

## **Living degrowth – a transformative endeavour?**

Investigating practices, motivations and challenges of living for a new era

*Johannes Brossmann*

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## Abstract

Our world is experiencing accelerated ecological destruction and social injustices on different scales and multiple levels. Unchecked economic growth has been criticised as causing this since the 1970s, but the dominant sustainable development paradigm has perpetuated the belief that economic growth and environmental protection can go hand-in-hand. In response degrowth has emerged in the last decade as a frame for a re-politicized, re-radicalized critique of capitalist growth-society, and as a proposal for radical change. However, to achieve such change more people need to become transformative agents.

While degrowth literature portrays an awareness of this problem, the question how more people can be encouraged for a degrowth future remains challenging. This thesis relates to this challenge with the aim of making degrowth thinking more accessible and tangible by understanding how degrowth is viewed and enacted through the lens of the *subject*. Drawing upon *practice theory*, I investigate degrowth as a *lived experience*, uncovering practices, motivating and supporting factors and related challenges of living for a new era.

This study is informed by *critical participatory action research* and based on insights gathered through *performative methods* – a novel research approach in sustainability science. I applied these methods in collaboration with a colleague through co-creating and co-facilitating a two-day *participatory theatre-workshop* with members of a degrowth reading group in Barcelona. In addition I conducted *extensive interviews* with three degrowth-scholars.

Overall this research provides a preliminary account of living degrowth by portraying a diverse range of interrelated practices grouped in five spheres: (1) Rethinking society, (2) Acting political, (3) Creating alternatives, (4) Fostering connections and (5) Unveiling the self. Multiple ideas guide these practices, with social justice and ecological sustainability at the core. Furthermore I found that each sphere of practices can be related to certain motivating and supporting factors and that various challenges, conflicts and contradictions appear inherent to living degrowth. Finally in this thesis I conceptualize living degrowth as an endeavour that transforms problematic realities into imagined futures in multiple realms. The transformative practices of living degrowth are concerned with theoretical, political, material, economical, social and personal dimensions of world and life. This points to the importance for sustainability science to investigate and foster transformations in all domains and at all levels, reaching from the outer to the inner and vice versa.

**Key words:** degrowth, performative methods, practice theory, critical participatory action research, transformative practices, sustainability science

**Word count:** 13 999 words

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Backdrop

Humanity is currently facing potentially irreversible environmental change (Rockström et al., 2009) and huge inequalities and deprivations (United Nations, 2015). The environmental movement has addressed humanity's impact on the environment, and since the 1970s economic growth has been discussed as a key driver for unsustainability (Meadows, 1972). However, the paradigms of sustainable development and ecological modernisation attempted to solve the tension between economy and environment, but actually perpetuated to 'sustain the unsustainable' (Blühdorn, 2007). With an ambition to end the "depoliticizing consensus on sustainable development" (Kallis, Demaria, & D'Alisa, 2015, p. 9) degrowth has emerged in the last decade as a frame for a re-politicized, re-radicalized critique of capitalist growth society, and proposes "radical change" (Demaria, Schneider, Sekulova, & Martinez-Alier, 2013, p. 192). Degrowth questions the possibility to solely solve the environmental and social crises through market solutions or technological progress and instead calls for 'escaping from the economy' (Fournier, 2008), abolishing "economic growth as a social objective" (Kallis et al., 2015, p. 3) and for "a multi-scalar transformation beyond capitalism" (Asara, Otero, Demaria, & Corbera, 2015, p. 379) to achieve long-term socio-ecological sustainability.

## 1.2 Problem

While the literature on degrowth has grown substantially since the term was introduced at the degrowth conference in Paris 2008 (Kallis et al., 2015), the question that remains open is how the needed transformation can be achieved. Fournier (2008) argues that if degrowth wants to "challenge the supposed neo-liberal consensus around growth, .... it needs to become a mass movement" (p. 539). But what is needed to engage and encourage more people for a degrowth transformation, for building a critical mass of change agents? This extensive question serves as the umbrella of my research. For sure, there are many directions from which one could approach this quest. Mine is guided by these three ideas:

(1) If more people are needed to work towards a degrowth future, then I argue that it is necessary to *make degrowth theory accessible* and translate it in a way that responds to the question "what is to be done?" (Kemmis, 2010, p. 425)

(2) If more people are to engage with "what is to be done", then I find it important to *find individually appealing and meaningful ways* to do so with regards to the question "What role can I play in this future?" (Heras, Tàbara, & Meza, 2016, p. 10) and

(3) If transforming "our world" means transforming "our practices" (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, p. 49), then it is crucial to speak about *what needs to be transformed* for a degrowth

future in terms of *transformative practices*, and in ways that open up the space for individuals to see a role for them in this transformation.

These three aspects taken together constitute my approach to degrowth, which I describe as taking a *subjective* perspective in a twofold way: First and foremost subjective in the sense of looking at the *subjects* of a degrowth transformation, as in the *individual agents* who (want to) take part in changing society towards more socio-ecological sustainability; and second, this perspective is also *my subjective question* of how to live well “*in and for a world worth living in*” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 426).

In fact, looking at the *subject* of degrowth<sup>1</sup> and taking a subjective perspective seems to be a relevant contribution to degrowth literature. In the recent publication ‘*Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*’ – according to the back cover of the book “the most comprehensive coverage of the topic of degrowth in English” so far – the editors touch on the *subject* of degrowth only briefly in the epilogue of their book (D’Alisa, Kallis, & Demaria, 2015). During a roundtable discussion D’Alisa (2016) admitted that the *subject* of degrowth “is one of those problematic themes that we as editors avoided engaging as much as we should have”. Regardless, D’Alisa, Kallis, et al. (2015) are convinced that the “subject of degrowth already exists”, but pose the question “how it can spread and replicate” (p. 220). Exactly this is what I have described earlier as the umbrella quest of my research – or the bigger problem I am tapping into with this thesis.

