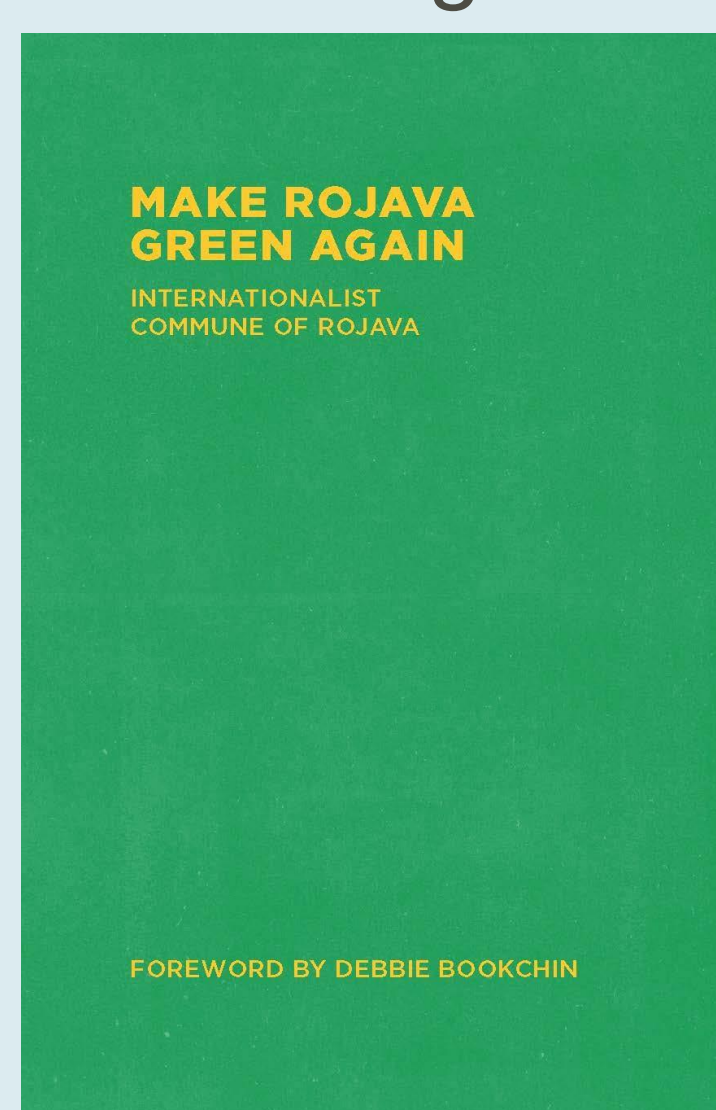


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Introduction

More than a decade has passed since the war in Syria began and today the region continues to be a zone of armed conflict with devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences. In the midst of this turmoil, a new venture has emerged: the Autonomous Administration of Northern and Eastern Syria (AANES or NES), commonly known as Rojava. In 2012, Rojava started forming as a self-proclaimed, self-governing unit and in 2014 claimed de-facto independence by adopting a social contract, establishing a self-governing entity. Rojava aims to implement an innovative model based on direct democracy, gender equality and ecological sustainability. However, the presence of Rojava as a non-state entity is perceived as a threat by the Assad government and by neighbouring Turkey, making it a highly vulnerable project. This vulnerability stems from political power dynamics, military offensives, and a lack of international support, which together challenge the efforts in Rojava to establish and maintain its unique governance model.



