

Sun, wind, and the rebirth of extractive economies: renewable energy investment and metanarratives of crisis in Greece

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In the midst of economic crisis, the Greek state has taken the unprecedented step of opening many of the nation's closed business sectors to international investors. Opportunities for multinational investment have been most prolific in the arena of renewable energy, where foreign prospecting in solar and wind energy is soaring. This article discusses two renewable energy initiatives: photovoltaic parks on agricultural land in Thessaly, central mainland Greece, and a planned wind farm development on the Aegean island of Chios. Among the people of Thessaly and Chios, the renewable energy initiatives are widely seen in terms of conquest and occupation akin to the Ottoman era and the Second World War. Harnessing natural resources is perceived to be a colonial programme of economic extraction associated with the global South as much as a sustainable energy initiative, heralding a return to a time of foreign occupation. This article examines the dialectical relationship emerging between narratives of renewable energy extraction and broader, long-standing conceptions of Greek identity.

The rocks upon which we stand

'Look at that view. What do you see?' Kostas¹ asks me as we stumble up a rocky peak in the Pindos Mountains. Without giving me time to gather my thoughts, he continues, 'I see occupation'. Eight hundred metres below us, glimmering in the winter sun, ten photovoltaic parks stand on prime agricultural land.

These are the new occupying forces; we have become the great estate (*tsifliki*) of Europe. The Germans have returned to take our land, to rape us of our resources. With their technology they take our sun, with their austerity they cripple our nation. And now the same rocks upon which we stand are no longer Greek.

With the severe social consequences of ongoing economic crisis, the Greek state, supported by European Union (EU) initiatives and Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank, and International Monetary Fund) austerity policy, has taken the unprecedented step of opening many of the nation's closed business sectors – including the energy and haulage industries and ports and transport

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infrastructure – to international investors.² Opportunities for multinational investment have perhaps been most prolific in the arena of renewable energy, where foreign prospecting in photovoltaic and wind energy is soaring against the backdrop of wide-scale business privatization as the Greek state attempts to repay its national debt and decrease its deficit.

This article discusses two renewable energy initiatives: photovoltaic parks on agricultural land in Thessaly, central mainland Greece, and a planned wind farm development on the Aegean island of Chios. Both of these initiatives have triggered widespread anxieties raised by the state's response to the crisis, and are representative of popular reactions to the threat to national sovereignty and to local autonomy that the crisis is generally perceived to have engendered. The majority of photovoltaic parks in Thessaly (all of which form part of an EU-advocated programme to encourage large-scale renewable energy generation) use German and Chinese technology to harness energy to distribute towards urban centres through the national grid. In line with austerity policy to privatize the Greek energy sector, multinational investment companies have seized the opportunity to develop solar parks in central Greece to export the energy produced to northern Europe. In Chios, a Spanish investment company, Iberdrola, currently plans to construct up to 300 wind turbines to generate energy to export to other EU nations. The wind initiative raises questions of environmental sustainability, land rights, and the relative weakness of local governments faced with multinational corporate interests.

Owing to the scale of foreign investment and their place in the public imagination, the developments in Thessaly and Chios are the two most prominent renewable energy initiatives in Greece today. In both cases, local communities do not stand to benefit directly from the power generated by the energy installations. Local people express deep concerns about foreign multinational investment on Greek soil designed to export energy to northern Europe rather than assist local communities. The fact that wind and solar power are renewable, inexhaustible resources might seem to make it impossible for them to be plundered in the way that finite resources such as timber or oil might be, but this is not how things are perceived in Greece today, where renewable energy projects are coming to be seen as new forms of extractive economy, harnessing local natural resources for the benefit of foreign corporations.³

The concept of extractive economies was originally developed to describe the exploitative relations obtaining between colonial powers and their possessions – most notably in Africa – but a lay understanding of this iniquitous global relationship is currently emerging as a popular model in crisis-stricken Greece by means of which the relations between northern European countries and multinational corporations, on the one hand, and southern Europe and Greece, on the other, are understood. New energy initiatives in Thessaly and Chios reveal remarkable consistency, despite being clearly differentiated regions of Greece with distinct histories, economies, and human geographies. Harnessing natural resources such as the wind and the sun is perceived to be a colonial programme of economic extraction as much as a sustainable energy initiative, heralding a return to a time of foreign occupation. The nationally renowned Chiot writer Yiannis Makridakis explicitly equates the wind farm project with extractive economic practice: 'What is happening now in Chios with the wind turbines . . . we're all colonies now . . . all economies are extractive now'. Likewise in Thessaly, farmers refer to photovoltaic parks as a foreign invasion, ravishing the most fertile farmland in Greece for the benefit of multinational investors and bureaucrats in northern Europe.

Such beliefs are exacerbated by the current political and economic climate of enforced austerity and what is seen as foreign intervention in the democratic process.⁴

Above and beyond the immediate concerns they raise about the environment and about neoliberal exploitation, both of these projects have evoked very similar discourses of international conspiracy and interference, of foreign tutelage and intervention, and of national backwardness, disgrace, and humiliation. These wider concerns go beyond discourses of environmentalism or of extractive economies narrowly defined, and reveal a coupling of narratives of environmental degradation and neoliberal exploitation to long-standing ambiguities of Greek identity that go back to the foundation of the state. Narratives of exploitation directed at renewable energy initiatives therefore have a double valence in contemporary Greece: expressing, in the first instance, concerns with the immediate dangers of economic exploitation and environmental degradation, they are at the same time overdetermined as metanarratives of the crisis, in turn lending to the crisis itself a diagnostic, oracular potential. Using images borrowed from the revolutionary foundation of the state, and expressed in the idiom of myth and folklore, debates and protests about the significance of renewable energy investment in Greece link the present to collective memories of past wars, becoming greater than themselves and connecting the present to the troubled past of the state. In so doing, metanarratives of energy shed light on a dark present in a dialectical process of critical re-evaluation that reveals at once radical new readings of what the past has been and how the present will come to be understood. In the narratives we present below, not only are the fields of Thessaly and the mountains of Chios shown to be endangered, but broader existential questions are brought to the fore interrogating what it means to be Greek, what the relation of the person is to the state, and what the relation of the nation-state might be to Europe.

Renewable extraction and the new South

In an internalization of negative northern European stereotypes of Greece, the advent of the crisis has given rise to widespread anxieties and self-doubt regarding the identity of the Greek people as pre-modern, euro-marginal, and 'politically underdeveloped' (Couroucli 2013: 12). The crisis of confidence occasioned by the financial crisis throws the nation back to long-standing dilemmas regarding its status as European/classical or oriental/Ottoman (Couroucli 2003; Herzfeld 1987; 1997; Theodossopoulos 2007). The intervention by the Troika and the draconian terms of its bail-out plan are widely seen in Greece as a concerted effort to profit from the nation's failure through further neoliberal immiseration and vampirism. Against this backdrop of national crisis and of ambivalent Greek identification with the global South, this article explores the emergence of a nation-wide discourse according to which renewable energy sources such as the sun and the wind are coming to be seen as prey to extractive economies operating on the same principles of neoliberal capital accumulation as oil production and mineral mining. While at odds with positive popular perceptions of renewable energy in the global North, the concerns of our informants – from across the political spectrum and with or without an interest in the environment – are consonant with the emerging concept of 'energopower', the complex power games played by Western states and multinational corporations in the name of energy (Boyer 2011; 2014). In this worldview, the scramble for renewable resources instigated by the United States and northern Europe is a new form of imperialist politics undermining national sovereignty (Boyer 2014: 324).