### **1.3 Research aim and questions**

In order to contribute addressing this challenge, my thesis aims at providing necessary grounds for furthering this quest. I see these basics in a better understanding of how degrowth is viewed and enacted from a subjective perspective. Thus, looking at degrowth as more than an academic debate, but as a “frame constituted by a large array of concerns, goals, strategies and actions” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 193), my aim is to ask how individuals interpret the degrowth vocabulary and in which practices they see it embodied. To capture this I put forward the notion of *living degrowth*. I use it as a general idea with a double meaning, where it can be understood as (1) a *lived experience* by those that re-shape their lives to reflect this inspiration, and (2) as an evolving endeavour with a “living and dynamic set of ideas” (Flipo & Schneider, 2015, p. xxvi).

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<sup>1</sup> Here and hereafter I will keep referring to the *subject* of degrowth in the sense of *individual agents* of degrowth, not in the synonymous meaning of the “topic” of degrowth.

Based on the backdrop, problem, research rationale and aim outlined so far, I define my following research questions:

1) *Explorative*: What does it mean to 'live degrowth'?

- **What** are *practices* that contribute to 'living degrowth'?
- **Why** are subjects (individual agents) performing these practices, i.e. what *motivates* and *supports* them?
- **How** are degrowth-practices experienced in terms of *conflicts* and *challenges* connected to them?

2) *Theoretical*: How can *living degrowth* be conceptualized as a *transformative* social endeavour?

To be precise, I want to clarify that I use *transformative* to describe "the need to go beyond pursuing or simply protesting against business-as-usual to actively constituting new meanings and practices" (Asara et al., 2015, p. 379). Echoing the need for 'going beyond' I also use the word because "it suggests a kind of radical change" (Brand & Daiber, 2012, p. 4)

#### 1.4 Relevance for Sustainability Science

In the context of sustainability science I see my thesis relevant for three reasons:

- (1) Being aware that sustainability science is an emerging field of science that entails diverse perspectives and research trajectories (Miller, 2013), I decided to work on degrowth in order to foster radically critical approaches within this scientific field. Sustainability science is concerned with research that solves problems while "critically questioning conditions that created problems of un-sustainability in the first place" (Jerneck et al., 2011, p. 78). Degrowth fits within this framework by offering both practical proposals for actions on multiple levels (D'Alisa, Demaria, & Kallis, 2015) as well as "uncovering the ideology and practice of economic growth (connected to capitalism) as the ultimate driver of unsustainability" (Asara et al., 2015, p. 382). If sustainability science is about guiding nature-society interactions along more sustainable pathways (Kates et al., 2001), then positioning it as critical of the hegemonic ideology of capitalist growth-society is deemed important to "meaningfully inform the social-ecological transformation required" (Asara et al., 2015, p. 382).
- (2) By looking at degrowth as *lived experiences* I further the investigation of "individual and subjective modes of being", which are considered crucial in the context of sustainability science and practice (Wamsler et al., 2017, p. 9)
- (3) By applying *performative methods* – an innovative approach in participatory sustainability science (Heras & Tàbara, 2014) discussed in chapter 3 – I advance the methodological practices in sustainability science.

## 2 Theoretical and conceptual background

This chapter provides theoretical and conceptual background of my thesis by describing (1) *degrowth* as its thematic context, (2) *the theory of practice and practice architecture* as its theoretical lens and (3) *my conceptual model of living degrowth* as its synthesis of theory and theme.

### 2.1 Degrowth – a radical proposal

Providing the thematic backdrop for my thesis, I briefly describe degrowth as depicted in academic literature. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that “degrowth defies a single definition” (Kallis et al., 2015, p. xxi) and is rather a frame composed of “a large array of concerns, goals, strategies and actions” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 193). This set of connected debates offers both a critical *diagnosis* of and (partially utopian) *prognosis* for society (Demaria et al., 2013), which I discuss in the following as *critiques* and *proposals* offered by degrowth.

Degrowth poses a strong critique of dominant concepts in society, “first and foremost, a critique of growth” (Kallis et al., 2015, p. 3). Economic growth is seen as highly problematic and causally related to both social and ecological crises (Demaria et al., 2013). However, not only growth itself is questioned, but also the “ideology of growth” as a “system of representation” that renders everything in economic terms (Fournier, 2008, p. 529). Thus degrowth aims at decolonizing the public dialogue from economism and overcoming economic growth as a social objective (Kallis et al., 2015). The critique of growth is accomplished by criticism of capitalism, GDP, commodification (Kallis et al., 2015) and the “omnipresence of market-based relations in society” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 209).

Degrowth is also a “proposal for radical change” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 192). It calls for a society with a smaller metabolism, i.e. less production and consumption to reduce the overall throughput of energy and material in accordance with ecological limits (Kallis et al., 2015). However, degrowth is not concerned with “doing less of the same”, but rather doing things differently, i.e. developing a metabolism “which has a different structure and serves new functions” (Kallis et al., 2015, p. 4). Thus degrowth develops an alternative imaginary of an economy of care and commons, and endorses new forms of living and producing like eco-communities and cooperatives as well as policies for work-sharing or basic and maximum income (Kallis et al., 2015). Furthermore, it calls for equitably redistributing wealth both intra-generational (Global North and South) as well as inter-generational (current and future generations) and for a deepening of democracy (Demaria et al., 2013).

In short, degrowth is a frame connecting multiple lines of thoughts and strategies. It radically critiques the dominance of the economy, calling for “democratic choices and debates in the shaping of the economy, and ... re-imagining economic relations and identities in different terms” (Fournier,

2008, p. 532). Thus it “re-politicise[s] debates about desired socio-environmental futures” and offers proposals for such futures motivated by social justice, democracy, respect for nature and its intrinsic value, meaning of life, well-being and anti-utilitarianism (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 191).