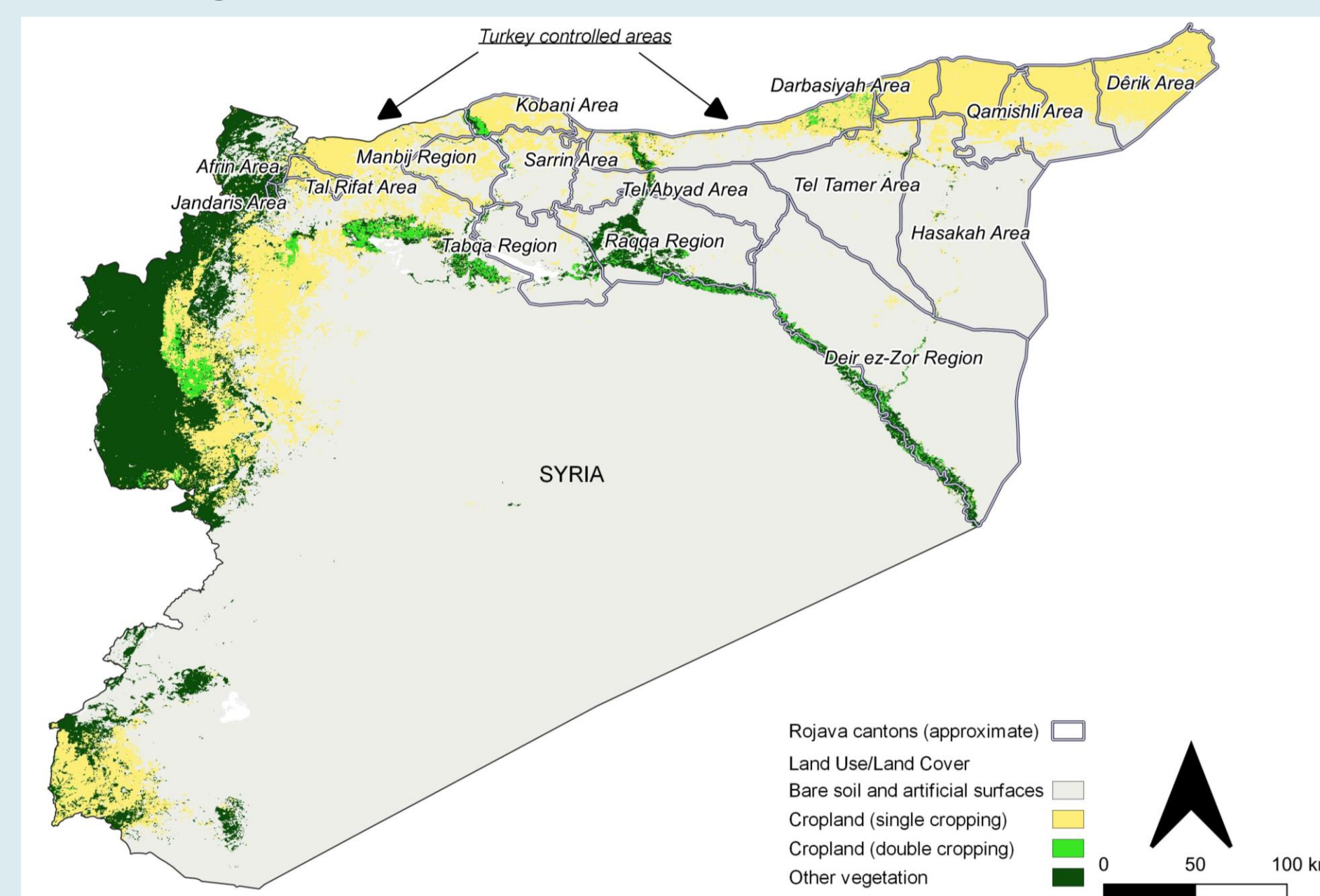
Make Rojava Green Again is a book that explores Rojava's social structures and the idea of social ecology to envision a free, ecological society with more equitable human-nature relationships.

Aims

We aim to understand the ongoing socio-economic, political, and ecological transformations in Rojava. The research team will employ interdisciplinary methods to generate scientific knowledge and policy recommendations for environmental and ecological sustainability and democracy in Rojava. The expected findings will be of particular interest to Syria as a whole, but will also be relevant to wider conflict and post-conflict contexts. This timely project emphasizes both political and environmental dimensions in a region where a peace process may soon emerge after a long war.

Research Questions

- 1) In the context of armed conflict in Rojava/Syria, how do the dynamics of local politics and land use practices in agriculture and agroforestry interact with and influence the region's socio-ecological sustainability and resilience?
- 2) How can national (e.g., Syrian government, Rojava administration), regional (e.g., Turkey, Iran), and international actors (e.g., Russia, United States) contribute to a potential peace process that fosters environmental sustainability and ecological democracy in the region?



Most frequent land use and land cover in (North and East) Syria between 2000 and 2019.

Methods, Theory and Empirical Focus

We apply a critical political ecology approach to understand and connect the following key concepts: ecological/environmental sustainability, ecological/environmental democracy, and socio-ecological resilience. It applies interdisciplinary methods in three interrelated Work Packages (WPs):

- WP1 establishes an understanding of the environmental changes and their correlations with armed conflict through satellite images and spatial analyses.
- WP2 identifies key actors, events, and locations through document analysis (e.g., academic literature, reports, newspaper articles, statements, etc.).
- WP3 delves into oral accounts and perspectives of key actors through key informant interviews and ethnography.

The empirical focus is on Rojava, using a comparative approach with the rest of Syria. The project looks closely at rural and urban agriculture and forestry in Rojava, how the armed conflict in the region is affecting the local economy and natural environment, and the different strategies people are using to resist the adverse effects on their livelihoods.




Jinwar: an ecological women's village in Rojava. Copyright permission from Jinwar 2023.