Stavroula Pipyrou (2014) has recently argued that one of the consequences of the European economic crisis has been a feeling among people in southern Europe that they are being colonized by flows of neoliberal business and finance directed from the centres of global power. Her research participants in southern Italy claim to be ‘Africans’, ‘colonized’ by the global North of which they are supposed to be part. Following John and Jean Comaroff’s observation that ‘colonialism entail[s] a confrontation of different regimes of value’ (1997: 190; also Chakrabarty 2000), Pipyrou highlights the emergence of tropes of colonization by the global North appearing in southern Europe (2014: 539; cf. Herzfeld 1987).

As southern Europe experiences fiscal meltdown and privatization and its population is made to internalize a self-image of congenital corruption, the southern periphery appears to be evolving southwards. Putative nations of the global North such as Greece are now synonymous with uncertain development, unorthodox economies, poverty, and corruption. As ‘southerners in the north’ (J. Comaroff & Comaroff 2012: 4), Greeks feel displaced from the ‘Euromodern’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 7). An editorial in the national newspaper *Kathimerini* recently decried the descent of the nation to the status of ‘subject of anthropological enquiry’, and called for Greeks to be ‘more Hellenic, less Romaic’ (cited in Couroucli 2013: 8–9). As new forms of neoliberalization and eco-degradation take hold in the new South-within-the-North, the same ‘politics of life’ seen in the global South emerge on the fringes of Europe. In need of hard currency and international forgiveness, Greece has offered itself up as untapped bounty, relaxing environmental controls and inviting multinational extractive business without attempting to broker deals that benefit ordinary citizens.

Initially associated with the gold rush in Senegal and Zambia, extractive economies have come to be seen as a prominent feature of the interaction of Western empires with the global South, and with colonial Africa in particular (Boele, Fabig & Wheeler 2001; Ferguson 2006; Watts 2005; Weszkalnys 2011; 2013). In the colonial period, the governance of extractive economies often involved the mobilization of state and corporate power by privileged parties to benefit accumulation by colonial governments, multinational energy companies, or local politicians (Bayart, Ellis & Hibou 1999).⁵ Similar forms of political (mal)practice appear to be rife in the contemporary energy sector in Greece, playing into popular perceptions that Europe’s commercial interests more generally are extractive. Just as ‘development’ and ‘bail-outs’ are coming to be seen as euphemisms for tutelage, so green energy becomes a synecdoche of anxieties and frustrations regarding broader extractive practices that the people feel powerless to confront. In European Union countries less pressured by World Bank restructuring programmes, national governments have listened to local communities mounting objections to recent photovoltaic and wind farm initiatives, halting these or re-siting them, but these checks and balances are luxuries of democracy which the citizens of crisis-hit countries in southern Europe are being made to forgo.

Stating that shifts in ‘energopower’ will have consequences at all levels of governance, Dominic Boyer recently called for more anthropological analysis at the intersection of conventional systems of energy politics and new sustainability projects (2011; 2014: 309–10). Renewable energy extraction in southern Europe is part of the wider dynamics of ‘energopower’ that demonstrates the changing face of political power both within the state and *vis-à-vis* multinational corporations. In Boyer’s analysis, energy is a facet of neo-imperial political control in which the welfare of local people is often an insignificant afterthought (Boyer 2014: 324; Howe 2014; Mitchell 2011). This article

examines the ‘zones of awkward engagement’ (Howe 2014: 383; Tsing 2004: xi) between local people and the geopolitics of energy extraction in a context of sovereign debt crisis.

The emerging anthropology of energy has thus far – quite rightly – focused on the environmental, economic, and social consequences of energy development and policy on small-scale communities (see, e.g., Howe 2014; Lifshitz-Goldberg 2010; Weszkalnys 2013). An aspect of energy development that has not yet been the focus of attention regards not the impacts that energy infrastructure developments have on local communities *per se*, but rather the manner in which these projects are perceived and put to work discursively in interpreting wider pre-existing networks of power and vested interests and in comprehending contemporary social and economic transformation. Where narratives of good global citizenship deployed by multinational energy corporations, local and national government, and EU bodies stress the universal benefits of renewable energy projects, counter-narratives of exploitation and extraction emerging in Greece encompass the *longue durée* of political iniquity and tutelage that has always marginalized the nation. These counter-narratives focus on the local impact of renewable energy investment, shifting the discourse from the environment of the planet and the health of its global flows of capital to the well-being of the local communities directly affected by the projects. But these localizing narratives also simultaneously place the new initiatives in their wider historical context. By expanding the field of view back in time while contracting its spatial dimension, counter-narratives of renewable energy confront the Panglossian optimism of the energy corporations and their backers not only with the brutal reality of their environmental impacts, but also with the more inchoate experience of their historical and social dimensions. In this manner, discursive reactions to the new energy initiatives in Greece are no longer self-referential, but overdetermined as metanarratives of the sovereign debt crisis affecting the country – itself in turn redolent of a history of crisis and a crisis of history in the nation.

Energy and crisis: the state of play

As of November 2013, Greece had received €240 billion of bail-out money, with another €86 billion potentially on the horizon. In 2012, government debt hit 170 per cent of GDP and is expected to surpass 200 per cent in 2017. In northern Europe, the Greek government is portrayed as dragging its feet over Troika reforms while EU bureaucrats grumble that people are resisting ‘logical’ life-style changes (Knight 2013a).

Greece currently imports more than 70 per cent of its energy needs and the country’s only reliable domestic energy source is lignite, or ‘dirty coal’, which accounts for 70 per cent of the country’s internal electricity production. According to the Greek Ministry of Development, plans for solar and wind power are expected to draw combined investments worth €5 billion by 2020. Overall, 7 per cent of national energy needs could be met over the next decade by solar energy, with projections of over 30 per cent solar contribution by 2030. Wind energy is expected to fulfil another 15 per cent (Michaletos 2011). Imported oil currently represents 55 per cent of Greece’s yearly energy consumption yet remains exceptionally expensive for fuelling central heating, with the result that since the crisis set in, people have returned *en masse* to wood-burning stoves and open fires to provide warmth during the winter months (Knight 2014). Natural gas is quickly becoming a sought-after commodity around the urban centres, but for the time being its contribution to Greece’s energy production is less than 9 per cent owing to a failing policy agreement with Russia.