## 2.2 Practices and practice architectures

My thesis approaches degrowth by drawing upon the theory of practice and practice architectures (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014). As a basis let me first provide the definition of *practice* given by Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al.:

A practice is a form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), and when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings and relatings ‘hangs together’ in a distinctive project. (2014, p. 31)

This definition points towards three characteristics of what constitutes a practice: (1) that it is composed of *sayings*, *doings* and *relatings*, which means that a practice is more than just people’s actions, but also what they say and think to describe, interpret, explain, orient and justify the practice and how they relate to each other and the objects in the course of the practice; (2) and that sayings, doings and relatings have to “cohere with one another purposefully” in (3) the *project* of the practice, i.e. the distinctive aim which “is realized through the practice” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, pp. 52-53). In reverse then, not everything people say, do or how they relate constitutes a practice if it does not have the just described characteristics. To clarify what is meant by *project*, Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) state that it is “what people say when they sincerely answer the question ‘what are you doing?’” (p. 31).

Let me give an example to apply the terms and concepts introduced so far. If you were to ask me right now what I am doing, I would answer: “I am writing a thesis”. This would be the project of the practice, and you could start looking at what sayings, doings and relatings are “hanging together” in this project, and how they cohere purposefully. In fact, my sayings, doings and relatings and the aim/project would be (slightly) different if I would have answered “I am learning about practice theory”. This said, let me return to the theory.

Practices exist at different levels and can be found anywhere: on a very “high level of generality”, e.g. the practice of education or medicine, or on a more specific level like the practice of teaching, but even in such daily things like boiling eggs (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 52). This means that humans’ lives are “composed of dozens – thousands – of practices on various scales and durations” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 5).

Practices at all levels are made possible by *practice architectures*. These are bundles of *cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements*, which “hold practices in place, and provide the resources ... that make the practice possible” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 55). By extension, cultural-discursive arrangements provide language, ideas and discourses for the *sayings* of a practice, material-economic arrangements supply material resources (e.g. objects, physical spaces) for the *doings* of a practice, and social-political arrangements offer the social resources (e.g. specific relationships with people or objects) for the *relatings* of a practice (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014). Together, these arrangements and the resources they provide are called practice architectures, and are situated in *sites*, i.e. “real, everyday places” like homes, schools or supermarkets (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 56). Practice architectures enable, but also constrain practices, however “without determining them” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 55), which leads to the last point I want to present.

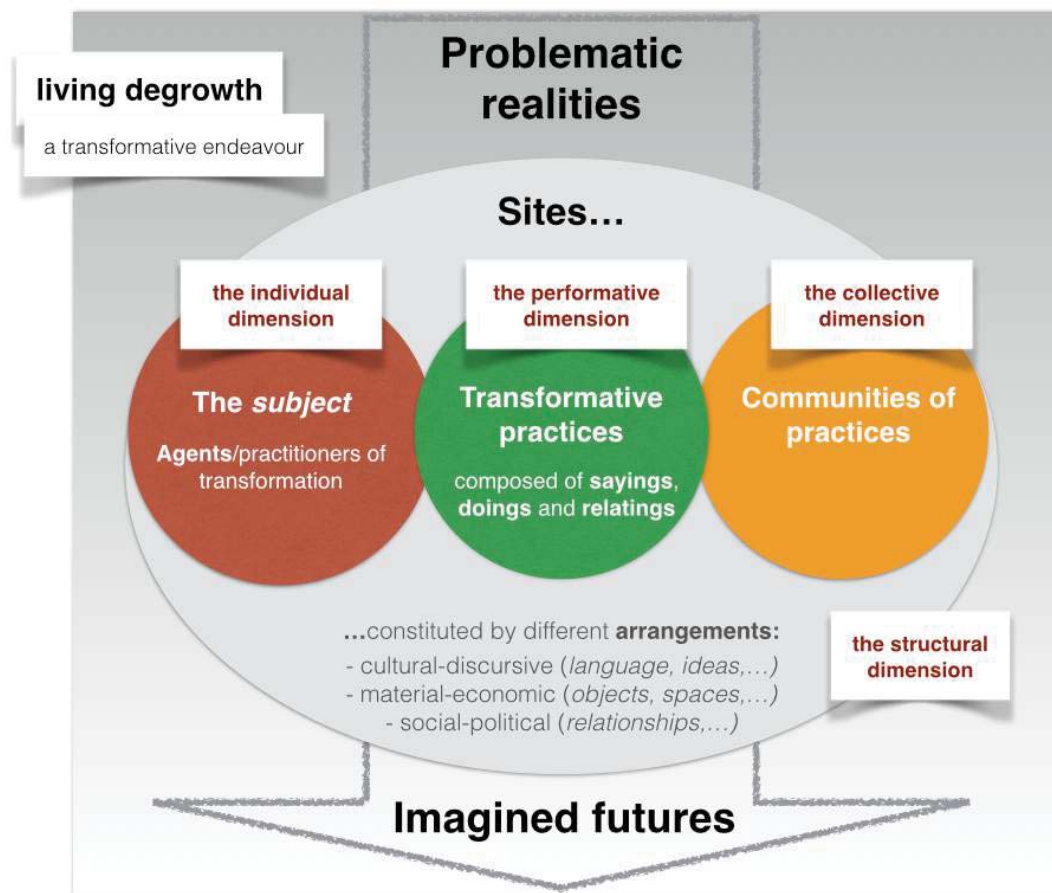
Practices and practice architectures are interdependent and mutually constitutive. Neither aspect dominates the other, nor can exist without the other. On the one hand, practice architectures prefigure practices, on the other hand, practices are “restlessly made and re-made” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 62) by practitioners and “leave behind distinctive traces ... in the practice architectures” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 35). Consequently, there is space for change, for transforming practices and practice architectures. However, it is crucial to understand that in order to transform practices, practice architectures have to be changed too (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014).

