The UK’s suicidal Rosebank decision – Scotland needs a stronger response

Rishi Sunak’s scandalous decision to go ahead with the exploitation of the Rosebank oil and gas field, alongside Keir Starmer’s cringe-worthy non-response – ‘yes, we’re opposed but no, we won’t do anything about it’ – has left the Scottish government and the SNP with an open goal. Unfortunately, Humza Yousaf and his Net Zero and Just Transition minister, Mairi McAllan, are being so careful not to blast the ball over the bar, they seem reluctant to kick it at all.

The desire seems to be there, sort of. After weeks of edging himself off the fence on the issue, the First Minister did say this was the wrong decision. Mairi McAllan said the same. The Scottish government’s Energy Secretary, Neil Gray, said, rather tamely, that the SNP administration was “disappointed” while pointing out, correctly, that Rosebank would not contribute to ‘energy security’, as most of the oil produced would be sold abroad. In fact, Equinor, the Norwegian state oil company that has been given the go-ahead to exploit Rosebank, was more forceful in its dismissal of the bogus argument about energy security used by the Tory government in London and the oil lobby in Scotland. It said if the UK wanted any of the oil it plans to extract from Rosebank, it would have to buy it on the open world market.

The sound of opposition from SNP ministers is a lot weaker than that coming from Caroline Lucas, still the only Green MP in Westminster, who called it “morally obscene” and “a climate crime”, or from the Scottish Green Party, the SNP’s partner in the Scottish government, whose spokesman, Mark Ruskell, called it an “utter catastrophe” that showed “total contempt for our environment and future generations”.

The day after the announcement, Mairi McAllan told the BBC's Good Morning Scotland that the Scottish government had had "long-standing concerns" about Rosebank and had been "calling for a very strict climate compatibility test, an evidence-led test, to be applied". When quizzed on what evidence was needed, she said there were a series of things that needed to be evaluated: firstly, whether it was in line with both Scotland and the UK's climate commitments, including to the Paris Agreement and its goal of keeping global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius; but also to things like energy security and the rights of workers in the northeast of Scotland.

We may agree these are vital concerns (although what exactly was meant by energy security could be controversial). However, insisting on them now seems pointless, unless it is just a rhetorical device to avoid saying clearly that no oil or gas should be extracted from Rosebank, or any other new field in the North Sea or elsewhere. We already know because we have been told, endlessly, by the scientists of the UN's IPCC, by the International Energy Agency, and by Antonio Guterres himself, not to mention the climate justice movement across the world and thousands of representatives and experts from the Global South, that staying within the 1.5 limit is simply incompatible with any new oil or coal extraction, and that we also have to phase out, rapidly, the wells and mines that are currently operating.

Most recently and conclusively, we have also been told by the very oil company responsible (as we mentioned before) that Rosebank and any other new North Sea fossil fuel production will contribute more or less zero to any kind of energy security. And although there are many, justified fears among workers in the northeast, oil workers themselves have told researchers that they want to be involved in a just transition away from fossil fuels. Some of them have begun to push for that themselves and to design what it might look like, through the important Our Power campaign.

The SNP government's problem is that it feels unable, or unwilling, to confront the oil lobbies or its right wing. It's unclear if the suspension of the right-wing, anti-Green, anti-woke MSP, Fergus Ewing, might signal a small shift in this respect. But the roots of such reluctance run deeper. They flow from the party's history and its character – as a nationalist party caught between its genuine, social democratic desire to build a fairer, more decent country, that seeks to combat poverty and exclusion at home and deal decently with migrants, the Global South and the planet, and its refusal to challenge or even query the iron laws of the market economy. The latter is cemented by its yearning to become a junior outpost of the supposedly progressive, European capitalist class.

This has been accentuated since the bruising leadership campaign at the beginning of the year, when Kate Forbes' explicitly right-wing, business-first, climate-light campaign came within a whisper of beating Humza Yousaf as bearer of the legacy of former First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon.

The police investigation into the party's accounts a few weeks later, with the formal questioning of Sturgeon's husband and then herself, drove the process further. Whatever the reality, if any, behind the case, it was certainly used to try to discredit the SNP as a whole and to push the new Yousaf administration to the right.

Ironically, the central target of that campaign, Nicola Sturgeon herself, has come out more strongly against the Rosebank go-ahead than her proteges. She tweeted her agreement with Caroline Lucas calling the approval an act of environmental vandalism, and saying risks slowing the green transition that oil and gas workers need to happen at pace.

The fact is that a sizeable majority of people in Scotland want their government to take urgent action to combat climate change. And despite its constrained powers under devolution,

there is a lot it can do too. Taking a clear, unequivocal stand against Rosebank and any other new fossil fuel projects in the North Sea would be a start. It would be one way of marking a clear difference with the pusillanimous position of Starmer's Labour leadership and might even help win the crucial Rutherglen election.

More strategically, that stance against any new oil and gas needs to be clearly stated in the Scottish government's long-overdue response to the public consultation on its seriously inadequate Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, and built into its new Climate Change Plan, due to be published in November.

