

ENTRY on « Sustainable » theme

On Land and Water

(digital photography / various dimensions)

Project Statement

Four years after the Paris Agreement, the European Parliament approved a resolution declaring a climate and environmental emergency in Europe and globally. While fossil fuels production and consumption appear to be the main reason of climate change, presenting a major threat for humanity, world leaders are challenged to find alternatives to fossil fuels and drastically reduce CO2 emissions. Even so, the oil industry is growing in the East Mediterranean, inside the EU.

On Land and Water is an ongoing photography project documenting the current expansion of the fossil fuels industry in Greece, as well as the long history of the oil industry and its effects on the environment and on the local population in the neighbouring balkan country of Albania. Albania shares a similar landscape to mainland Greece and carries a complicated history of almost one century of oil extractions.

Today, in the overtone of a striking economic crisis, 1/3 of the greek territory is under exploration for oil and gas by both local and multinational companies such as Repsol, Total and Exxon Mobil. Western Greece, one of the poorest provinces of the EU, is thought to sit on considerable oil reserves and pilot drillings are expected in 2020.

The almost abandoned greek countryside, home to ways of life strongly connected to the land and its mysteries, today fights an existential struggle against severe population decline and high rates of unemployment (2nd highest rate of long-term unemployment in the EU in 2018). Surrounded by a well-preserved natural environment rich in water and biodiversity, population is mostly sustained by agriculture and tourism. In this context, local communities are divided between those who see job opportunities in the oil business and those who opt for green development and clean water for the next generations.

My research started almost one year ago, when I realised that the issue is poorly covered by the media and most of greeks are unaware of the current fossil fuels megaproject and its future consequences. In search of the impact on the oil industry on natural resources and on local communities, the research inevitably led me 200km north the greek-albanian border to the Albanian counties of Fier and Kucove where the oil industry is running since the 1920s. The smell of oil is present everywhere in the air. Sometimes your mouth gets bitter because of it and you feel the urgency to spit. The water is no more drinkable anymore. People living close to Patos Marinza, the biggest onshore oilfield of continental Europe, just don't have another place to go.

The project interweaves landscapes, portraits and testimonies from Greece with pictures from the polluted landscapes of Albania in an effort to raise awareness about the imminent destruction of wild nature and of the ways of life that depend on it. This local story of geopolitical importance for the Balkans, is also a reflection of the decisions of our global community in terms of ecology, sustainability and how we shape our future. If the question was "Oil or water?", what would you choose?

For BIO please check BIO & CV document attached