This theory is useful to my thesis for four reasons: (1) it suits my aim to investigate degrowth from a subjective perspective, because it considers practitioners and their practices, thus acknowledging agency. (2) It nonetheless considers the importance of structures in shaping humans’ actions by describing the role of practice architectures. Hence this theory integrates agency and structure without over- or underrating either of them. (3) By including cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political aspects it takes a holistic ontological view, seeing the social world not as purely discursively, nor as only materially or relationally constituted, but as a bundle of all those. (4) Kemmis, McTaggart, et al. (2014) see practices not only abstractly, “but as embodied” (p. 77), which connects well to applying performative methods (see chapter 3), as latter recognize and explore embodied experience (Heras & Tàbara, 2014).

### **2.3 Living degrowth – a preliminary conceptual model**

After this brief introduction to degrowth and practice theory, I now present a preliminary idea of how *living degrowth* could be conceptualized. Concepts and models are helpful in making sense of the world and my model therefore offers an approach of how to think and perceive living degrowth. At the same time, models reveal how we look at the world and represent

our theoretical convictions, assumptions and biases. The model thus shows how I as a researcher approach this topic, and which lenses I wear.



**Figure 1.** *Living degrowth* as an endeavour to transform problematic realities into imagined futures through an individual, performative, collective and structural dimension. Own depiction, drawing upon practice theory by Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) and social learning theory by Wenger (2009)

The model (see Figure 1) is composed of *four dimensions* that I consider important in discussing living degrowth:

*Individual:* highlighting the subjects which engage and act as agents of transformation; understanding their motivations, their (personal) struggles and what supports them

*Performative:* looking at how agents are active in the world through their practices (which are realized in distinctive sayings, doings and relatings; see section 2.2)

*Collective:* seeing humans first and foremost as *social* beings, who are living and learning through participating in practices of social communities (Wenger, 2009)

*Structural:* acknowledging that subjects conduct transformative actions never in isolation, but in already existing sites which are constituted by cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014).

Living degrowth – as this human endeavour with certain subjective, performative, collective and structural aspects – is (1) an answer to currently problematic realities of social inequality and

ecological destruction and (2) aims at transforming those realities into imagined futures of long-term socio-ecological sustainability.

To conclude, I described degrowth, the practice theory informing my research, and a conceptual model of living degrowth. However, I have to clarify that my research cannot cover all the areas of this model, as this would be far beyond the scope of a master thesis. Following my research questions I focus on the subjective (i.e. motivating/supporting factors and challenges) and performative (i.e. practices) dimension of living degrowth.



### 3 Methodology

In the following chapter I present the methodology of my thesis by describing (1) the applied methodologies – *critical participatory action research* and *performative methods*, (2) the data collection through a *theatre-workshop* and *interviews with degrowth scholars* and (3) the *data interpretation*.

#### 3.1 Applied methodologies

##### 3.1.1 Critical participatory action research

My research is informed by *critical participatory action research*, a research practice developed in the educational sciences (Kemmis, 2008, 2009; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014; Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) that is concerned with supporting participants to transform their practices for the better. More precisely, *transforming practices* means changing people's a) understanding, b) conduct and c) conditions of their practices (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 67). *For the better* describes the aim of transforming practices so they "will be more rational (...), more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive" (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 67). This form of research is employed by *participants*, who engage with *their* own lives and contexts, putting an emphasis on the "single case", in order "to transform 'the way we do things around here'" (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 67). Hence, this is not a positivist kind of science and does not aim at producing generalisations (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014).

My thesis draws upon the theoretical concepts offered by critical participatory action research, especially the theory of *practices* and *practice architectures* presented in chapter 2.2. Furthermore, the key process of gathering evidence in my thesis – the theatre-workshop outlined below (chapter 3.2.1) – was driven by the aims of this methodology. The workshop served the participants and me as a researcher to gain a better *understanding* of degrowth practices through a process of "individual and collective self-reflection" (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 6). By identifying conflicts and challenges participants explored "felt concerns about the nature and consequences" of their practices (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 77). The workshop ultimately aimed at helping participants to transform their practices by providing a space for rehearsing new ways of *conducting* them.

However, I depart from this methodology regarding generalisations. While the workshop helped participants to reflect on their practices in their *local* contexts, my research simultaneously aims for developing a more generalized, conceptual understanding of degrowth practices. I strive for this *not* as a matter of producing a blueprint, but in order to create a theoretical tool/lens that could

encourage people engaged in degrowth *elsewhere* to reflect individually and collectively on their *local* practices.

### **3.1.2 Performative methods**

In general terms, arts-based research means to use various art forms – literary writing, performance, music, visual arts, etc. – during different stages of qualitative social research, from data collection, analysis and interpretation to representation (Leavy, 2009). As a particular form of such research, my thesis embraces ‘performative methods’, a concept recently introduced by Heras and Tàbara (2014) and defined as:

a participatory form of integrative research aimed at integrating and combining elements from the performing arts into research in a flexible and context-specific manner within larger social and political processes, devised to support individual, community and institutional reflexivity and transformation (p. 388).

Heras and Tàbara focus on ‘applied theatre’ methods (2014), described by Nicholson as dramaturgic activities usually taking place outside classical theatre institutions, “intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies” performing them (2005, p. 2)

Arts-based practices especially serve research with a descriptive, explorative or discovering purpose (Leavy, 2009). Similarly, applied theatre methods can be used to create “opportunities for exploration through performance or ‘acting out’” (Conrad, 2004, p. 16). Thus, these methods suit the explorative nature of my research questions, and will allow the participants of my research to *act out* what *living degrowth* means, rather than only cognitively describing it.