It should look at how it can use its existing powers – in areas like planning, transport, and health – to wage a guerrilla campaign against the implementation of new fossil fuel extraction.

And it could put in serious doubt the long-term viability of investments like those of Equinor, if it promised that any government of an independent Scotland would make a priority of nationalising and closing down Rosebank and any other new fields, without compensation.

Such bold action may seem unlikely, unless there is some serious pressure pushing in this direction.

We could all take courage from the historic success of the *Yes to Yasuni* campaign in Ecuador, led by environmentalists and the powerful Indigenous movement, which persuaded nearly 60% of the population to vote in August in favour of mandating their government to leave the oil in the soil beneath the mega-diverse Amazonian rainforest.

Iain Bruce

28 September, 2023

Photo: Steve Eason

Stand with Ukraine: UK TUC backs their right to resist Russian aggression

Fred Leplat reports on the UK TUC Congress in Liverpool
The TUC congress on 12 September adopted overwhelmingly a motion in solidarity with the people Ukraine in their war of liberation from Putin's invasion of their country. Three major unions, the RMT, the UCU and the NEU, abstained while the FBU spoke against the motion. It commits the TUC to support "The immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014" and "A peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people". The motion also states that the TUC notes "That those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible".

TUC Resolution Affirms Solidarity with Ukrainian People

The position now adopted by the TUC, which has unions representing over 5.5 million workers, is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular. The TUC policy is now to support "The full

restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction that … rejects deregulation and privatisation," which is the opposite of what the Tory government was pushing at its Ukraine Reconstruction conference in June with its neoliberal emphasis on private investment and reforms.

> *"The position now adopted by the TUC…is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular."*

The TUC resolution is pro-Ukraine, not pro-war. However it was caricatured by Andrew Murrayof the Stop the war Coalition as "a call for the trade unions to align in support of the most hard-line elements among NATO policy-makers and push for the war to continue until Russian surrender". The StWC denounced the vote as "A vote for war that Sunak and Starmer will welcome", while the SWP declares that the "TUC backs war and clears the way for more arms spending." These responses fall into the binary trap set by Blair and Bush to win support for the war in Iraq: "Either you support the war or you support Saddam Hussein." It is entirely possible to support the people of Ukraine in their armed resistance, be critical of Zelensky's neoliberal government and also oppose NATO.

No to NATO Expansion and Arms Escalation

Internationalists cannot condemn Ukrainians because they are using every means available for their self-defence. If the war is one mainly for liberation of the country from Russian imperialism, Western imperialism is also involved for its own geostrategic interests. Of course, NATO and Western imperialist countries have not suddenly been converted to being fighters for democracy. They happily support and sell arms to many dictatorships, such as Saudi Arabia, provided they are loyal to their interests. While the TUC motion is silent on the role of NATO, conversely, it does not repeat the

Starmer position of “unshakable” support for NATO. The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected. Describing the conflict as only a “proxy war” by NATO removes from the Ukrainians any self-determination, and erases Putin’s responsibility for the military aggression and the brutal treatment of Ukrainian civilians.

> *“The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected.”*

The position adopted by the TUC is a welcome contrast to that adopted a few days earlier by the G20 summit in India. The G20 stepped back from the support they gave to Ukraine in 2022. The G20 summit last year declared that it “deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine”. This year, it did not directly mention Russia or Ukraine, and stated vaguely that states should “refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition.”

Eighteen months after the beginning of the war, there seems to be no quick end. While the Ukrainian army has made some gains recently, it has not yet routed the Russian troops. Arms continue to be supplied by the West, but not in sufficient quantities. Internationally banned cluster munitions and dangerously toxic depleted uranium shells are being supplied to Ukraine. These risk the war escalating into a direct inter-imperialist conflict.

The Ukrainians desperately want peace and freedom. But a ceasefire for peace negotiations without simultaneously a withdrawal of Russian troops is in reality and annexation of parts of Ukraine. This will not bring lasting peace. While there have been several attempts at peace negotiations, some

were not encouraged by Western leaders who see the war as an opportunity to marginalise Russia. However, Russia's position has remained that any peace plan can only proceed from Ukraine's recognition of Russia's sovereignty over the regions it annexed from Ukraine in September 2022, and that Ukraine should demilitarise and "de-Nazify". While Ukraine, quite reasonably, wants recognition of its territorial integrity along internationally recognised borders. Putin is unlikely to make any moves for peace any time soon as he has already suffered two defeats. He failed in a quick war for regime change in Kyiv, and NATO has expanded further with Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. Putin's naked aggression and invasion of Ukraine has been a gift to NATO which has found a new purpose in a fight for democracy, replacing the failed war against terrorism. Hence the push for increases in defence spending and the possible return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, both of which should be opposed.

