

# Session: The Scottish Degrowth Commission: work, livelihoods and a 'just transition'

## Session hosts:

Dr Svenja Meyerricks | [Enough! Scotland](#) | svenja@enough.scot

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**Summary:** 'The Scottish Degrowth Commission' is a panel discussion to explore how degrowth ideas and practices can influence ideas to restore people's work and livelihoods in Scotland in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and its economic fallout.

**Where:** At the [International Online Joint Conference](#) of the international degrowth research networks, the International Society for Ecological Economics and the European Society for Ecological Economics, hosted by University of Manchester, UK.

**When:** 6th July 2021, 13:45 - 15:15 (full programme [here](#))

## 1. Peatlands - An Exercise in Reimagining

**Bethany Copsey and Ireen van Dolderen**

**Affiliation:** [RE-PEAT](#), a youth-led collective pushing for a peatland paradigm shift | info@re-peat.earth

**Abstract:** Peatlands are weird and wonderful ecosystems. They possess a number of unique attributes. In this talk we will focus primarily on their ability to help us reimagine futures and societies. Reimagine. It is quite clear that many people, institutions and structures are lacking imagination currently. We are unable to collectively and individually dream up alternative systems. We want to challenge this condition, provoking people to enter a state of radical reimagination, to unfurl the expansive, magical and curious realms of our minds. We will use peatlands as our portal. Peatlands are places of inbetweenness, lending a useful metaphor to the current moment. Through them we can reevaluate distinctions between dead and alive, water and land, then and now. Peat landscapes are very different to those we have become accustomed to thus to shift back again to how the landscape once looked requires transformations mentally as well as physically on a societal and personal level. Our presentation provides an introduction to reimagining and using the natural world as a means to do so. We will draw parallels between the degrowth movement and the imagination required to rethink our societies in such ways, and equip people to begin reimagination processes.

We will cover a peat 101 including the current common perceptions of peatlands. Then we will move to the reimagining aspect. We will challenge participants to reimagine the nature and future of peatlands through a few different exercises. If we can reimagine peatlands, what else can we reimagine?

## 2. "Space to Breathe": COVID-19, Reappropriating Space, and the Urban Degrowth Agenda

**Scott Leatham**

**Affiliation:** Scott Leatham is tutor of MSc students at intersections of knowledge, citizenship, critical thought, and environmental education at the University of Edinburgh (Moray House). He is also a

lecturer in political ecology at the Centre for Alternative Technology (Wales) and an Early Career Researcher. He holds a PhD in global political ecology completed June 2020 | [sleatham@ed.ac.uk](mailto:sleatham@ed.ac.uk)

**Abstract:** This paper aims to contribute to the emerging urban degrowth agenda by bringing together strands within consumerism, culture, and (urban) political ecology in the context of COVID-19 and its novel productions/ contestations of urban space. I draw on Edinburgh, Scotland as a case study, which gives a context of pre-existing urban contestations amid rising impacts of tourism and private development, and novel assemblages of third sector and grassroots campaigns with local council interventions. Reclaiming space for walking, wheeling, cycling, (socio-)natures, and other forms of being in the city, is shown as a slowing of the urban metabolism in contestation with the neoliberal growth-centred appropriation of the city. A place-based political ecological approach offers a means of considering local manifestations of a growth-oriented political economy in material urban forms and symbolic structures, and the material and discursive challenges to this as moments of repoliticisation.

This paper reports on two phases of the research, while a final phase is planned for later. First, I systematically analyse the emerging urban degrowth literature. I then perform a qualitative discourse analysis of elite policies and interviews with local organised groups. This helps map actor assemblages and the discourses they deploy, helping clarify and expand the identification of stakeholders and allies in the goal of other-than-growth urban being. The results show how aspects of growth-oriented discourses are destabilised in practice. The analysis contributes to a better understanding of the novel implications of COVID-19 on degrowth and city transformations, moments of governance, and emerging contestations.

### 3. **The Cuchubal and the Commons: Sharing Circles, Food Sovereignty & Organising Bioregionally**

**Catriona Spaven-Donn and Diana Garduño Jiménez**

**Affiliations:** Catriona is on the Climate & Gender team, UN House Scotland & Casagua Eco Project, Guatemala | [catrionasd1@gmail.com](mailto:catrionasd1@gmail.com). Diana is Project Officer at Nourish Scotland | [diana@nourishscotland.org.uk](mailto:diana@nourishscotland.org.uk)

**Abstract:** As part of the imagined Scottish Degrowth Commission, we address Indigenous lifeways, the essential work of farmers and the just transition to a healthier food system built on agroecological principles. Organising within and around our bioregions as a strategy of resilience in the face of ecological crisis must entail the replacement of linear systems with holistic sharing circles and common resources within planetary boundaries. Informed by the Indigenous Mayan tradition of monthly foodstuff contributions to a common pool, the *Cuchubal*, we propose global transformation through local action, mycorrhizal networks of community growing and feminist decolonisation as key to healing with the earth.

Motivated by Nourish Scotland's Fork to Farm Dialogues and the burgeoning network of small-scale food growers in Scotland and internationally, we re-imagine our roles as food producers, consumers and decision-makers as key to re-localising, horizontalising and thriving – in Scotland, in Latin America, and everywhere. We can be a world of many worlds (following the Zapatista call for *un mundo donde quepan todos los mundos*); a world of abundant bioregions & reciprocal relations.