

# Ye Doughnut

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Jamie Cooke of RSA Scotland proposes that our economic model to be more local and how 'Doughnut Economics' could be an approach to take a city scale.

The Glasgow 'Doughnut' and Re-Thinking our Local Economy

As the COVID-19 pandemic grips the world, it is starkly highlighting issues in our economy, communities and social structures which have been endemic for some time. Precarious work, punitive social security systems, the exploitation of the natural world – all of these, and many other aspects, have combined to accentuate the impact of the viral outbreak.

For a city like Glasgow, with a proud history, bright future but many deeply rooted challenges, the pandemic is both a time of opportunity and risk. Many of our citizens face serious threats to their health, livelihoods and housing as businesses shut, and incomes dry up. At the same time, these threats present us with a chance to make the sort of radical change that was not possible in what previously passed for normality. To grasp those opportunities requires a recognition that there is no going back to 'normal' – that what passed for the norm before COVID-19 cannot, and should not, return.

## Glasgow Now

Whilst this is a daunting situation to be in, Glasgow has many advantages that put us in a strong place to use this crisis to evolve. The city has been looking to new approaches to the economy and social supports, such as the circular economy and basic income, as it aims to create an environment that works for all of its citizens.

Like the rest of Scotland, Glasgow has a commitment to improve our environmental presence in light of the climate emergency, moving to become a sustainable city that lives up to our reputation as the Dear Green Place. We have a creative population across a wide range of sectors and interests, who offer a space for new ideas to flourish; and we have a proud industrial heritage that can shape the city's future as a manufacturing centre – where once we made ships, now we make satellites – and who knows what the future will look like.

We also have a long-established position as a truly global city, with a network of willing partners around the world keen to collaborate with us. Participation in networks such as the Rockefeller Resilient Cities has kept us at the heart of global city discussions, opening up new developments such as the blossoming relationship with our fellow post-industrial city of Pittsburgh).



These strengths are coupled with long entrenched challenges around health inequalities and unemployment. Too many people in Glasgow still die earlier than they should and experience reduced quality of life due to a range of conditions. Too many of our residents are trapped in a harsh and punitive benefits system which is not designed to work for them. And too much of the space in our city lies vacant and derelict, held in speculation for investors rather than used for the good of the city and her people. Change will require facing these barriers head on.

## **Building Back Better**

Thankfully, change does not happen in isolation or without the chance to learn from other places. Across the world different areas are looking at different responses to the tensions and challenges outlined above, offering ideas - and hope - for Glasgow moving forward.

We have, in the best possible sense, a chance to turn Glasgow into a living laboratory – not in terms of experimenting on our residents; but rather in truly testing and co-creating new approaches to the city we want to see.

Kate Raworth’s work on Doughnut Economics offers an ideal model and provocation for us in this context. A “playfully serious” approach to the challenges of moving into the world we want to see, it sets out the ceiling of sustainability above which our resource consumption must not rise; and the floor of necessity below which our citizens must not fall. This combination of both planetary and social justice offers us a pathway to follow towards a fair and sustainable city.

## **Glasgow needs to become a Doughnut City.**

We are not alone in considering this – others, most noticeably Amsterdam, are already following that pathway. This is a huge positive – creating a space for shared learning, vision and collaboration as we iterate our way into a better future. In creating spaces for experimentation and visioning, where we can honestly discuss and weigh up trade-offs and changes that will be required, we can co-create a new Glasgow with all of our citizens.

The Glasgow Doughnut will also allow us to create an environment for other policy proposals to be explored, challenged and incorporated. Basic income, one of the hottest topics in Scottish policy just now, could potentially offer the foundational policy to base the doughnut upon. The circular economy, already well established and supported in the city by the Chamber of Commerce and others, could offer a new model of business activity which can keep us within our required environmental limits. And new approaches to technology could open up both data and services which could revolutionise and deliver both the floor and ceiling of the doughnut.



## How do we turn Glasgow into a Doughnut?

This piece is a provocation and does not pretend to have the answers – the pathway, as well as the outcomes, must be co-created. However, there are several potential points we could start with.

Connecting with, and learning from, Kate Raworth and her team and the other cities exploring Doughnut Economics is a must, allowing us a chance to collaborate, learn and lead. Glasgow could explore the creation of a new Doughnut Lab, focused on developing the model for the city, with a wide range of essential partners and contributors. This Lab would draw its strength from our people, businesses, education and voluntary sectors, ensuring each had a voice. The City Model, building on existing work and data sets, could highlight where Glasgow is currently delivering the doughnut; and draw attention to the areas where we are currently falling short

The people of Glasgow must be at the heart of any pathway, and so a broad, imaginative and inclusive programme of engagement would be essential. Glasgow is not short of ideas or creativity amongst its population – where we can fall short is in giving all of them the space and confidence to take flight. Case studies could be carried out in specific parts of the city, building on work that is already being undertaken by various key agencies. These are not to target work, but rather to allow a jigsaw of the varied challenges and opportunities of the city to be brought together

## Conclusion

People Make Glasgow. This is not just a marketing slogan, it is a call to action, and a powerful reminder of the centrality of our residents to everything that is delivered in Glasgow. COVID-19 has highlighted the many imbalances, inequalities and insecurities which are endemic to our current system – and it would be shameful if we allowed them to survive a pandemic that many of our fellow residents have not. Moving towards being a post-pandemic city means that we are currently pre-something – the choice and opportunity for us all is to make that next step one that is the good of all of us Glasgow, and which allows the city, and her people, to flourish.

As Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop recently declared in the Scottish Parliament “the time of a wellbeing economy has well and truly arrived”. Over the coming weeks, we want you to contribute to our thinking and discussions to ensure that we can seize this opportunity to reshape Glasgow for the better. We are looking for ideas from across the city (and beyond) - this is a chance to co-create, to collaborate, and to imagine.

COVID-19 has forced us to confront the failings of our structures, it is up to us to make sure we take this chance to ensure that we build back better.

People: Make Glasgow.

And together, people can make Glasgow even better.

