

## **Degrowth meets Feminist Political Ecology: Towards a care-full and pluridiverse intersectional degrowth transformation (Part I)**

In this two-part session, affiliates of the Feminism and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) put Degrowth and Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) into dialogue. We aim to explore what a degrowth transformation might entail from intersectional, pluridiverse and placed/situated perspectives (Haraway, 1988; Kothari et al., 2019). The sessions will be centred around the guiding question “what would it mean to make degrowth truly care-full and to put social reproduction at the heart of socio-ecological transformations?”

In the first part, we dive into **Commoning stories of the reproductive caring economy from various geographies**. In the second part, we explore the **Co-weaving of theories and praxis for an intersectional degrowth transformation**.

We propose the following questions to steer the explorative sessions' discussion:

- What can we learn from the ‘caring commoning’ citizens’ movement, and movements from the South who are prefiguring, feminising and decolonising the path to change within, against and beyond the confines of the growth-oriented system (Motta, 2021)?
- What kinds of insurgencies of care, ecologies of intimacy and socio-ecological transformations might we need to re-member and co-weave (Simpson, 2017)?
- To what extent is this also a cosmopolitical and epistemological pluridiverse task and praxis (Lugones, 2010)?
- How are emancipatory and critical lineages of pedagogical practices central to the how of these processes?
- To what extent do the categories of social reproduction capture this politics of ecology and how would we develop categories of critique and being-knowing through engagement with Indigenous and communities of colour and extend beyond human and non-human kin?

**Format: Paper session**

**Keywords for the sessions:** intersectional feminism, care economy, decoloniality, degrowth, commoning practises, pluriversity

**I: Communities of care/commoning caring practises/stories of the reproductive caring economy**

- 1) Practising feminist futures of Degrowth: An ethnographic study on ecovillages in France by Nadine Gerner

- 2) The toxic workplace versus subversive localism: care in the pandeconomy by Myfan Jordan
- 3) The planetary health need for a care-full degrowth transformation: lessons from Dutch reproductive caring commons by Winne van Woerden

1.

**Practising feminist futures of Degrowth: An ethnographic study on ecovillages in France**  
**Nadine Gerner, Lecturer at the University of Münster**

This study examines social practices of degrowth in socio-ecological niches using the example of ecovillages. Supposedly, the progressive and emancipatory label often associated with such communities makes them more likely to challenge power structures or even transcend gendered relations, roles and practices. Hence, a special focus lies on their organisation of care work and the practice of gender relations. My research conceptually draws on feminist political ecology aiming to explore what we can learn from ecovillages in terms of feminist degrowth in practice. Guiding questions are: *Which role does gender play in community life? How is care work organised? Which importance is accorded to reproductive tasks?* The presentation offers ethnographic insights into three french ecovillages. Theoretically, a social practice approach is drawn upon in order to study the materialities, the images and the competencies which constitute practices of cooking, cleaning, child-raising and food supply in eco-communities. The qualitative research is based upon participant observation collected via field notes and 10 semi-structured and narrative interviews. The study shows the potentials and ambivalences of ecovillages centering their daily practices around ecological, community and self care. New forms of caring and commoning were identified, and the role of gender in everyday practices partly deviated from or partly reproduced hegemonic patriarchal practices. Even if ecovillages do succeed in changing the narratives of growth and care such ecological and care-full practices do not automatically lead to a genderjust organisation and valorisation of reproductive tasks as well as a feminist (and intersectional) practice of degrowth.

**Keywords: Gender, collective care, ecofeminism**

**Short Bio:**

Nadine (M.A.) recently graduated from her double degree in „International and European Governance“ at the University of Münster (Germany), Sciences Po Lille and Toulouse (France). As she specialised in sustainable development and gender studies throughout her Master she became passionate about Degrowth and Ecofeminism. Hence, she centered her Master Thesis around the practice of feminist degrowth in ecovillages. Currently, Nadine is planning a PhD in the field of Feminist Political ecology and giving a seminar on ecofeminism at the University of

Münster. Her research interests are: Intentional communities, social movements, ecofeminism and care. Besides, she is also active in the climate justice movement.