Applied theatre has, alongside other purposes, been used to approach diverse sustainability issues, such as using participatory theatre with youth to explore future scenarios in biosphere reserves (Heras et al., 2016); supporting community-based natural resource management by enhancing community participation in environmental policy development (Guhrs, Rihoy, & Guhrs, 2006) or by making youth voices heard (Heras & Tàbara, 2016); applying community theatre to raise awareness about environmental resources, e.g. trees (Cornwall, Chakavanda, Makumbirofa, Shumba, & Mawere, 1989); encouraging participation of women regarding sustainable energy development (Beth Osnes, 2013; B. Osnes, Weitkamp, & Manygoats, 2015) or enhancing awareness of mercury pollution in artisanal mining (Metcalf & Veiga, 2012). The range of diverse groups and environmental issues addressed through applied theatre indicates the flexibility of such methods. Hence I see no general limitation to explore degrowth in a performative way. Furthermore, while several examples exist, as shown above, the use of applied theatre in environmental and sustainability sciences “still remains one of the less explored” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 382). Accordingly, further exploring

dramaturgical activities for sustainability research would be useful for other researchers wanting to use this methodological approach.

Performative methods could support sustainability science through multiple functions (Heras & Tàbara, 2014). A key function of performative activities is “integrating and embodying different kinds of knowledge, values and perspectives” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 389). This is important to my research since I frame degrowth not only as an (academic) debate, but as a lived experience constituted by a range of practices. To explore these lived experiences, tapping into various forms of knowing (e.g. emotional, embodied, experiential, habitual) seems important as it “can trigger a powerful self-reflective process” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 389).

Self-reflection is not only needed to uncover and understand ones own practices, but feeds into broader, collective reflection processes. Performative methods can foster “social reflexivity” and “critical reflection” by creating “dramatic distance” and safe spaces to discuss “delicate issues” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 390f). This will help to explore conflicts and challenges that arise in degrowth-practices, and is therefore relevant for understanding what it means to live degrowth.

To understand degrowth as something lived by people, I also look at what motivates and supports *subjects* of degrowth. Applied theatre can aid in accessing this dimension, as it supports the building and reconstructing of socio-ecological identities (Heras & Tàbara, 2014). As Heras and Tàbara point out, dealing with unsustainability requires more than increasing our knowledge, because ultimately we need to answer the question “What role/s can I play?” (2014, p. 392). This is a very subjective question, yet I see the answers influencing the shared social sphere of practices (see chapter 3.2).

Finally, performative methods will serve my research by “fostering engagement and emotional commitment leading to action” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 392). This connects to critical participatory action research and its aim of changing practices for the better (see section 2.1.1 above), and to the umbrella quest of my thesis, i.e. how more people can become engaged for a degrowth transformation.

## **3.2 Collecting data**

### **3.2.1 *The living degrowth theatre-workshop in Barcelona***

In this section I describe how I applied performative methods in a spirit of critical participatory action research through co-creating and co-facilitating a theatre workshop in Barcelona. I first present my case and continue by describing the concrete realization of my methodology, as in the workshop line-up and the key theatre methods used.

Barcelona is home to an established hub for degrowth, both academically and from an activist point of view. The Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) at the

Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) hosts “an important nucleus of researchers studying degrowth” (ICTA, n.d.). Furthermore, the academic association *Research & Degrowth* has strong links to Barcelona, especially through organising an annual summer school on the topic in collaboration with ICTA (Research & Degrowth, n.d.). In terms of activism, degrowth has been a clear theme in the dynamic socio-environmental movement in Barcelona called Indignados (Asara, 2016).

In this context, a reading group on degrowth has flourished for more than five years in Barcelona and helped to produce the recent publication by Kallis et al. (2015). In addition, after the summer school 2016 a new “young” reading group formed, composed of people interested in degrowth from the academic (master and PhD students) and/or activist field. While developing my research topic and looking for a research collaboration, I got in contact with this young degrowth reading group. My proposal to explore degrowth through a theatre-based approach met their interest in relating to degrowth more practically. My colleague Benno Zenker, studying his Master’s in applied theatre at Leeds University, UK, also helped facilitate and used the project for his Master’s thesis. Hence, two representatives from the reading group, Benno and myself discussed, agreed and developed a collaborative project over a period of three months (January – March 2017). Our efforts culminated in the conduct of a 2-day theatre workshop in Barcelona (March 18-19, 2017) that provided empirical material for my thesis<sup>2</sup>. The workshop was held in English and attracted 15 individuals, of which 13 participated on the first day (Saturday) and 8 on the second day (Sunday). Most participants had connections to academia, either through studies or work.

After having set the scene, I now portray the workshop line-up. As Table 1 shows (next page), the workshop was built around three themes – *practices*, *challenges* and *motivating/supporting factors* of living degrowth, reflecting my research questions – and composed of various creative methods. Several come from Augusto Boal’s theatre techniques called *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 2008), and are indicated with an asterisk (\*) in the table. Other methods were based on our<sup>3</sup> repertoire of methods for participatory education<sup>4</sup>. Even though I will describe the key methods used shortly, the detailed workshop plan including timing, instructions, reflection questions, documentation activities, materials used and facilitator roles can be found in Appendix A.

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<sup>2</sup> While I am using the *outcomes/content* of the theatre-workshop, Benno’s thesis focuses on the *methods* and *processes*. Hence our research efforts take substantially different angles.

<sup>3</sup> In this section “our” or “we” refers to Benno and me as workshop facilitators.

<sup>4</sup> As we both hold a Bachelor in Environmental Education and are working together in a NPO using applied theatre we share a repertoire of educational methods.