The Ukrainians have made tremendous sacrifices and suffered enormous casualties with over 70,000 dead and 120,000 injured. Russia's casualties are even higher, with close to 300,000 of which 120,000 have been killed, according to the Guardian. A staggering total of 500,000. Apart from the ecological devastation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes, Ukraine is now the most mined country in the world.



The mood of Ukrainians is resigned and sombre, but support for the war effort is still there. A Gallup poll conducted a year ago in September 2022, showed that 70% of Ukrainians wanted to continue the war with Russia until victory. Political solidarity and humanitarian aid are necessary to demonstrate that the Ukrainians have not been abandoned. There have been many spontaneous and independent efforts of practical support for Ukrainians. Today, 64% of Europeans agree with purchasing and supplying military equipment to Ukraine (it is

93% in Sweden). With the US presidential elections in 2024, Trump's continuing electoral threat and his isolationist policies are affecting the mood in Washington. How long will NATO's support for Ukraine last if the economic cost for western capitalism is too high a cost to pay for the Ukrainians fight for democracy? That's why it was always right to say "don't trust NATO". No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.

"No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them."

What you can do:

- Circulate the motion from the TUC, and amend it as necessary.
- Invite Ukrainian trade-unionists and socialists to speak to your organisation.
- Twin your workplace or trade-union with a similar organisation in Ukraine.
- Raise funds for medical and humanitarian aid.
- Support the anti-war activists being persecuted and imprisoned in Russia.
- Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org www.ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
- or in Scotland
- uscscotland@gmail.com https://ukrainesolidarityscot.wordpress.com/https://www.facebook.com/groups/USCScotland



Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Fringe meeting at TUC Liverpool. Included in the picture: Maria Exall TUC President, Gary Smith GMB National Secretary, Barbara Plant GMB President, Chris Kitchen NUM General Secretary, Simon Weller Assistant General Secretary ASLEF, John Moloney PCS Assistant General Secretary.

This article is reposted from Anticapitalist Resistance: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/stand-with-ukraine-tuc-backs-their-right-to-resist-russian-aggression/

Headline picture: Ukraine refugees hold GMB We Stand with Ukraine placard, George Square, Glasgow, August 2023 (M Picken)

Radical Independence Campaign announces conference on impasse in independence movement

The Radical Independence Campaign invites supporters to join a conference aimed at finding a way through the movement's current impasse.

Break the Impasse: Towards Independence

Saturday, 21 October 2023 11:00 – 16:00

Location: The Renfield Training and Conference Centre Glasgow

260 Bath Street Glasgow G2 4JP (Journey Planner here)

The movement for Scottish self-determination is at an impasse – we are stuck. The Radical Independence Campaign invites independence supporters and the wider Scottish left to join us at a conference in Glasgow on Saturday 21st October to help find a way to break the impasse.

This grassroots-focused event is the first in-person RIC conference since the pandemic and follows an online conference in 2021 which attracted hundreds of participants.

Programme

The conference will begin with speakers from a range of invited organisations, including the Scottish Greens and SNP Socialists, offering their views on the way forward, followed by breakout discussions in which participants can discuss their response to the speakers.

After lunch, there will be a series of participatory workshops on issues including climate justice, trade unions and independence, and how we get organised at a local level.

The day will conclude with a plenary session aimed at establishing concrete next steps.

More information about the programme, including speakers and workshops, will follow.

Get involved

We wish to create a friendly forum to contribute to a discussion on where Scottish politics and the independence movement finds itself now, and to explore the options and strategic implications of the proposals coming from different parts of the movement.

We want to have a good conference with lively discussions that produce clear decisions and commitments – in other words, a well thought-out strategy and plan of action to take forward RIC and the movement for Scottish self-determination.

For more information or to help us organise the conference, please email contact@ric.scot.



Radical Independence Campaign on the march at COP26 in Glasgow, November

2021

BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE Campaign Launch – Glasgow Friday 29 September

*Get Glasgow Moving are launching **BETTER BUSES FOR STRATHCLYDE** – a campaign focused on winning an improvement to bus services in the greater Glasgow/Strathclyde region. They are holding a launch in Glasgow on Friday 29 September, details from Get Glasgow Moving's news release below.*

JOIN THE LAUNCH RALLY

> ***Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am***
> *SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent St, Glasgow, G2 5JF – Journey Planner here*
>
> *Please share details on Twitter, Facebook & Instagram to help spread the word.*

The next year is crucial in our long-running fight to **take our buses back into public control**. So we're joining forces with trade unions, community councils, environmental groups, students and pensioners associations and more, to launch a new region-wide campaign.

Better Buses for Strathclyde is inspired by the success of the Better Buses for Greater Manchester campaign, which pushed their transport authority, TfGM, into bringing their region's

buses back into public control in order to deliver a fully-integrated, accessible and affordable public transport network called the Bee Network:

By bringing together bus users and employees from across Strathclyde's 12 council areas, Better Buses for Strathclyde will put pressure on our regional transport authority, SPT, to utilise the new powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to deliver a similar fully-integrated, accessible and affordable system for us – and on the Scottish Government to provide the necessary funding and support.