Dimósia Epicheírisi Ilektrismoú (DEI) is currently the largest power company in Greece, but is in the process of being broken up and sold off to private investors. A local DEI director in Thessaly acknowledged the precarious state of the company and the uncertain future inherent in the privatization scheme, stating:

It is a complete mess. Not even we, the local directors [a relatively prestigious position], are sure what is happening day to day. The Germans are like piranhas circling the company, breaking it up into small parts to sell off to the highest bidder. My job is insecure and my children's future will soon be out of my hands.

In 2006–7, DEI decided to expand into the lucrative fields of alternative energy production, signing an agreement with the French EDF Energies Nouvelles for the construction of wind parks with a power capacity of 122 MW, and another with the Greek ETBA Bank for solar parks of 35 MW (Michaletos 2011). Since 2012, there has been investment from German, Israeli, and Chinese private and state-owned companies keen to own greater stakes in southern European renewable energy markets.

Although the renewable energy programmes are not a measure imposed directly by the Troika, the reasons for changes in energy policy are deeply entwined with the consequences of austerity, inducing the government to embrace privatization in the desperate need to find the means to repay mounting debts to international creditors. With the breakdown of agricultural markets owing to the bankruptcy of wholesalers, increased fuel prices for haulage, and low consumer spending, diversification towards photovoltaic panels is justified by local investors by the need to 'put food on the table'. In both Thessaly and Chios, people have begun to evince a tangible fear of returning to times of famine, last experienced in Greece in 1941–3, when 300,000 people died in Athens (cf. Hionidou 2006; Knight 2012a; 2012b: 56), and deaths in the main harbour town of Chios saw a fourfold increase from 363 in 1938 to 1,468 in 1942 (P. Argenti 1966: 48; P. Argenti & Rose 1949: 1128–30). Despite widespread anxieties regarding a return to famine in Greece, however, the potential benefits of renewable energy investment to local communities have yet to be made clear, leaving an overwhelming feeling that the government is selling-out Greek soil and heritage to the highest bidder in a general climate of compromised sovereignty.

Three interlocking themes repeatedly arise from conversations on renewable energy programmes with informants in Thessaly and Chios. References to the era of Axis occupation during the Second World War, suppression under Ottoman rule, and the belief that Greek natural resources are being extracted for foreign profit are condensed into narratives of exploitation, victimhood, and collective suffering. These discourses of resource extraction reify in concrete terms more nebulous and intangible anxieties arising as a result of EU-imposed austerity measures.

Under the wings of Daedalus: the photovoltaic (solar) programme

The first large-scale renewable energy initiative in Greece, the solar programme commenced in 2006 and was re-launched in 2011 amidst intense media attention, and will be the topic of the first half of this article. The Greek photovoltaic programme aims to improve energy security in southeast Europe, open the country to international investment and assist the Greek government to repay the nation's debts (Knight 2012b: 63; Knight & Bell 2013: 4). The initiative ranges from plans to construct the world's largest solar park to incentives for homeowners to install photovoltaic panels on private buildings and a special programme for agriculturalists. The most infamous example



Figure 1. A photovoltaic park stands on the agricultural plain in western Thessaly, April 2014. The view is towards the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Meteora. (Photo: Daniel M. Knight.)

of the ambitious solar drive is the ‘Project Helios’ development near Kozani. The plan envisages construction of a 200 MW solar park producing 10 GW of solar energy by 2050 (Fig. 1). Construction will include an adjacent panel factory, creating 60,000 jobs. Government forecasts indicate revenue in excess of €80 billion from the project over a twenty-five-year period, allowing them to cut national debt by an initial €15 billion.

From the outset of the solar programme, local people raised concerns about feeling colonized by opportunists within the national government and the private sector waiting to sell national assets to the highest bidder. When plans for a large solar park near the village of Megalochori were revealed, residents immediately suspected that they would not benefit from the development. Kostas, 35, is a former IT consultant with a young family. He lost his job in 2011 when the company he was working for filed for bankruptcy; his wife cares for their two children and her elderly parents. From a traditionally centre-right-leaning family, he currently lives off his mother’s pension. Kostas can see the site of the new photovoltaic development from his bedroom window. Watching the sun set behind the panels, he revealed his anxieties about the solar park: ‘Greece has so many natural resources, but the new investment will not benefit local people. They are planning to export the energy to Germany and Scandinavia, who require more “green” resources’. Kostas believes that his family will remain in poverty whilst the politicians in Athens have their ‘pockets lined with money once again’. In a climate of radical breakdown in trust between the people and the political class that has ruled since the end of the dictatorship in 1974, even since the rise to power of the left-wing SYRIZA party in January 2015, any new government-sponsored initiative is seen simultaneously as a self-serving ploy by the established political and business elite and as a perfidious

and humiliating capitulation of national sovereignty. It is important to note that Kostas is not an environmental activist or a member of the social movements taking to the streets of Athens to protest against austerity measures. He says that he just wants to 'live his life, raise his family and make an honest living'. Kostas does not trust promises by the local mayor stating that household energy bills will decrease as a result of the new solar development. Echoing sentiment at both ends of the populist political spectrum, he says,

We have heard it all before. These promises are hollow. Do you think that they will employ me to be a consultant on the project? I would even settle to be a labourer, just to secure some form of income. But no, they have already out-sourced the construction to a foreign developer.

Government plans do indicate that the majority of energy produced by large-scale solar installations will be sold at fixed prices to northern Europe and will not benefit local communities. The Greek Regulatory Authority for Energy (RAE) acknowledges that energy export is their primary objective in an attempt to repay government debt. A director insisted that 'this is the way forward, the future for Greece. Any engineering or political problems can be overcome. We must overcome them to export our energy resources to Europe. It is the future'.

Through land diversification towards renewable energy on the Plain of Thessaly, agriculturalists feel that they are being asked to make a choice between a stable monthly income offered by feed-in tariffs and lease agreements or potential economic destitution. For farmers, the average monthly income from selling solar energy to the provider is currently greater than the revenue from crop production, yet the average loan required for a typical 100 kW/h photovoltaic development on agricultural land is €180,000. Loans are advertised as returnable over twenty-five years with repayments automatically deducted from the monthly income provided by the panels. Dionisis, a farmer from Kalampaka in Thessaly, is a prime example of how diversification into renewable energy is seen as the last resort for Greek agriculturalists. Dionisis, 44 years old, has seen his land become 'worthless' since the onset of the crisis. His family have resorted to burning illegally sourced logs to heat their home as they can no longer afford petrol central heating – his two young children complain of being cold at night. In 2012, he installed photovoltaic panels over 50 per cent of his land. 'This is the only way to survive, to pay the rent and feed the family', he tells Knight. 'For generations my family have worked this plain, now it is in the hands of the foreigner . . . my children's future will be decided in Brussels, in Berlin. They decide if we live or die'. Dionisis says that the energy development reminds him of 'the occupier, the foreign hand that dictates our lives . . . we are a colony of the North'. He believes that the solar programme hides beneath a mask of 'sustainability' but in reality his land is degrading, generations of specialized skills are being lost, and he has taken on new debts to subsidize the photovoltaic equipment. This short-term coping strategy has resigned Dionisis to 'a future beyond [his] control', in which the solar panels take on the nightmarish aspect of 'a colonizing army standing to attention, looking over me as I sleep'. There can be no clearer image of the manner in which solar panels have come to reify all of the humiliations and frustrations born of the crisis.

