Twitter Thread by Giorgos Kallis

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Interesting thread, but I don't think ecosocialists or degrowthers are arguing that if German socialists had come to power the world would be green by now. Socialism is not automatically green. Eco-socialism is what it says - a green version of socialism - to be tested /1

> You get the impression from the eco-socialists and degrowthers that humanity wouldn\u2019t face the threat of climate change or biodiversity loss if it weren\u2019t for capitalism (or rather, if it weren\u2019t for capitalist modernity).
>
> But I see no evidence to suggest this is the case.
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> — Leigh Phillips (@Leigh_Phillips) February 2, 2021

The historical counterfactual also in not totally convincing. So let's assume Germany and Europe went socialist. The world economy would have evolved exactly the same way it did? ■ I doubt it, this is too deterministic. Examples: /2

We do not know if the transition from coal to oil would have taken place when it took place, the way it did. From Timothy Mitchell we know that oil was a fix for capitalism to bypass the labour strikes of coal workers. One would think that socialists would treat workers better /3

We also do not know if socialist governments would strong arm the Middle East the way capitalists did, starting wars to secure cheap oil, and setting up puppet governments. One would want to think that Rosa Luxembourg would not go down that path..../4

We also do not know if they would have continued colonial unequal exchange, extracting raw materials as cheap as possible from the rest of the world. Without cheap oil and cheap materials, it is anyone's guess if GDP and CO2 would be where it is now. /5

Socialism in Europe, would enable socialism in Africa or Latin America. Socialists there were against the appropriation of their resources for the sake of Northern growth. They sought to make them significantly more expensive. /6

Socialists like Gandhi, Fanon, Sankara, etc were against growth as an objective even in their own countries. Closer to what we call post-development or ecosocialism today. /7

But also domestically within Europe, we can't be so sure of how national projects and economies would have evolved. I have studied tangentially the Republicans in Catalonia. And they were committed to decentralized peasant based agriculture. /8

Maybe they would have ended up with large-scale, oil-based industrial agriculture. Maybe yes. But also maybe not. Maybe a coalition of socialist states would have pushed ahead with a model that sacrificed some growth for support of peasants or coal workers. Who knows /9

Especially, if we were to assume that there was no Cold War competition, then there would be even less pressure to grow economies (the arms race was a significant driver of growthmanship and growth target competition - see @MGSchmelzer 's book) /10

Final point. The argument I've seen degrowthers and ecosocialists make is that the 20th cent socialist regimes were not truly socialist (some call them even 'state capitalist'). They emulated capitalism's 'surplus to make more surplus', substituting private control of ../11

..the means of production, with state. So the critique to capitalism as a system tied to limitless and ultimately destructive growth, extends to systems nominally socialist that reproduce the same pattern. / END