THE NEXT YEAR IS CRUCIAL

From September 2023 – March 2024, SPT is developing the new 'Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy' which will set the direction of bus policy in our region for the next 15 years (until 2038).

This offers us **a once-in-generation opportunity** to end the chaos caused by bus deregulation (introduced by Thatcher in 1986), which has seen millions of miles of routes cut and fares hiked well above inflation.

We must ensure that SPT's strategy sets out ambitious plans to:

- re-regulate the all private bus companies in our region (through 'franchising') so that it can plan routes to serve communities' needs and connect seamlessly with trains, ferries and Glasgow's Subway, with one simple, affordable ticket across all modes.
- And to set-up a new publicly-owned bus company for Strathclyde (like Edinburgh's Lothian Buses) which can start taking over routes and reinvesting profits back into expanding and improving our network.

And we must ensure that the Scottish Government provides the funding and support necessary for SPT to deliver the world-

class public transport system that the 2.2 million people living across Strathclyde need and deserve.

Please join the Better Buses for Strathclyde launch rally on Friday 29 September 2023, 9:30am at SPT Head Office, 131 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5JF – as we get ready to build the campaign over the next year.

The launch rally takes place as part of the Better Buses National Week of Action and Scotland's Climate Week.



Bus Campaigners including Get Glasgow Moving protest at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh

Republished from: https://www.getglasgowmoving.org/campaign/betterbuses/

Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

There is continuing widespread interest in debate on Degrowth. ecosocialist.scot is keen to encourage this debate. We published Michael Lowy's Nine Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth recently, and below we are republishing two more topical contributions. The first is an overview of the Degrowth debate from Alan Thornett's Ecosocialist Discussion site and the second is an introduction to degrowth concepts from the Scotonomics newsletter that was also published by Scottish daily newspaper 'The National'.

Degrowth: a remarkable renaissance

This article was written for the current edition of the Green Left's publication Watermelon in advance of the Green Party conference AT

There has been an upsurge of interest in degrowth –a long-discussed strategic alternative to climate chaos and not just from the radical left. It is experiencing a renaissance at the moment, driven by the relentless rise in global

temperatures and the resulting climate chaos.

It was the theme of a three-day conference in May entitled 'Beyond Growth 2023' which filled the main hall of the European Parliament with mostly young and enthusiastic people. It was organised by 20 left-leaning MEPs and it was opened by the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

According to the Economist report the young audience 'whooped and cheered' when it was proposed that some form of de-growth will be necessary to avoid societal collapse."

In July, Bill McKibben – the veteran environmental campaigner, founder of 350.org, and prolific author – had a major article in the New Yorker strongly advocating degrowth from an historical perspective.

Numerous books supporting degrowth – to varying degrees and stand points – have been also published recently from the left: The Case for Degrowth by Giorgos Kallis et al; Less is More how degrowth will save the world by Jason Hickel; Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism by Kohei Saito; and The Future is Degrowth by Matthias Schmelzer.

A recent book opposing degrowth is Climate Change as Class War, by Matt Huber – from, in my view, an ultra-left and voluntaristic position. He has reviewed himself in the current edition of Jacobin.

Growth is the driving force of the environmental crisis. Over the past 60 years the global economy has grown at an average rate of 3 per cent a year, which is completely unsustainable. John Bellamy Foster has pointed out that a 3% p.a. growth rate of would grow the world economy by a factor of 250 over the course of this century and the next. Over the same period the global human population has risen from 3.6 billion in 1970 to 8 billion in 2022.

Such growth rates are incompatible with the natural limits of the planet, and will ultimately defeat any attempts to resolve the environmental crisis that fail to deal with it.

An early attempt to analyse this issue was undertaken in 1970 by Donella Meadows and a team of radical young scientists from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was published in 1972 as the Limits to Growth Report

The Meadows Report, as it became known reached the monumental conclusion that: "if the present growth in world population, industrialisation, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continues unchanged", the limits to growth on the planet will be reached sometime around the middle of the 21st century. The most probable result "will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity."

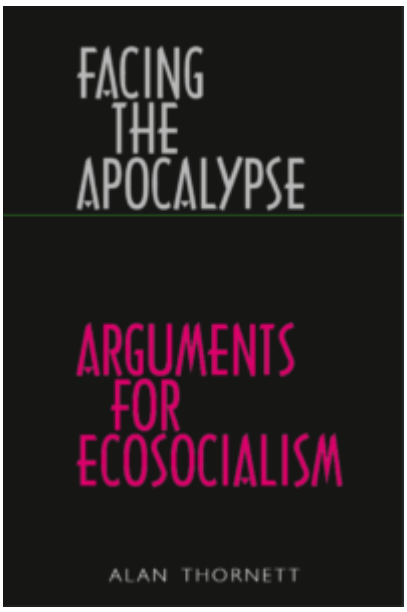
It sold 12 million copies world-wide, was translated into 37 languages. and remains the top-selling environmental title ever published. It also became the driving force behind the emergence of the ecology and green movement in the 1970s, and the degrowth movement itself.