At state level, the harnessing of solar and wind energy is seen to provide the obvious antidote to the black hole of economic squalor (Freudenburg & Gramling 1998: 569), but at the local level people feel that energy developments are totems of colonization and foreign opportunism. In his landmark book on environmentalism in Greece,

Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2003) discusses how locals on the island of Zakynthos oppose external powers ‘telling them what to do’ with their land. In a community where land has historically been a scarce resource, proposals for new forms of land use are met with ardent disapproval based on the notion of ‘toil’ or ‘sweat’ embedded in the land; likewise, Dionisis resents the alternative land use and feels that natural resources are being exploited for short-term economic gain (cf. Theodossopoulos 2003: 30). The top-down ‘colonial’ imposition of new ideals concerning the landscape negates the views of locals whose relation to the land is one of economic necessity, of urgency and struggle at the ‘most basic level of existence’ (Argyrou 1997: 160).

Vassilis, 40 and a former PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) supporter now disillusioned with politics, is a long-term confidant of Knight and works land close to Dionisis. Lamenting the inability of Greek politicians, left and right, to ‘save my country’, he describes feeling stripped of all political agency. Echoing Theodossopoulos’s informants, Vassilis says his family have ‘put blood, sweat and tears’ into the same plot of land since annexation from the Ottoman Empire in the late 1800s. Now Vassilis feels he has been dispossessed and is disillusioned with his own government, as well as angry at ‘opportunistic foreigners’ who have left him with no option but to put solar panels on his land – he has begun ‘planting photovoltaics’ (*fitronoun fotovoltaika*). He protests that ‘the foreigners are bleeding the land, taking everything that Greece has to offer, and we do not benefit’. When Knight asked Vassilis how he felt about turning over his land to solar energy, he replied: ‘From under our noses they take our sun, our wind, our soil. They take the very air that we breathe’. Vassilis says that he works his land daily, as previous generations have done. ‘We touch the soil, breaking our backs to feed our families . . . now the land has been taken from our hands to make money for foreign governments, big companies, and greedy politicians’. Highly critical of the solar scheme, both Vassilis and Dionisis are adamant that ‘mining the sun’, as Vassilis puts it, is a colonial game aimed at harnessing Greek natural resources without giving anything back to the local people. The stark image of appropriating ‘our sun, our wind, our soil’ – the last things that one would imagine could be taken, even by the most rapacious debt collector – effectively diabolizes the northern European bureaucratic and corporate bodies that would contemplate such an unnatural and inhuman feat of economic prestidigitation.

‘They are doing it again’

Collective memory of specific incidents in Greece’s past informs how people discuss the reworked socio-economic landscape. Since the declaration of independence in 1822, Greece has been subject to a chequered history of ongoing tutelage and colonialism: financial, ideological, even occasionally military. As Knight has written elsewhere, in local historical consciousness two past events stand out as particularly significant to comprehending the twenty-first-century crisis: the late Ottoman era of landed estates and Axis occupation during the Second World War (Knight 2015). Research participants in Thessaly feel as though these moments of the past are repeating themselves and they are fearful of the consequences of a new occupation (Knight 2015). On both occasions, alternative land use was the centre of debate as occupying powers enforced new forms of productivity upon local populations (cf. Theodossopoulos 2003). Sudden dependence on increased German and Chinese technology on the plain in the form of energy installations bespeaks in incontestably palpable terms the loss of sovereignty that Greeks feel the crisis has ushered in. Tales of Greeks besieged by Ottoman forces during the

War of Independence often feature a treacherous outsider – a liminal figure such as a gypsy or a widow unrelated to the community – who opens a secret passage in the defences for the besiegers to slip through. The emerging discourse of renewable energy in Greece resurrects this myth in contemporary terms, with the established political class in Greece placed in the role of the treacherous Judas figure, opening the back door of the country to foreign corporate interests.

In conversation with Dionisis in the village coffee shop, a fellow villager named Thomas overheard our discussion about increasing solar energy developments on private agricultural land. Thomas installed solar panels in 2012 after hearing about the programme from another villager who promised him that ‘collaborating with the enemy’ was the only way to survive the economic turmoil. Thomas, 65 and a supporter of the centre-right New Democracy party, had struggled to sell his produce either to wholesalers or at the local market since the onset of the crisis in 2009. He bemoans the current economic situation, claiming not to have enough money to care for his elderly mother who lives with him and his wife. He also has the pressures of paying off his son’s credit card debts and providing for a new-born grandchild. ‘I installed solar panels under protest’, he declares. ‘You see, there is now another German occupation . . . the Germans are dictating how I use my land and telling me to install photovoltaics “or else”’. Dionisis agrees when Thomas suggests that the Germans are holding Greek farmers to ransom, using the tactics of ‘occupying armies’ to force local people to their knees, with German-enforced austerity compelling them to buy German technology. Thomas continues, ‘In the Second World War the Germans raped our land in Thessaly, they took all our resources for themselves and we were left to starve. Now they are doing it again. Not only our land, but our sun! They are basically stealing all our resources’.

Thomas’s fears are compounded by rumours that German companies are buying up the Greek energy sector and that the state plans to export renewable energy to northern Europe. He is also alarmed by the presence of German technology on his land. ‘Just look out the window’, he tells me.

There are two hundred years of family history in fighting for that land you see, fighting against occupiers – Turkish, German, British. But now it is owned by foreign invaders again, by Mrs Merkel. My family have won back their land before and my children will have to do it again, but for now I have no choice but to collaborate.

Thomas, like so many people in Thessaly, temporally condenses the Ottoman era with Axis occupation during the Second World War (Knight 2012*b*; Knight & Bell 2013: 11; cf. N. Argenti in press *a*; in press *b*; Knight 2013*b*: 112; Theodossopoulos 2013). Thomas is acutely aware that his fears of foreign bodies annexing local resources have a strong historical base. The Foreign Director of the Near East Foundation in Athens during the Second World War, Laird Archer, recorded from first-hand observations how occupying forces confiscated hospital food reserves and sealed off entire markets, appropriating the supplies for their own troops and machine-gunning live poultry before repossessing farmland (Archer 1944: 196–7; Mazower 1993: 30). Adding salt to the wounds, such actions were officially approved by the collaborationist government in Athens. Thomas sees resonances of that terrible period with the ‘collaborationist’ New Democracy government of Antonis Samaras, in power at the time of the interview, despite his belief that the leader is ‘the best of a bad bunch’. Pertinently, another aspect of the 1941–4 Axis occupation was the purchase of Greek businesses by German investors (Archer 1944: 198) and a compulsory Greek government loan to Germany. The excessive

extraction of Greek natural and financial resources for the benefit of wartime Germany has suddenly gained new salience, emerging from the somnolence of forgetting into the light of intergenerational memory to give form to a terrible and atavistic new world.