**Table 1.** Themes and methods of the *living degrowth* theatre-workshop (own table)

Day	Themes & Methods	Reflection activities
Saturday	Registration, Welcoming, Introduction, Research Ethics	
	Get-to-know-each-other, Theatre Warm-Up Methods	
	<b>THEME: Practices of <i>living degrowth</i></b>	
	<b>1) Statue-Museum*</b> (exploring and portraying favorite and challenging practices of living degrowth in statues)	
	<b>2) Mapping our practices</b> (collective brainstorming activity)	
<b>3) Playing our practices</b> (improvisation exercise)		
<b>THEME: Challenges of <i>living degrowth</i></b>		
<b>1) Newspaper theatre*</b> (Becoming aware and giving voice to challenges)		
<b>2) Image theatre*</b> (Portraying challenges in statues)		
Sunday	Arriving, Recap of Day 1, Theatre Warm-Up Methods	
	<b>3) Feeling our practices</b> (Dream-Journey to reflect on emotional perception of practices)	
	<b>4) Collecting stories</b> (Describing everyday challenges of degrowth practices as stories)	
	<b>5) Cops in our heads*</b> (Working in-depth with one story)	
	<b>THEME: Motivating and supporting factors</b>	
<b>1) Connecting to the core</b> (individual brainstorming and sharing in small groups what motivates and supports personal degrowth practices)		
<b>2) Image theatre*</b> (Portraying motivating and supporting factors through statues)		
<b>Final reflection and evaluation</b>		

*Statue-Museum* and *Image Theatre* are methods that rely on a simple yet powerful tool: *statues* created with human bodies. Participants either use their own body or sculpture “the bodies of the others as if ... the others were made of clay” (Boal, 2008, p. 112) to “explore symbolic language and mental representations” (Heras et al., 2016, p. 3) about a topic. We invited the participants to create such body statues, or *images* as Boal calls them, to express their ideas about each theme. While the *Statue-Museum* is a pair exercise, the *Image Theatre* was used in groups of variable size. I use photos of such statues taken during the workshop throughout my findings (chapter 4) because of their “extraordinary capacity for making thought *visible*” (Boal, 2008, p. 115).

*Newspaper Theatre* is an exercise that transforms “daily news items ... into theatrical performances” (Boal, 2008, p. 121). We provided newspapers to trigger reflections on challenges of living degrowth by asking participants to find a word or sentence that caught their attention in relation to degrowth. These words were then performed in various ways.

*Cops in the Heads* is a complex method that helps to explore challenging situations by identifying inner, conflicting voices called “cops” (Boal & Jackson, 1995). Since I did not use material (quotes, images) from this exercise, I will refrain from explaining it here and refer to the appendix instead.

*Reflection activities* played a crucial role during the workshop. After each major theatre activity we provided space to discuss the process and outcomes. This is a common practice in workshops inspired by Theatre of the Oppressed and served simultaneously for collecting data. Heras and Tàbara (2016) also combined “theatrical techniques with guided discussions and group reflections” (p. 953) in their application of performative methods. We used discussions also for *brainstorming* with the group. This provided essential data as well as input for other theatre exercises. These reflection activities can be understood as *focus groups*, because they involved several participants, were focused on a topic/activity and fostered “interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning” (Bryman, 2008, p. 474).

*Documentation:* We recorded the workshop using audio-, video- and photo-equipment. Furthermore we collected cards that participants used to note ideas during reflection/brainstorming rounds.

*Research Ethics:* We communicated our research intentions throughout the project, from developing the workshop to inviting participants and at the workshop itself. We explained our documentation methods, obtained oral consent for the use of material and discussed anonymity and authorship (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** A poster about research ethics discussed with participants at the beginning of the theatre-workshop

### **3.2.2 Interviews with degrowth-scholars**

To complement insights gathered through performative methods I conducted three extensive semi-structured interviews with degrowth scholars after completion of the theatre-workshop. This can be understood as triangulation, because I used several methods and sources of data (Bryman, 2008), although in awareness of Silverman’s critique that this does not help to “reveal ‘the whole picture’” (2013, p. 138). The interviews focused on how degrowth-scholars view (their) degrowth practices, and served me to discuss initial results from the workshop. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to cover specific questions – prepared in advance (see interview guide in Appendix B) – and to pick up on interesting points that interviewees brought up (Bryman, 2008, p. 438). The list of interviewees is provided in Appendix C.

### 3.3 Interpreting data

For interpreting the empirical data of my research I was inspired by tools of *grounded theory* and *thematic analysis*. I say *inspired* here to account for (1) the critique that former is often said to be used without careful consideration of all its procedures (Locke, 1996) and (2) the remark that latter is “a rather diffuse approach” (Bryman, 2008, p. 700). Therefore I will clearly describe which tools I have used, when and for what purpose and reason.

The first step of organizing data took place already during the workshop: after participants had brainstormed and organized degrowth-practices on cards (see Figure 3) I did a first tentative *coding* – a



**Figure 3.** Degrowth-practices noted on cards during the workshop

central process in grounded theory –reviewing all cards and giving components of this data different “labels” (Bryman, 2008, p. 542). I developed six headings that grouped the practices together and discussed those with the participants, who agreed and added one label. We used these for the rest of the workshop as a joint understanding of degrowth-practices. Moreover, these labels became *themes* for my further analysis (in order to not foreclose any findings, the labels can be found in Appendix D).

After completing workshop and interviews I organized the data (audio- and video-recordings, photos, notes) in three steps:

- (1) I selectively transcribed my data using *sensitizing concepts*, a grounded theory term describing “particular kinds of questions” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 16) to ask about one’s data. These concepts were – mirroring my research questions – practices, motivating and supporting factors and challenges.
- (2) I constructed three matrixes, one for each sensitizing concept. A matrix is a “thematic framework [which] is used to classify and organize data according to key themes” (Ritchie, Spencer, & O’Connor, 2003, p. 220). These matrixes, operationalized in a spreadsheet, included all sources of data (workshop activities and interviews) on one axis and the seven labels/key themes on the other axis (see Appendix E). By filling in the matrixes I got a general idea of the data, which lead me to
- (3) identify patterns in my data and develop empirically grounded emergent categories (Williams, 2012), which I will present in chapter four.