It was remarkably accurate, as Bill McKibben notes, and it's conclusion puts us exactly where we are today, facing increasing frequent climate related societal breakdowns that may soon become generalised.

McKibben also notes that Ursula von der Leyen directly referenced to the Meadows Report at her opening speech in Brussels: "Our predecessors", she had said, "chose to stick to the old shores and not lose sight of them. They did not change their growth paradigm but relied on oil. And the following generations have paid the price."

The Report, however, was ignored by the socialist left, with a few exceptions. Tony Benn's Alternative Economic Strategy of the 1980s, for example, made ever-faster economic

growth its key demand. No wonder the trade unions and the Labour Party remain dominated by growth productivism today because they have never been challenged by the left.



William Morris – the outstanding environmentalist in the 19th century – had also gone unheeded when he raged against useless and unnecessary production. In his lecture 'How We Live and How We Might Live', delivered in December 1884 in Hammersmith [Image above]– he raised the issue of how to live dignified and fulfilling lives without the need for mass produced commodities and consumerism, and what kind of future society could best provide such an approach.

What degrowth offers is a planned reduction of economic activity, within a different economic paradigm, and first and foremost in the rich countries of the Global North. Giorgos Kallis puts it this way in The Case for Degrowth (page viii): "The goal of degrowth is to purposefully slow things down in order to minimise harm to human beings and earth systems".

Jason Hickel in Less in More (page 29) –– tells us that degrowth is: "a planned reduction of excess energy and resource use in order to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a safe and equitable way".

The adoption of such an approach will need a mass movement involving everyone who is prepared to fight to save the planet on a progressive basis, including environmental movements, indigenous movements, peasant movements, farmers movement as well as trade unions and progressive political parties. It must demand that the big polluters pay for the damage they have done. This means heavily taxing fossil fuels in order to both cut emissions and to ensure that the

polluters fund the transition to renewables as a part of an exit strategy from fossil fuel that redistributes wealth from the rich to the poor, and is capable of commanding popular support. Such an approach must be the cornerstone of ecosocialism and an ecosocialist strategy designed to save the planet from ecological destruction and create a post-capitalist, ecologically sustainable, society for the future.



Alan Thornett, ecosocialist writer and activist, was a leading British trade unionist and car worker in the 60s and 70s

Written by Alan Thornett September 2013. Republished from https://www.ecosocialistdiscussion.com/2023/09/16/degrowth-a-remarkable-renaissance/ Alan Thornett's 'Facing the Apocalypse – Arguments for Ecosocialism' is published by Resistance Books and available for £15 here.

An introduction to degrowth: What is it and how does it work?

This is the latest edition of the Scotonomics newsletter – click here to receive it free to your inbox every week.



As a global society, we must pursue policies to reduce material consumption and increase our wellbeing. This is the core of degrowth.It is exceptionalism that leads us to think that our economy, which grows by consuming natural resources, can grow forever. There must be a limit. That much is self-evident. However, even for those who agree that there is some future limit, many people think that we are a long way from that.

It is often a shock when you tell people that with an annual growth rate of only 3%, the economy doubles in only 24 years. By 2070, it would be four times bigger than it is today. Can we really look at our ecological problems and seriously picture an economy four times bigger?

2070 might seem too long a timeframe. So, let's look at 2050. There are approximately 9.7 billion people on the planet. If all of them were to live according to the living standards of a country like Scotland, assuming that 3% growth, our global resource use would be 15 times higher than it is today.

It is the bury-your-head-in-the-sand growth paradigm that is detached from reality.

Growth is not wellbeing

The mistake our society continues to make is to consider

growth the same thing as wellbeing. The growth of an economy can increase and reduce wellbeing. Degrowth makes this connection implicit; a degrowth economy is one in which well-being increases.

Ecological economist Herman Daly talked about "economic and uneconomic growth", and he suggested that it is likely that economies in the global north became "uneconomic" at some point in the 1980s. Herman's argument focused on the depletion of non-renewable resources, the ecological consequences of overfilling waste sinks and an understanding that not all expenditure is beneficial. Spending £10 billion to deal with an oil spill would increase GDP. But it is hard to argue that it improves wellbeing.
The idea that growth is always good has become what George Monbiot (above) calls a "root metaphor". So deeply rooted is the idea that growth equals well-being that it frames our understanding and choices without us even being aware. Growth is now more than a simple process; it has become a powerful idea.

According to degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis: "Growth is not only a material process. It is also a cultural, political and social process. Growth is an idea, produced, imagined and instituted. An idea that growth is natural, necessary and desirable."

Degrowth challenges that growth is natural, necessary or desirable.

Degrowth is a broad transformative process. It is a decrease in ecological damage and an increase in well-being.

In a degrowth economy, our human society reacts in a co-evolutionary way to its surroundings, in a way familiar to humans for around 99% of the last 100,000 years. In other words, we act more in tune with our environment.

Degrowth is selective and will involve increases in some things and decreases in others, such as less private and more

public transport.