For other agriculturalists, feelings of colonization are emphasized through comparisons with the Ottoman Empire, when the Plain of Thessaly was divided into great estates known as *tsiflikia*. The owners of the estates, the *Tsiflikades*, held rights over whole villages whose inhabitants became their tenants (Knight 2012*b*; 2015; Mouzelis 1978: 77). In Thessaly the landlord-worker contracts were mainly based on agreements whereby the peasant workers gave one-half or one-third of their produce to the landlord.⁶ Like Dionisis and Thomas, Stefanos has also been affected by the solar drive. An agriculturalist whose wife is the manager of a mini-market, Stefanos, 32, has two small children and admits that he has never voted, saying that politicians make him physically sick. He reiterates a line common in Thessaly throughout the economic crisis that compares new relations of land ownership with ‘going back in time’ to the era of Ottoman *tsiflikia*.

This [photovoltaic] programme is offered to me by the government as a way to survive. But I know that they are capitalizing on me, they are making money out of my situation . . . We risk becoming the *tsifliki* of northern Europe as they occupy our land for cheap energy . . . We will become dominated once again by occupying forces, using our land and sun to make money for foreigners, with no benefit to ourselves . . . But my family still have demands for food, clothes, and education, so I must now grow photovoltaics, not corn, and let the governments of Europe exploit me as my ancestors were exploited by four hundred years of slavery to the Turks.

Stefanos’s observations are representative of increasing fears of the atavistic resurrection of landlord-tenant agreements characterized by the *tsiflikia* system. Upon discussing this point of view with Dionisis and Thomas, they agreed that ‘for so many years we fought for private property, our own piece of land, but we are resigned to giving most of the “produce” [energy] to a powerful landlord whom we don’t even know’. Emphasizing the extractive nature of renewable energy production, Dionisis laments that the worst thing is that ‘local people do not benefit’ from what their land produces (solar power) as it is ‘quickly taken away to serve the rich *Tsiflikades* [landlords]’. Incipient in Stefanos’s warning is recognition of the real danger that his land may be repossessed if the return on the energy he produces drops and he is unable to keep up the loan repayments on his solar panels. At another level, however, his narrative of despoliation ensconces current national energy policy and multinational involvement in Greece in the time-frame and the folk genre of foreign exploitation that characterized the history of the region from the colonial period and into the foundation of the nation.

The Greek Regulatory Authority for Energy insisted to Knight that the relationship between landowners, banks, and energy companies is ‘of little importance’ as nationally the majority of solar parks are based on public or abandoned private land. The Authority emphasizes that landowners have not become directly involved in electricity production and cannot claim to be ‘occupied’, stating that ‘a direct or even indirect relationship between landowners and banks providing photovoltaic financing doesn’t really exist; landowners are usually restricted to collecting the monthly lease of their land’. However, this does not dispel the enduring perspective that land is once again coming under occupation by foreign entities that extract resources without benefit to local communities.

Aeolus' bag, or the tragedy of the common wind

After the 2011 re-launch of the photovoltaic initiative, deemed a dramatic success by the Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Climate Change, it was considered appropriate to entertain international investment interest in wind energy. Wind farms have recently been proposed for many Greek islands, including Crete, Skyros, and Chios. Similarly to concerns about the photovoltaic initiative on mainland Greece, however, plans for major wind farm projects have roused strong emotions among local communities.

Iberdrola, a private multinational electric utility company based in Bilbao, intends to construct a 400 MW wind farm on the Aegean island of Chios, with another 306 MW development on neighbouring Mytilene (McGovern 2012). With subsidiaries including Scottish Power (United Kingdom) and Elektro (Brazil), Iberdrola holds significant stakes in the global renewables market as well as in conventional and nuclear energy, currently operating a 539 MW wind farm in Scotland, a 292 MW wind installation in Huelva, Spain, and a 404 MW development in Texas. Since embarking on its growth and international expansion plan in 2001, Iberdrola has become Spain's largest energy group by market capitalization, the global leader in wind energy, and one of the world's largest utility providers.

Iberdrola's plans for Chios include an initial seventy-five wind turbines with a second phase increasing the number to 150. A final third phase will increase the total number of turbines to 300. The plans have met with alarm and serious opposition from islanders and environmentalists alike, citing concerns over foreign ownership and the impact on ecology and tourism on this densely populated island of 904 square kilometres and 53,000 inhabitants. Fronted by a Greek energy investment company named Roca, the Spanish multinational is popularly believed to be exploiting natural resources on Chios for international energy export to other EU nations – or, some islanders darkly suggest, even to Turkey, just 7 kilometres across the water, stirring local historical consciousness of Ottoman suzerainty over the island.

In the run-up to approving the project in 2012, the local council organized a public meeting with a group of experts on wind turbines present, but it was scheduled when most people were at work and could not come. Local media were not present, and only a handful of Chiots showed up. The director of environmental affairs for the regional council of the North Aegean – despite being in favour of the project – pointed out that the proposal included no commitment to connect the wind turbines to the local grid. The plan to build an underwater trunk cable connecting Chios to the mainland is designed to feed the electricity to the national grid, but not to the local grid for local consumption, meaning that Chios might not receive any of the electricity that it produces. Locals argue that the proposal is rife with misleading statements and that the impact study is defective, in particular regarding patterns of bird migration. They also complain that both the local newspapers, *Alithia* and *Politis*, are in favour of the project, relegating protest letters to the back pages yet regularly including articles in favour of the project on the front page.

The Greek Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Climate Change has to approve the wind farm application based on an ecological impact report, and the Ministry of Culture and Sport has to do so on the basis of archaeological preservation. Reports submitted by the local archaeological department to the Ministry of Culture and Sport make a case against the project, stating that the turbines will be far more destructive than photovoltaic panels, and sited in sensitive archaeological sites. The author of the

report suggests that the scale of the wind project is simply too big for the island and does not serve the interests of local communities. She stated to Argenti that the plans only envisage creating five jobs on the island for maintenance workers. Yet she believes that the current economic crisis has tied the hands of the Greek government and made it easier for foreign companies to operate inside the country on large-scale energy projects. She has heard that Iberdrola representatives went to villages to promise residents new roads if the project was approved. (The 150-metre-tall wind turbines would necessitate a substantial network of roads to service them, so road-building is a significant aspect of the project.) There have even been reports that Iberdrola representatives have offered gifts to bureaucrats and politicians involved in the application procedure. The concerns raised in the impact study are echoed by local residents, one stating that ‘over the past two years, the Greek government has had no energy policy. And since the crisis began, their concern for the environment and the cultural heritage of the country has evaporated’.

In contradiction with the formal proposal, one local PASOK councillor stated in a private interview that the turbine project would result in the closure of the fossil-fuel power plant, free electricity for all islanders, and a share of the profits to the local municipality. He further asserted that there will be no environmental costs or any impact on tourism. Paradoxically, suddenly shifting to a populist register as we were taking leave of one another, the councillor suggested that Germany was now preparing to finish by economic means what it had begun by military means in the Second World War. Such contradictory statements, both public and private, have done nothing to allay public suspicion about the project, and demonstrate the use of the discourse of foreign extraction by both sides in the argument.