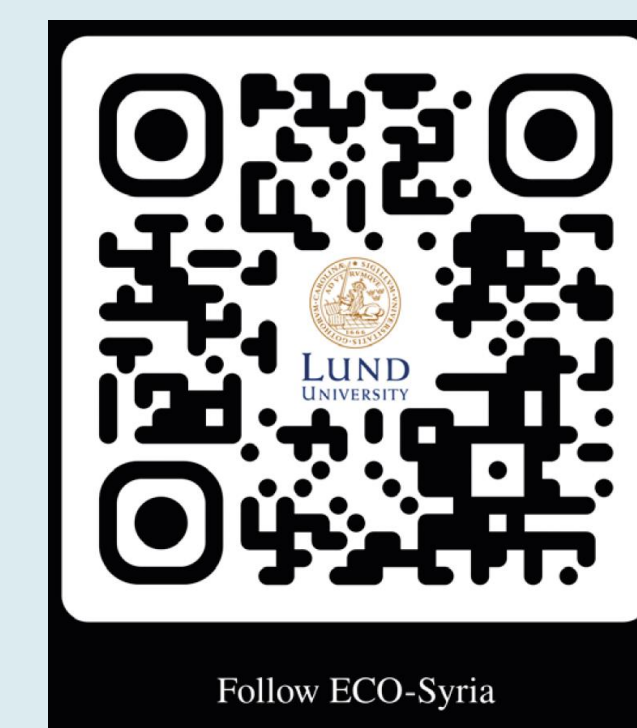
Expected Outcomes

- Scientific knowledge of land cover and land change from a historical perspective, based on remote sensing data and oral and written accounts from the ground, showing how conflict, local politics, and environment play out in Rojava and Syria.
- Dialogue between policymakers, stakeholders, experts, and local actors.
- Evidence-based policy recommendations to achieve Sustainable Development Goals in post-conflict Syria: 5-Gender Equality; 13-Climate Action; 15-Life on Land; and 16-Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Research Team

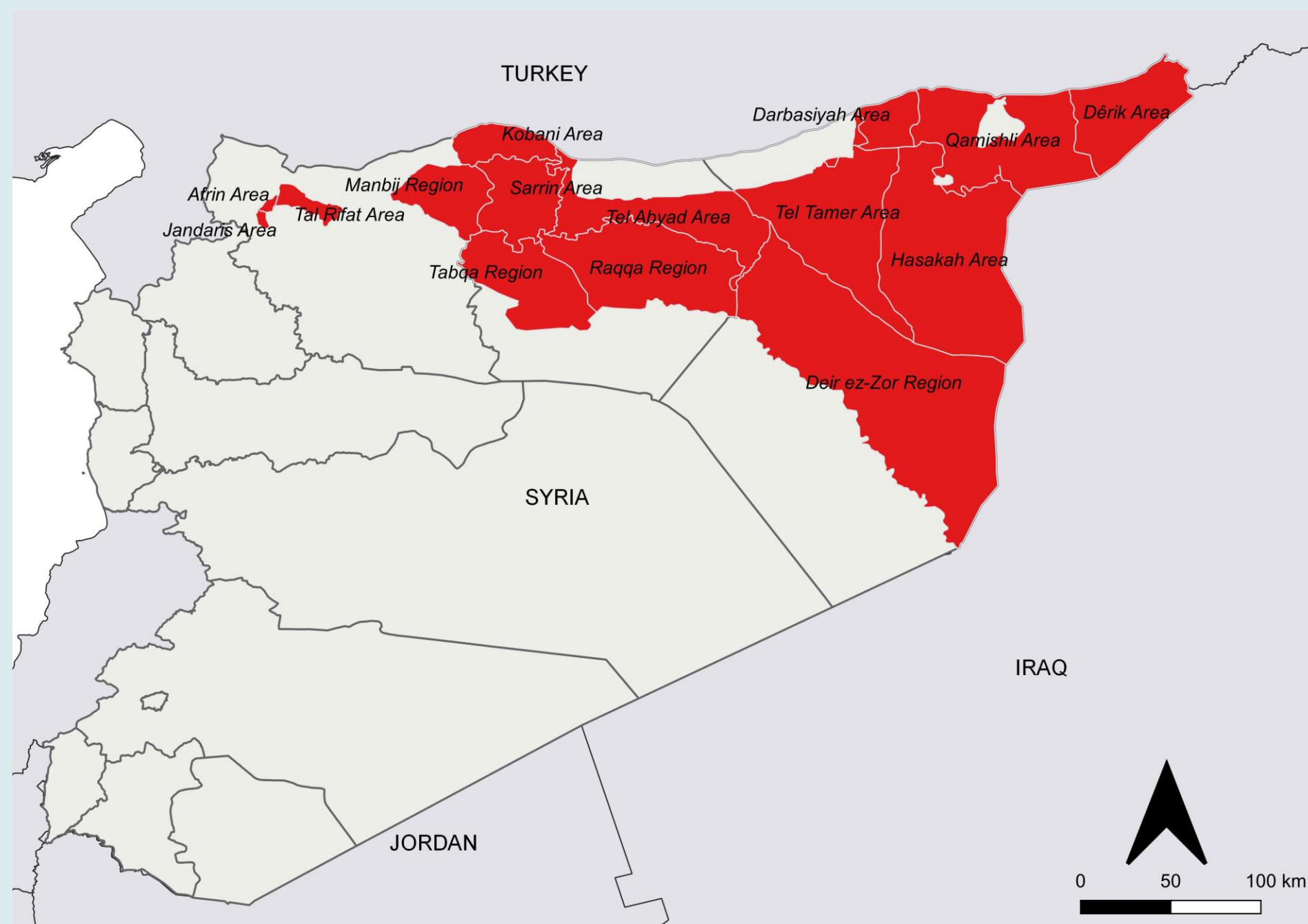
				
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The study area: approximate de-facto boundaries of North and East Syria (Rojava) 2023.