In a society guided by degrowth policies, we set limits on harmful activities and move our society to stay within specific and defined boundaries. Our life, not our economy, is placed within the planet's biophysical boundaries. Once we return to within our current constraints, these boundaries can be seen as fluid, advanced or reduced by managing technology and other factors to create a steady state or "Goldilocks" economy.

Degrowth policies, in general, are highly redistributive. It is degrowth for the global North to allow space for "economic" growth, as defined by Herman Daly, for the global south.

Within global north nations like Scotland, degrowth starts with the wealthiest in society. The actions and lifestyles of the wealthiest degrow before anyone else, and there is a clear rationale for this. In the UK, the top 1% emit 10 times as much carbon yearly as the poorest do in two decades. Where else could you possibly start if you wanted to be effective?

There are no "non-reformest reforms" in a degrowth paradigm. However, a degrowth economy would be familiar enough to today's economy that we can use today's economic terms to make sense of a degrowth economy.

The ecological economist Tim Jackson, who describes himself more as a "post-growth" economist, wrote in his book Prosperity Without Growth: "The economy of tomorrow calls on us to revisit and reframe the concepts of productivity, profitability, asset ownership and control over the distribution of social surplus."

"It calls for a renegotiation of the role of the progressive state." This would need to happen in a degrowth economy.

The end game for degrowth is a much more balanced society and

economy that prioritises planetary well-being. It is a post-capitalist world.

Common among those who support degrowth is the belief that degrowth is inevitable: We deal with the need to drastically reduce throughput by design or by disaster. Degrowth uses the agency we have to solve the problems we have created.

In next week's article, we will take a closer look at degrowth policies.

Join us at 2.30pm on September 27 to discuss all of the topics we have discussed this month.

Republished from The National. https://www.thenational.scot/politics/23800528.introduction-degrowth-work/

Join the Scotonomics mailing list here

Picture: 'How We Might Live' – from the cover of How We Might Live: At Home with Jane and William Morris by Suzanne Fagence Cooper

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Rising Clyde: Cumbrian Coal – leave it in the ground

This month's Rising Clyde programme is about the protest movement against the proposed coal mine in West Cumbria with a discussion with Cumbrian climate justice activist, Allan Todd, and interviews with Cumbrian activists at the 'speakers'

corner’ events against the coal mine.

Rising Clyde is the Scottish Climate Show, presented by Iain Bruce, and broadcast on the Independence Live Channel. Previous editions can be found in the embedded video above, Episode 14, by clicking in the three lines in the top right hand corner and choosing from the video list.

Allan Todd is a climate and anti-fascist activist, and has been active with Greenpeace and XR. He participated in the anti-fracking protests at Preston New Road in Lancashire, where he organised the ‘Green Mondays’ from 2017 to 2019. Allan is a member of Anti- Capitalist Resistance and of Left Unity’s National Council. He is the author of Revolutions 1789-1917 (CUP) and Trotsky: The Passionate Revolutionary (Pen & Sword). His next book is Che Guevara: The Romantic Revolutionary.

The host of Rising Clyde, Iain Bruce, is a journalist, film maker and writer living in Glasgow. Iain has worked for many years in Latin America. He has worked at the BBC and Al Jazeera, and was head of news at teleSUR. He has written books about radical politics in Brazil and Venezuela. During COP26, he was the producer and co-presenter of Inside Outside, a daily video briefing for the COP26 Coalition.

Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth

Ecosocialist writer and Fourth International activist. Michael

*Löwy. presents **‘Nine Theses on Ecosocialist Degrowth’** in an issue of the US magazine [Monthly Review] dedicated to a discussion on this important topic. If you can afford it please buy this issue (details below).*

I. The ecological crisis is already the most important social and political question of the twenty-first century, and will become even more so in the coming months and years. The future of the planet, and thus of humanity, will be decided in the coming decades. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change explains, if the average global temperature exceeds the pre-industrial period by 1.5°C, there is a risk of setting off an irreversible and catastrophic climate change process. What would be the consequences of this? Just a few examples: the multiplication of megafires destroying most of the forests; the disappearance of rivers and the exhaustion of subterranean water reserves; increasing drought and desertification of land; the melting and dislocation of polar ice and rise in sea level, leading to the flooding of the major cities of human civilization—Hong Kong, Kolkata, Venice, Amsterdam, Shanghai, London, New York, Rio de Janeiro. Some of these events are already taking place: drought is threatening millions of people in Africa and Asia with hunger; increasing summer temperatures have reached unbearable levels in some areas of the planet; forests are burning everywhere over increasingly extended fire seasons; one could multiply the examples. In some sense, the catastrophe has already begun—but it will become much worse in the next few decades, well before 2100. How high can the temperature go? At what temperature will human life on this planet be threatened? No one has an answer to these questions. These are dramatic risks without precedent in human history. One would have to go back to the Pliocene Epoch, millions of years ago, to find climate conditions similar to what could become reality in the future due to climate change.