The Germans are coming

Echoing the voices of concern about the solar parks in Thessaly, many Chiots understand the attempts by a foreign multinational to capitalize on local natural resources as a colonial project. An engineer and environmentalist on the island argues, like many other Chiots, that foreign companies threaten the ecological and cultural patrimony of the island, seeing their interventions as a direct result of the neoliberal demands of the Troika, which he refers to simply as ‘Merkel’. Gathered for lunch in 2012, he and his friends discussed the irony of local church and government celebrations for the centenary of the 1912 ‘liberation’ of the island from Ottoman ‘occupiers’ at a time when the country had never been less free. Since the onset of the economic crisis, the people at the table concurred, Greece had lost its sovereignty, its government, and was now subservient to Troika – and particularly German – tutelage.⁷ When Argenti asked the environmentalist if he might join him in the church service after lunch to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the liberation of Chios, he suddenly dropped his usual tone of gentle irony and exclaimed in a fit of frustration: ‘Tell them there is nothing to celebrate! There is no freedom here! From now on, Roca⁸ is coming, he is going to run *everything* here, and *finita la musica!*’

Later that evening, Argenti was with him again when he received a Facebook message from a friend in Bavaria that included a photograph of a turreted mountaintop castle. He replied without hesitation: ‘I see a beautiful mountain – but no wind turbines. Why? Because they [the Germans] want to fuck *our* mountains!’ Another public posting of his from the day before had protested explicitly against the 100th anniversary of independence celebrations: ‘One hundred years ago, we fought a heroic battle on Mount

Epos⁹ to liberate our island – one hundred years later we sold it to Roca/Iberdrola'. The environmentalist's feminization of the island violated by a German aggressor echoes the voices of Kostas and Thomas in Thessaly, who speak of the rape of their land by Germany. His evocation of environmental degradation as sexual violence, coupled with his depiction of the island's sacred sites commemorating liberation from occupation as desecrated by plans of corporate development, harnesses the honour-shame discourse, taking it from the realm of the family to emphasize the powerlessness of the islanders in the face of global capital (Herzfeld 1980; 1984; Peristiany 1974 [1966]).

He turned to Argenti and asked if he had heard of the myth of the Minotaur. When the Cretans beat the Athenians in a battle, they had demanded that every year the Athenians pay a tribute of seven boys and seven girls to be fed to the monster. 'The Germans are doing the same to us now with their bail-out plan', he warned. With a wry smile, he urged Argenti to write in his forthcoming publications that everyone was starving again in Chios, just as they had been in the Second World War, so that Merkel's unnatural appetite might be assuaged, or that she might turn her malignant gaze upon another victim. Another classical myth he could have referred to would have been that of Aeolus, the god of beneficial winds, who had given to Odysseus a bag tied with a silver string containing all the evil winds of Typhoeus so that they should not impede him on his maritime journey. The fact that his sailors could not resist peering into the bag, with the predictable consequences, evokes the tragedy of the commons of current green energy production, whereby the global good of carbon reduction is experienced by affected populations as being achieved at the cost of the despoliation of local habitats (Howe 2014; Lifshitz-Goldberg 2010). Chiots are acutely conscious of the irony of being made to sacrifice their island in the name of the environment – an irony that for them evokes the double-headed evil of EU interference and national capitulation. The wind, they acknowledge, may be an inexhaustible resource, but islands are not.

The environmentalist channels his frustration through historical tropes of German occupation, which become temporally condensed in his narrative; providing a model for understanding the present crisis and planned wind farm. Rather than discussing Spanish involvement with the proposed wind farm, he locates blame through the well-known repertoire of German and Turkish occupation. In popular discourse on the economic crisis, Spain is often flagged up as a fellow struggler and an ally of Greece against German austerity. 'Spain' does not represent the same historically endorsed trope of Greek exploitation and oppression as Germany.¹⁰

Renewable energy production and environmental degradation

As Dimitrios Theodossopoulos (2003) notes, environmentalist groups in Greece have often clashed with locals over matters of environmental protection and economic development. Discussing the dispute over the protection of loggerhead sea turtles in the face of tourist development, Theodossopoulos delineates how locals see the interference of environmentalists as an imposition on their rights to use land as they please, whilst environmentalists perceive locals as exclusively preoccupied with their personal interests and the maximization of financial profit by uncontrolled development. These tensions arise from the fact that environmentalism is seen to be pursued by predominantly middle-class urbanities in their mid-twenties who are unfamiliar with rural life and dismissive of indigenous relationships with the land (Theodossopoulos 2003: 4–5). In Cyprus, Vassos Argyrou (1997) shows how environmental concerns are usually the domain of the local middle classes, with environmentalism being associated with

civilization and Europeanism, whilst brazen anti-environmentalism is hailed as a form of resistance against hegemonic foreign powers. However, both Theodossopoulos and Argyrou allow space for nuances in these dichotomies. Theodossopoulos notes that this 'one-dimensional interpretation' betrays internally conflicting discourses and occasions when environmentalist and local opinions align¹¹ (2003: 54, 174).

Since the outbreak of the Greek crisis, lines of solidarity and fragmentation have formed in relation to livelihood diversification schemes. When the target of animosity is located away from the self – Germany, America, or corrupt politicians – 'locals' tend to express solidarity against a common adversary. In the case of energy developments in Chios, people who might not normally do so are aligning themselves with the environmentalists opposed to the wind developments, citing foreign exploitation. At the same time, environmentalists are questioning some of the central tenets of their own ideology in rejecting renewable energy production schemes.

Opposition to the wind farm project in Chios has thus spawned heteroclitite protest groups that cut across class and party-political divisions and have wide popular appeal. One such group, *Polites kai Anemogenitries* (Citizens and Wind Turbines), consists of thirty members from all walks of life trying to raise awareness of the Iberdrola plans by showing documentary films and chairing public meetings. Loukis, an active member, says that events have been well attended and over 1,000 signatures have been collected opposing the project. After examining the ecological impact report, the first thing to strike the members was that the project would encroach upon two environmentally sensitive sites with endangered flora and fauna.¹² In the report, issues of environmental concern, including the scale of the turbines, new infrastructure developments, and the re-routing of streams by the road-digging associated with the project, are counterbalanced against the benefits of carbon dioxide (CO₂) cuts. But Loukis, like so many islanders, points out that the contribution of Chios's wind turbines to cuts in global CO₂ production would be risible, while a project on this scale will have grave social and environmental costs for such a small island. As one informant put it, 'in the North Aegean region 1,500 turbines will be erected . . . The island will disappear – it will be the end of Chios'.

Loukis's group is working with people on the neighbouring islands of Lesbos and Limnos who plan to take their concerns to the EU committee on the environment in Brussels. He echoes the view that the project is a direct result of the crisis, put forward at the national level as a form of debt alleviation and deficit reduction but without concern for local consequences. The government is making Greece more attractive to foreign investors by ignoring local communities and downgrading environmental protection legislation.