2.

**The toxic workplace versus subversive localism: care in the pandeconomy** by Myfan Jordan, Director [Grassroots Research Studio](#) in Naarm, 'Australia'.

**Abstract:**

Colonial capitalism remains a highly gendered and racialized project. While legislation to drive equality has resulted in higher rates of participation in employment for women in the 'global North', age, gender, and other hierarchies shape life outcomes, it is the abiding and dual nature of care – both commodified and yet invisible – that is the key driver of gendered ageing in Australia. As a 'consumable', care in Australia has been institutionalised within the hegemony of public funding and then fragmented under a neo-classical economic paradigm. Outcomes for both care recipients and the care workforce, a highly feminised and ageing labour cohort.

That Australia's health sector is predominantly linear in structure, hierarchical and medicalized routinely leaves women workers lacking autonomy and job satisfaction. Workplace bullying and burnout are routine with Australia's Fair Work Commission showing healthcare topping the ladder of workplace bullying. Grassroots Research study suggests older women workers are a 'generation expendable': vulnerable to un-/under-employment, to heightened occupational health and safety risks including bullying and burnout. Yet the pandemic has seen informal caring networks flourish. This proliferation of local caring 'commons' offers an alternative narrative to growth capitalism; potentially even a structure from which we might pivot towards a sustainable model of degrowth where both people and planet are cared for equally.

**Keywords:** Relationalism, Localism, Burnout

**Short Bio:** Myfan is the Director of Grassroots Research Studio, who recently published research on older women workplace experiences in the 'pandeconomy', '[Generation Expendable?](#)' Myfan has spent 20 years working at the grassroots as an advocate and researcher, specialising in "bottom-up" policy development and co-design methodologies. She has expertise in ageing and aged care, LGBTIQ+, housing, gender, disability and intersectional disadvantage. Myfan is an Associate of the Healthy Ageing Research Group at La Trobe University, a member of the Australian Association of Gerontology and of The Research Society. She has worked extensively in local government and the non-government sector.

3.

**The planetary health need for a care-full degrowth transformation: lessons from the reproductive caring commoning practises at Dutch citizens collectives, Winne van Woerden .**

Lead Researcher Degrowth & Caring at Commons Network Foundation, The Netherlands

For a care-full degrowth transformation to happen, a rethinking of health and reorganisation of care, based on different values and practises, is imperative.

Towards this end, this study ought to explore the central social, governing and provisioning features of caring commoning practises that already exist in the fringes of today's growth-based societies. A qualitative explorative case study was performed with five citizens' initiatives located in the Netherlands part of the Dutch network for citizens' initiative on care, housing and well-being and in total 17 in-depth interviews were conducted. Analysis of the findings showed that these 'caring commons' emerged from holistic understandings of health and well-being which focused on socioeconomic aspects and prevention, but did not in particular reconcile ecological-centred values with human health and well-being. Meanwhile, caring commoning practises seem to promote a shift to a more locally oriented economy and a culture of sharing and cooperation, where resources are used more sustainably. Through being demand-driven, promoting solidarity in interpersonal relationships and by extending paid care work with voluntary activity at community level, caring commons have the potential to (re)integrate the 'ethics of care' with the provisioning of care; make care more reciprocal and approachable. Lastly, initiatives aimed to involve those affected by decisions as much as possible in their decision-making processes; move from competition towards cooperation; and from specialisation towards integration, which clashed with bureaucratic procedures and growth-focused market dynamics prevalent in the formal healthcare system, hence being identified as an important hindrance for scaling-out commoning of care.

**Keywords: Caring commons, Degrowth, Health**

**Bio:** Winne van Woerden works as a Lead Researcher Degrowth & Caring at Commons Network Foundation, The Netherlands. Her latest research focused on topics rooted in ecological and feminist economics, including degrowth, the commons and the caring economy. Winne also has experience working as a policy advocate on health issues with civil society networks. She has a background in Global Health, specifically in Political Economy of Health and Planetary health and is currently obtaining a second masters in Degrowth & Political Ecology from the Autonomous University of Barcelona.