Peatscapes
The Social Science of Peatland Restoration

Objectives

1. Illuminate the local implications of peatland restoration for pre-existing uses of peat and peatlands
2. Map how a range of restoration strategies and techniques are articulated across different social and ecological contexts

Study Sites

Two sites in the UK:

1. Honeygar Nature Reserve, on the Somerset Levels
2. The Great Fen, on the East Anglian Fenlands

Two sites in Estonia:

1. The Lavassaare Peatlands
2. The Kolga-Jaani Peatlands

Significance

Understand peatland restoration as a social process

This will entail examining the locally-specific compromises and trade-offs required for peatland restoration to be effectively scaled-up, and the challenges of translating approaches between contexts.

Engage with diverse forms of expert knowledge about peat

This will mean engaging with the knowledge about peat produced by stakeholders, restoration practitioners, and natural scientists.

Methods

1. Review of Grey Literature

We will need to engage fully with the ecological, hydrological, and atmospheric science of peatland restoration. This will be necessary in order to understand how different techniques interact with pre-existing social contexts.

2. Desk-based and walking interviews

Desk-based interviews with restoration ecologists, site managers, peat extractors.

Walking interviews with restoration practitioners, local stakeholders, and volunteers.

3. 'Photovoice'

Photovoice is a recent methodological development in social science, it involves prompting participants to take photographs, in our case of peatlands, and also record why they took this particular photograph. These participant-generated images can then be analysed, in concert with interview transcripts.

Outcomes

1. Four peer-reviewed articles
2. Critical overview of key policy and public engagement challenges
3. Interdisciplinary symposium at the University of Bristol
4. Online oral-history archive, containing Photovoice Gallery and interview transcripts

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