If this island has something important it is its natural habitat, its cultural heritage; these are the assets and resources of the island. The real wealth of Greece is passed from generation to generation. We need to think about the future generation by protecting what we have and finding the best way to use our heritage in the future.

The writer Yiannis Makridakis, mentioned above, says that environmentalist groups in the Aegean have always been interested in alternative forms of energy production, but multinational energy corporations are now taking advantage of this goodwill to produce a new extraction industry. Yiannis believes that sustainable energy and industry are two different things; just because renewables are generally perceived as clean, green, and 'friendly' does not make the industry harmless. Yiannis is trying to alert people

to the environmental and economic consequences of such large-scale energy projects: 'The environmentalists in Chios are already wary of this project; they have not been taken in by the veneer of environmental sustainability lent to the project by its use of wind power'. Yiannis speaks for many islanders when he espouses the potential of green energy to facilitate self-sufficiency and an end to dependence on multinational corporations and central government. For him and like-minded islanders, green energy controlled by a multinational corporation for the purpose of resource extraction that would leave the island an industrialized factory bespeaks a new proletarianization of Europe's southern margins in an emerging global power structure that traduces the environmental ethos and values of sustainable energy production.

Conspiracy theories centred on exploitation of the natural habitat took a sinister turn when in 2012 one-third of Chios burned in a gigantic forest fire, the smoke plume of which was photographed from space and reached 350 kilometres to Crete. When a high-ranking civil servant allegedly claimed publicly that it is very difficult to take basic preventive measures – such as maintaining anti-fire corridors in the forest – because government legislation does not permit it, environmentalists concluded that the fire was connected in a nefarious way to the wind turbine proposal. Some suggested darkly that the fire may have been linked to a Supreme Court decision that one could use burned forestry land for renewable energy projects, even where that land was a protected national forestry reserve, such as in Chios.

When discussing the fire, Yiannis speaks of a slaughter (*sphaghi*) – the same term used to refer to the infamous massacres of 1822 on the island. He uses the term advisedly, he says, because when the Turks came in 1822, they not only massacred the population, but they also burned the island, incinerating its forest, as happened during the summer of 2012. That is why in his recent newspaper articles and interviews he has referred to the fire as a *sphaghi*: to raise consciousness about the gravity of the fire and its political dimension. Just as the massacres of 1822 woke the conscience of philhellenes around the world, he wants to raise the conscience of a new generation of philhellenes to make the world realize the importance of the environment in Greece and the 'barbarity' of the multinational corporations now placed in the role of the invading Turkish forces. Yiannis puts temporal conflation to use in a discursive project that consciously retraces the nineteenth-century philhellenic equation of Ottoman Greeks with classical Hellenes in their lionizing of the victims of the massacre, seeking to mobilize a new pan-European phalanx of advocates for a modern, Helleno-European Greece that might be pulled from the ashes of its oriental opprobrium.

A computer technician at the local university who has been involved in the petition against the wind turbines goes back further still in his search for the mythemes with which to address the existential danger the island now faces. He tells me that centuries of information are handed down through the landscape. Chios exists, he says, not only in the present: 'If you dig [on Chios] you will find whole other civilizations, levels of consciousness stored in our past'. The people of Chios, he goes on, have for millennia been in contact with the same archetypal landscape. As a result, the island is now inseparable from the consciousness of the Chian people. Contemporary Western culture inures us to the significance of this primordial landscape, leading us to see only the surface, only the present, only consumables that disappear as soon as they are bought. In irreversibly altering the landscape of the island, the wind turbine project would change the consciousness of the islanders themselves, severing them from their past as the windmills sink their pediments into the archaeology and the geology of the

island and tower over the horizon. He evokes a delicate web of relations binding Chiots through the generations back to the classical inhabitants of the island, and beyond them to the geology of the land itself, introducing a trans-human stratigraphy connecting the island to its people. In this vision, the mutually constitutive relationship of the Chiots and their island underpins an ethos he sees as fundamentally incompatible with the short-term consumerist values of a disastrous economic policy and a neoliberal tragedy of the commons.

Energy: the modernity of myth

In the context of fiscal turmoil and externally enforced government policy in Thessaly and Chios, renewable energy initiatives provide a lens through which people elucidate long-standing historical, cultural, and political anxieties concerning the hegemony of the Greek state. In portraying energy programmes as extractive – as providing no benefit to local communities whilst serving ‘colonizing’ outsiders – people express long-standing fears and frustrations about land ownership, economic disenfranchisement, political ineptitude, domestic clientelism, and international tutelage. Until now, theories of extraction have focused exclusively on the impact of fossil fuel and mineral extraction in the global South, yet harnessing renewable energy now raises similar paradoxes for contemporary Greeks about resource ownership, national sovereignty, and the shifting geopolitical boundaries of international ‘energopower’. The fraught questions, urgent debates, and emerging struggles around renewable energy initiatives place energy at the centre of contemporary debates and conflicts in Greece and around the world.

In the crisis, public discussions concerning the history and the legacies of occupation have been outweighed by the pressure on the national government to repay its creditors. For the government officials we interviewed at the Regulatory Authority for Energy and at the Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Climate Change, and for the local politicians and councillors deciding on the solar and wind projects for the islands of the eastern Aegean, there is little option but to follow the path of renewable energy investment that actually helps to maintain the fundamental structures of neoliberalism that led to the current economic crisis. Green though their cladding might be, the interventionist policies and privatization drives emerging in the crisis-ridden ‘PIGS’ of southern Europe (Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain) – implying obligations to new empires and multinational aristocracies – appear as extractive economies of a new kind to citizens weary of such developments and anxious about the future. Many of our research participants believe that the Greek government is proposing that the state become a ‘rent collector’, surviving on the extractive resource rents, taxes, and royalties paid by transnational companies while being exploited as part of the new global South. For our informants, the implications of new energy initiatives reify in the present crisis a history of colonial exploitation that they feel, now more than ever, powerless to contest. So it is that renewable energy projects, based though they are on resources defined as inexhaustible, have none the less come to be perceived in Greece as harbingers of a return to extractive practices and the colonial power relations that have always facilitated this mode of production.

The relations that energy policy and energy transactions instantiate reveal broader fields of power at the local, national, and international levels. Like bread in the French Revolution, energy and its lack encapsulate a myriad of intangible injustices in a tangible form. In this way, energy is good to think with: where access to it is considered a human right, restrictive control over that access becomes evocative of broader inequities and

overarching struggles. Facing the energy corporations' generic narratives regarding the universal benefits of renewable energy projects, counter-narratives of extraction, exploitation, and rape not only record the immediate environmental and economic risks of energy development, but additionally nurture metanarratives of the crisis, spawning 'mythhistories' (Mali 2003; Stewart 2012) that bind the structural violence of the past to the inchoate upheaval of the present, confronting myths of state with legends of people (Kapferer 1998).

