the intrinsic contradiction between the capitalist dynamics of the unlimited expansion of capital and accumulation of profits, and the preservation of the environment. This leads to a critique of productivism, which is often relevant, but does not lead beyond an ecologically-reformed 'market economy'. The result has been that many Green parties have become the ecological alibi of center-left social-liberal governments.
Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy is above all an exercise in prediction. Born in the English Industrial Revolution and thrust into prominence by its successes in France, Germany, and the United States, capitalism had existed for more than a century when Schumpeter began to assemble the material for his book. In the state socialist economy, planners are expected to act in the public interest, managers are expected to innovate and produce efficiently, and workers are expected to do their best on behalf of the enterprise and in the larger interest of society. Democratic eco-socialism – challenges and tasks for deep just transitions. There are no stages in this struggle to secure human and non-human life. We need to break with the anti-life and climate eco-cide logic of carbon capitalism now. The first challenge in this regard is to overcome old modes of politics and thinking. This means "reformist pragmatism" or "revolutionary maximalism" is not what the historical moment demands.