II. What is responsible for this situation? It is human

action, answer the scientists. The answer is correct, but a bit short: human beings have lived on Earth since hundreds of thousands of years ago, but the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere started to accumulate only after the Industrial Revolution and only began to become dangerous to life since 1945. As Marxists, our answer is that the culprit is the capitalist system. The absurd and irrational logic of infinite expansion and accumulation, productivism, and the obsession with the search for profit at any price are responsible for bringing humanity to the brink of the abyss.

The capitalist system's responsibility for the imminent catastrophe is widely recognized. Pope Francis, in his Encyclical Laudato Si, without uttering the word "capitalism," spoke out against a structurally perverse system of commercial and property relations based exclusively on the "principle of profit maximization" as responsible both for social injustice and destruction of our common home, nature. A slogan universally chanted the world over in ecological demonstrations is "System Change Not Climate Change!" The attitude shown by the main representatives of this system, advocates of business as usual—billionaires, bankers, so-called experts, oligarchs, and politicians—can be summed up by the phrase attributed to Louis XV: "After me, the deluge." The complete failure of the dozens of United Nations COP Conferences on Climate Change to take the minimal measures necessary to stop the process illustrate the impossibility of a solution to the crisis within the limits of the prevailing system.

III. Can "green capitalism" be a solution? Capitalist enterprises and governments may be interested in the (profitable) development of "sustainable energies," but the system has been dependent on fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) for the last three centuries, and shows no sign of willingness to give them up. Capitalism cannot exist without growth, expansion, accumulation of capital, commodities, and profits,

and this growth cannot go on without an extended use of fossil fuels.

Green capitalist pseudo-solutions such as “carbon markets,” “compensation mechanisms,” and other manipulations of the so-called “sustainable market economy” have proven perfectly useless. While “greening” goes on and on, carbon dioxide emissions are skyrocketing and catastrophe gets closer and closer. There is no solution to the ecological crisis within the framework of capitalism, a system entirely devoted to productivism, consumerism, and the ferocious struggle for market share. Its intrinsically perverse logic inevitably leads to the breakdown of the ecological equilibrium and the destruction of the ecosystems. As Greta Thunberg put it, “it is mathematically impossible to solve the ecological crisis in the framework of the present economic system.”

The Soviet experience, whatever its merits or shortcomings, was also based on the logic of growth, grounded on the same fossil resources as the West. Much of the left during the last century shared the ideology of growth in the name of “developing the productive forces.” A productivist socialism that ignores the ecological crisis is unable to answer the challenges of the twenty-first century.

IV. The degrowth reflection and movement that emerged in the last few decades has made a great contribution to a radical ecology by opposing the myth of an unlimited “growth” on a limited planet. But degrowth in itself is not an alternative economic and social perspective: it does not define what kind of society will replace the present system. Some proponents of degrowth would ignore the issue of capitalism, focusing only on productivism and consumerism, defining the culprit as “The West,” “Enlightenment,” or “Prometheanism.” Others, which represent the left of the antigrowth movement, clearly designate the capitalist system as responsible for the crisis, and acknowledge the impossibility of a “capitalist degrowth.”

In the last few years, there has been a growing coming together of ecosocialism and degrowth: each side has been appropriating the arguments of the other, and the proposal of an “ecosocialist degrowth” has begun to be adopted as a common ground.

V. Ecosocialists have learned much from the degrowth movement. Ecosocialism is therefore increasingly adopting the need of degrowth in the process of transition to a new socialist ecological society. One obvious reason for this is that most renewable energies, such as wind and solar, (a) need raw materials that do not exist an on an unlimited scale and (b) are intermittent, depending on climate conditions (wind, sun). They cannot, therefore, entirely replace fossil energy. A substantial reduction of energy consumption is therefore inevitable. But the issue has a more general character: the production of most goods is based on the extraction of raw materials, many of which (a) are becomingly increasingly limited and/or (b) create serious ecological problems in the process of extraction. All these elements point to the need for degrowth.

Ecosocialist degrowth includes the need for substantial reductions in production and consumption, but does not limit itself to this negative dimension. It includes the positive program of a socialist society, based on democratic planning, self-management, production of use values instead of commodities, gratuity of basic services, and free time for the development of human desires and capacities—a society without exploitation, class domination, patriarchy, and all forms of social exclusion.

VI. Ecosocialist degrowth does not have a purely quantitative conception of degrowth as a reduction in production and consumption. It proposes *qualitative* distinctions. Some productions—for example, fossil energies, pesticides, nuclear submarines, and advertising—should not be merely reduced, but *suppressed*. Others, such as private cars, meat, and

airplanes, should be *substantially reduced*. Still others, such as organic food, public means of transport, and carbon neutral housing, should be *developed*. The issue is not "excessive consumption" in the abstract, but the prevalent mode of consumption, based as it is on conspicuous acquisition, massive waste, mercantile alienation, obsessive accumulation of goods, and the compulsive purchase of pseudo-novelties imposed by "fashion." One must put an end to the monstrous waste of resources by capitalism based on the production, on a large scale, of useless and harmful products: the armaments industry is a good example, but a great part of the "goods" produced in capitalism, with their inbuilt obsolescence, have no other usefulness but to generate profit for large corporations. A new society would orient production toward the satisfaction of authentic needs, beginning with those which could be described as "biblical"—water, food, clothing, and housing—but including also the basic services: health care, education, transport, and culture.

