

Waste, Improvement and Repair on Ireland's Peat Bogs

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Since the 1950s, the rural midlands of Ireland have been the site of large-scale industrial peat-cutting. With the phasing out of the peat industry, these post-industrial 'waste' landscapes are now being positioned as central to the country's 'green' and 'smart' futures as sites for renewable energy, carbon sequestration and information services. Contemporary discourses of waste and bog landscapes resonate with discourses in the 18th and 19th centuries, when colonial efforts to drain and reclaim these semi-aqueous territories were driven by moral as well as economic imperatives. In this chapter, we aim to disrupt linear accounts of bog progress and ruination that rely on binaries of waste/value, to surface 'submerged' bog relations that pre-date and endure in spite of their designation as 'un-valuable' within colonial and post-colonial economies. Our contribution is that 'repair', rooted in maintenance, endurance and liveability, while not spectacular, resists the temporality of boom/bust, even if remaining ambivalent in political expression. © 2023 Bristol University Press.