### 3.4 Limitations

Here I discuss several limitations of my research approach related to (1) the choice of participants, (2) the methods and (3) my role as a researcher.

(1) Most of the people I interacted with to gather material – workshop-participants and degrowth-scholars – had ties to academia. Their view of degrowth thus had strong academic rendering, which shapes the outcomes of my study accordingly. This, however, ensured mutual understanding amongst participants and a certain level of consistency in my data.

(2) Gathering data through performative methods poses limitations due to the fact that participants need to familiarize themselves with creative and bodily ways of expression. Furthermore, these methods, while allowing for great explorative depth, sometimes make it difficult to gather a comprehensive overview over a broad topic. We balanced this out by incorporating more classical tools of discussing and brainstorming.

(3) By co-creating and co-facilitating the theatre-workshop I had a big influence on methods, themes and questions of the process. However, by using first person voice and being as explicit and transparent as possible I practiced “strong-objectivity”, which means to “self-reflect on what values, attitudes, and agenda” I brought to the research process (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 10).



## 4 Living degrowth – a preliminary account

This chapter portrays the insights from my fieldwork, combining outcomes of the theatre-workshop and interviews with degrowth-scholars. I present what I learned about practices (section 4.1), motivating and supporting factors (section 4.2) and challenges (section 4.3) of *living degrowth*, thus responding to my first research question. This preliminary account of what it means to live degrowth is structured by *emergent categories* that I developed while interpreting the material. To enhance readability, quotes from workshop-participants are indicated by quotation marks but not referenced. Quotes from interviews with scholars are however referenced with S1, S2 and S3. Photos taken throughout the workshop accompany the text. Along with presenting the material I discuss my findings by comparing them with existing degrowth literature.

### 4.1 Spheres of practices

This section presents the major findings of my research by portraying degrowth through a *practice* lens. I structured the identified practices in five spheres: (1) Rethinking society, (2) Acting political, (3) Creating alternatives, (4) Fostering connections and (5) Unveiling the self, with each sphere divided by several sub-categories. Throughout this section I italicized phrases, especially *verbs*, from the material and/or my analysis that I interpret as *practices*, thus highlighting their *performative* nature.

#### 4.1.1 Rethinking society

Living degrowth seemed to be highly concerned with questioning and reimagining society. I grouped practices that specify this concern under the heading of *rethinking society* and present them in an order that makes narrative and procedural sense to me. I begin with general practices, and then describe specific academic activities.

##### ***Observing and reflecting***

Rethinking society entails *observing* and *reflecting*, which I see as good starting points for rigorously challenging existing orders. To use the words of a participant, it is important to “*be honest and really observe the world [without] being dogmatic*”. Here we can imagine someone taking a step back to see oneself and the bigger picture in a non-judgemental way, becoming aware of what is actually happening. In a next step, by *reflecting on values* one can evaluate observations, which could help to “*see contradictions*” in and around us. A participant described how he observed many contradictions when thinking about implementing degrowth both on a personal and societal level (see also chapter 4.3).

### **Questioning and deconstructing**

On the basis of observation and reflection, rethinking society needs questioning and deconstructing. Participants pointed to this repeatedly, arguing for the importance of “*deconstructing currently present concepts*” in our society. An example stressed was the need for a “*radical critique of neoclassical economics*”, or for deconstructing concepts like “work”.



**Figure 4.** A statue representing the struggle with “internalized structures”

During the workshop activity Statue-Museum a participant showed deconstructing as a personal, inner process (see Figure 4): the person on the right was “*challenging internalized structures*”, against the person on the left, who was “*trying to maintain my hegemony*”. I interpret this image as the inner struggle of a person against hegemonic ideas in society (like growth, competition), which however have become “internalized structures” within the agent. In addition to the need of questioning broad or internalized concepts, as it appeared in the workshop, one of the scholars also drew attention to the “*questioning [of] small micro-practices*” (S3) in our every-day interactions.

### **Imagining and constructing**

Having taken (dominant) societal concepts apart, rethinking society means to imagine and construct alternatives. Participants argued for “*envisioning/imagining utopia*” and “*constructing new alternatives*” practically (see chapter 4.1.3.) and theoretically. As an example someone described that it was important for him to find “new orientations of lifestyles and life aims”, asking questions like “Where do I/we want to go?” and “What do we want to reach?”

Drawing again on the outcome of the statue museum, I found an image that I relate to *imagining utopia*. A participant created a statue that represented “*Thinking with the heart*” (see Figure 5) as a favourite practice of living degrowth. This depiction does not reveal the content, but the quality of thinking processes that the participant considered important. If we take the idea of the heart as a reference to emotions, then this statue makes an important point supported by literature: that “analytic reasoning cannot be effective unless it is guided by emotion and affect” (Slovic, Finucane, Peters, & MacGregor, 2004, p. 311).



**Figure 5.** A statue depicting “Thinking with the heart” as a favourite practice

### ***Learning and discussing***

For these practices of rethinking society, learning and dialogue can play an important role. Practices of “*knowing, reading and learning more*” or “*non-hierarchical education*” support a questioning of society, as “*discussing and debating*” (for example “to break the hegemony of growth”) also do. A tangible example of learning and discussing would be a reading group (on degrowth). In fact many of the workshop participants belong to such a group.