How to distinguish the authentic from artificial, factitious, and makeshift needs? The last ones are induced by mental manipulation, that is, advertisement. While advertisement is an indispensable dimension of the capitalist market economy, it would have no place in a society transitioning to ecosocialism, where it would be replaced by information on goods and services provided by consumer associations. The criterion for distinguishing an authentic from an artificial need is its persistence after the suppression of advertisements (Coca-Cola!). Of course, old habits of consumption would persist for some time, and nobody has the right to tell the people what their needs are. The change in patterns of consumption is a historical process, as well as an educational challenge.

VII. The main effort in a process of planetary degrowth must be made by the countries of the industrialized North (North America, Europe, and Japan) responsible for the historical

accumulation of carbon dioxide since the Industrial Revolution. They are also the areas of the world where the level of consumption, particularly among the privileged classes, is clearly unsustainable and wasteful. The "underdeveloped" countries of the Global South (Asia, Africa, and Latin America) where basic needs are very far from being satisfied will need a process of "development," including building railroads, water and sewage systems, public transport, and other infrastructures. But there is no reason why this cannot be accomplished through a productive system that is environmentally friendly and based on renewable energies. These countries will need to grow great amounts of food to nourish their hungry populations, but this can be much better achieved—as the peasant movements organized worldwide in the Vía Campesina network have been arguing for years—by a peasant biological agriculture based on family units, cooperatives, or collectivist farms. This would replace the destructive and antisocial methods of industrialized agribusiness, based on the intensive use of pesticides, chemicals, and genetically modified organisms. Presently, the capitalist economy of countries in the Global South is rooted in the production of goods for their privileged classes—cars, airplanes, and luxury goods—and commodities exported to the world market: soya beans, meat, and oil. A process of ecological transition in the South, as argued by ecosocialists, would reduce or suppress this kind of production, and aim instead at food sovereignty and the development of basic services such as health care and education, which need, above all, human labor, rather than more commodities.

VIII. Who could be the subject in the struggle for an ecosocialist degrowth? The workerist/industrialist dogmatism of the previous century is no longer current. The forces now at the forefront of the social-ecological confrontations are youth, women, Indigenous people, and peasants. The resistance of Indigenous communities in Canada, the United States, Latin

America, Nigeria, and elsewhere to the capitalist oil fields, pipelines, and gold mines is well documented; it flows from their direct experience of the destructive dynamics of capitalist "progress," as well as the contradiction between their spirituality and culture and the "spirit of capitalism."

Women are very present in the Indigenous resistance movement as well as in the formidable youth uprising launched by Thunberg's call to action—one of the great sources of hope for the future. As the ecofeminists explain, this massive women's participation in mobilizations comes from the fact that they are the first victims of the system's damage to the environment.

Unions are beginning here and there to also get involved. This is important, because, in the final analysis, we cannot overcome the system without the active participation of urban and rural workers who make up the majority of the population. The first condition, in each movement, is associating ecological goals (closing coal mines, oil wells, coal-fired power stations, and so on) with guaranteed employment for the workers involved. Ecologically minded unionists have argued that there are millions of "green jobs" that would be created in a process of ecological transition.

IX. Ecosocialist degrowth is at once a project for the future and a strategy for the struggle here and now. There is no question of waiting for the conditions to be "ripe." It is necessary to provoke a convergence between social and ecological struggles and to fight the most destructive initiatives by powers at the service of capitalist "growth." Proposals such as the Green New Deal are part of this struggle in their more radical forms, which require effectively renouncing fossil energies—but not in those reforms limited to recycling the system.

Without any illusions on a "clean capitalism," one must try to buy time, and to impose on the powers that be some elementary

measures of degrowth, beginning with a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The efforts to stop the Keystone XL Pipeline, a polluting gold mine, and a coal-fired facility are part of the larger resistance movement, called Blockadia by Naomi Klein. Equally significant are local experiences of organic agriculture, cooperative solar energy, and community management of resources.

Such struggles around concrete issues of degrowth are important, not only because partial victories are welcome in themselves, but also because they contribute to raising ecological and socialist consciousness while promoting activity and self-organization from below. These factors are decisive and necessary preconditions for a radical transformation of the world—that is, for a Great Transition to a new society and a new mode of life.

Michael Löwy is emeritus research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris. He is the co-author, with Bengi Akbulut, Sabrina Fernandes, and Giorgos Kallis, of the call "For an Ecosocialist Degrowth" in the April 2022 issue of Monthly Review, and author of Ecosocialism: A Radical Alternative to Capitalist Catastrophe (Haymarket Books, 2015).

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