In the context of the Greek crisis, the discursive model of extractive economies speaks to wider concerns regarding the collapse of national aspirations to inclusion on equal terms within the European project. With the fading of the hope born of inclusion in the European Union, centuries of marginalization as the 'sick man of Europe'²³ – more Ottoman than occidental – have returned to haunt the collective identity of the nation. The vision of renewable energy as a Trojan horse of neoliberalism resulting from the latest collapse of the state is but one thread – the most explicit one – of a narrative of catastrophic national impoverishment that simultaneously evokes centuries of crisis, international tutelage, and national clientelism and corruption; narrative and metanarrative mutually reinforcing one another and binding the unfathomable evil of the present to the known devil of the past. Where global flows of capital and the politics of patron-client relations are by their very nature either abstract and ungraspable or surreptitious and hidden, the solar panels on the Plain of Thessaly and the wind turbines planned for Chios reify in implacably concrete terms the diffuse and opaque malaise and disorientation of a people in crisis. The relations of disempowerment, exploitation, and inequity that these material objects evoke call forth in turn memories of occupation and famine, images of treachery and rape, stories of heroic resistance and vocabularies of shameful capitulation, and in this manner energy is the modernity of myth; the discourses to which it gives rise knotting the ungraspable absurdity and injustice of the current crisis into the net of past experience – capturing the suffering to come in the memories of losses known.

NOTES

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¹ To protect the identity of our research participants, pseudonyms are used throughout this article.

² Alexis Tsipras, leader of the left-wing anti-austerity SYRIZA party, came to power after a general election held on 25 January 2015, after research for this article was completed. His campaign was based on promises to renegotiate the terms of the international bail-out agreement. The election of SYRIZA was most certainly a vote against Troika austerity and the two-party political establishment that had run Greece since the fall of the junta in 1974, but in relation to the themes of this article, very little has changed. The energy initiatives have continued regardless of the change in government, still resonating with ideas of neo-colonialism, occupation and economic extraction.

³ In her analysis of the development of large-scale wind parks across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, Mexico, Cymene Howe also highlights the paradoxes and contradictions between the claims of carbon reduction and ecological benefits on a global scale made by the energy corporations and the national government of Mexico vs the local concerns of the affected indigenous populations facing local environmental impacts from these wind parks. Noting that local people do not stand to benefit from the energy produced on their land and yet face all the risks and costs associated with its production, she describes the disenfranchisement of local populations in the name of green development as typified by an 'extractive

ethos' (Howe 2014: 388). See also Büscher and Davidov's (2013) discussion of ecotourism economies as extractive.

⁴ As in the case of Chios, the wind parks of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec are backed by Spanish energy consortia, prompting indigenous groups there to speak of a '*nueva conquista*', of a '*despojo de nuestra terra*'; of being robbed or stripped of their land (Howe 2014: 389).

⁵ The case of Shell's oil operations on the lands of the Ogoni people in the Bakassi peninsula provides a perfect example of the problems besetting extractive practices (Boele *et al.* 2001: 77; see also Saro-Wiwa 1995).

⁶ Notions of the re-emergence of the Ottoman Empire are semantically reinforced through popular reference to '*haratsi*' payments – ill-defined new taxes paid on land and property as a consequence of Troika austerity measures. A Turkish word, *haratsi* were originally taxes paid to Ottoman era governors levied on the male non-Muslim populations, and are remembered in Greek popular consciousness as evidence of the exploitative nature of Ottoman domination.

⁷ In Michael Herzfeld's view, since 1822 Greece has sacrificed a great deal of political and economic sovereignty to a European hegemony that continues to influence popular ideas and aspirations. For Herzfeld, Greek 'crypto-colonialist' independence narratives resist domination at the cost of 'effective complicity' (2002: 902-3).

⁸ The Greek middleman fronting Iberdrola.

⁹ The name of the mountain – the site of a monument to the Greek soldiers who fell on its summit in the final battle to liberate the island in 1912 – means 'epic', but its name becomes ironically redolent in this reference of a desecrated heroism, or Pyrrhic victory.

¹⁰ Greek anti-austerity protesters in Athens have regularly demonstrated solidarity with their Spanish counterparts on the streets of Madrid, holding aloft banners expressing unity and even adopting the terminology of the *indignados* (Dalakoglou 2012: 542; Theodossopoulos 2013: 200).

¹¹ Argyrou discusses in detail the connotations associated with environmentalists – from bowing to the will of old colonial powers and being 'soft' to being thought of as 'drug addicts' and 'whores'. At the local level, those who resist environmentalism are characterized in terms of 'moral excellence' – the poor, the bishop, the virtuous woman (Argyrou 1997: 172-3).

¹² The first is a collection of two species of ancient oak and conifer trees (*dris* and *Pinus brutia*). Chios and neighbouring Lesbos are the only European habitat for the *Pinus brutia*, which itself is the unique habitat of the Krueper's nuthatch, *Sitta krueperi*, which now only exists within Europe on Lesbos. Sixty-two trees, between 300 and 400 years old, survive on Mount Epos as the last remnant of an ancient forest. The other vulnerable ecological site is the breeding ground of a migratory bird classed as near threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the *smyrno tsiklono* (*Emberiza cineracea*, cinereous bunting), again unique to Chios and Lesbos in Greece, of which 100 breeding pairs remain (cf. Theodossopoulos 2003).

¹³ The Ottoman Empire was first referred to as the sick man of Europe before the Crimean War, and its poor health used as a justification for intervention in its affairs by the Great Powers. The title has been used of many ailing nations since, and was applied to Greece in 2008 following the riots in Athens (EurActiv 2008).

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Le soleil, le vent et la renaissance des économies extractives : investissement dans les énergies renouvelables et métanarrations de la crise en Grèce

Résumé

En pleine tourmente économique, l'État grec a pris la mesure sans précédent d'ouvrir aux investisseurs étrangers de nombreux secteurs de l'économie nationale qui étaient jusqu'alors fermés. Les opportunités d'investissement ont été particulièrement nombreuses pour les multinationales dans le secteur des énergies renouvelables, où les prospections étrangères dans le solaire et l'éolien se sont envolées. Les auteurs discutent ici de deux initiatives dans les énergies renouvelables : des parcs photovoltaïques sur des terres agricoles en Thessalie, dans le centre de la Grèce continentale, et un projet de parc éolien sur l'île de Chio, dans la mer Égée. Les habitants de la Thessalie et de Chio perçoivent ces projets d'énergies renouvelables dans des termes de conquête et d'occupation semblables à celles de l'époque ottomane et de la deuxième Guerre mondiale. Autant que comme une initiative pour les énergies durables, l'exploitation des ressources naturelles est perçue comme un programme colonial d'extraction économique au détriment du Sud global ; à ce titre, il annoncerait le retour de l'occupation étrangère. L'article examine la relation dialectique qui se crée entre les narrations de l'extraction des énergies renouvelables et les conceptions plus larges et anciennes de l'identité grecque.

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