### ***Academic practices***

In the interviews with degrowth-scholars *academic research and writing* came up as a way of living degrowth. This is on the one hand unsurprising, as working on topics related to degrowth is part of their academic life, while on the other hand it reflects our interaction during the interview. In these situations I described practice theory in detail (see chapter 2.2), either in response to being asked for example whether I saw “writing” as a practice (which I answered with yes; S2), or by prompting the idea of academic work as a practice to further the interview (S3). I place *academic writing and research* and entailed practices (see below) within this sphere, because I see it very much as one (but not the only) way of *rethinking society*, combining many (or all) of the before mentioned practices.

To become more specific, I now describe practices that one scholar discussed as her way of living degrowth in academia (S3). Her entire academic activity was underpinned by a critical attitude. On the one hand, she pointed towards the *critical content* of her academic writing, on the other hand she criticised mainstream academic processes and stated her *unwillingness to “play the game”* within them. As “playing the game” she described academic practices that might be good for her/one’s career, but not in line with her/one’s principles, which she thus rejected. An example was writing a monograph for her PhD instead of a article-based thesis, which made it harder to find a job later on. In addition, she described *being part of an open access, independent, critical academic journal* as another way of resisting mainstream academic processes. In producing this journal as a collective, the engaged scholars *share “intellectual and practical involvement”, change “positions of power”* (e.g. as managing editors), work with contributing authors in a *caring, cooperative way* through “*constructive feedback*”. Other practices she described were *organizing degrowth conferences* or participating in interdisciplinary academic groups.

### ***Summary***

In short, I analysed rethinking society as a sphere of practices that entails *observing* and *reflecting* on values, *questioning* and *deconstructing* concepts, *imagining* and *constructing* alternative ideas, all together supported by *learning* and *discussing* (e.g. in a reading group). I described *academic research and writing* as a concrete example of rethinking society, showing it as critical

scholarship regarding processes (e.g. publishing an independent open access journal) and content of knowledge production.

This sphere of practices is supported by degrowth literature: Demaria et al. (2013) portray “academic and non-academic research” (p. 204) as a degrowth strategy and D’Alisa and Kallis (2015) discuss the relevance of post-normal science for a degrowth transition. Post-normal science calls for extended peer communities, i.e. a democratisation of science, to effectively deal with global environmental challenges (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993). These references point out that *rethinking society* needs science, but in a mode that creates “cooperative research by bringing together scientists, practitioners and activists”, something the degrowth conferences strive for (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 204).

#### **4.1.2 Acting political**

Living degrowth appears to have a strong political component. I grouped practices, which participants and scholars labelled political or which sounded political to me under the heading of *acting political*. I acknowledge that “we act politically all the time”, as a participant put it, and embrace the feminist claim that “the personal is political”, but nevertheless decided to use the word political as referring to processes and actions that are concerned with public opinions and collective decisions.

#### **Advocating**

A central part of political engagement is advocating for certain ideas here seen as “practices related to *defending degrowth in public*” (S2). Participants were concerned with *passing the degrowth message to others*, and how to reach specific groups like workers or ethnic minorities. They highlighted the need to *invite others* to join the conversation about degrowth and to find “different ways of communication”. The already quoted need for “*discussing and debating to break the hegemony of growth*” can here be seen as a way of advocating growth-critique. If we see advocating more broadly as the way that people share knowledge, then it relates to ideas and practices of *open source*, *digital commons* and *creative commons licenses*.

#### **Resisting**

While I understand advocating as primarily discursive practices, I use *resisting* to refer to political practices of a contentious nature (Tarrow, 2011). General insights from my data describe it as *intervening politically* or *violating the accepted order*. Resistance can occur “in different types and from different levels”. As different types, participants referred to and portrayed both more common ways of resistance – *marching* and *protesting* – and discussed the less common happenings of “*direct action resistance*” (described as “stopping bad industrial operations and unsustainable activities directly”) and “*occupation movement*”. The latter has both a component of resisting by occupying

spaces (e.g. houses, squares), but also of creating alternatives (see chapter 4.1.3). Regarding resistance from different levels I found references to geographical space – neighbourhood, local or city level – and a reference to the non-physical space of media, where a participant described the practice of *challenging “fake news”*. Most or all of these practices can be seen as contentious politics in the sense that they are carried out by “collective actors [who] join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents around their claims” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 4).

### **Organizing**

Underpinning the aforementioned political activities as well as many other practices of living degrowth, I see *organizing* as a highly political practice in itself. For the individual it means *participating* and *getting involved* in more than individual action, i.e. in “*collective action*”. In the context of degrowth, participants and scholars stressed collaboration, cooperation, horizontality and sovereignty as guiding principles for organizing and organisations. The emphasis on *collective organizing* seems to me closely related to striving for *non-hierarchical structures/processes*, especially *seeking consensus* in decision-making. As I show later, practices of organizing are strongly related to the role community plays in living degrowth.

### **Summary**

In short, I described *acting political* as practices of *advocating* degrowth discursively, *resisting* developments that – from a degrowth perspective – are unfavourable through contentious politics and pursuing common goals through collective, cooperative *organizing*. Especially *resisting* appears prominently in degrowth literature, for example in “oppositional activism” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 201), civil disobedience (Renou, 2015) and the Indignados or Occupy movement, which also has a strong component of collective *organizing* and *advocating*, e.g. for “systemic change” (Asara & Muraca, 2015, p. 171). *Advocating* can also take place within existing institutions, as Demaria et al. (2013) show by discussing reformism as a degrowth strategy, and digital commons are recognized as realizing “degrowth’s call for de-commodification” (Fuster Morell, 2015, p. 160).

### **4.1.3 Creating alternatives**

To live degrowth means, for many, to engage in practices that create alternatives, both regarding ways of living and societal structures. I collected practices here that to me are strongly related to the use of material resources and appear as every-day activities.

### **Consuming consciously and less**

A reoccurring term regarding consumption and personal activities was consciousness. In the words of one of the scholars this appears as “*being conscious of the impact of your acts*” (S2), which she related to the environmental and social impacts of consumption, travel or services. This

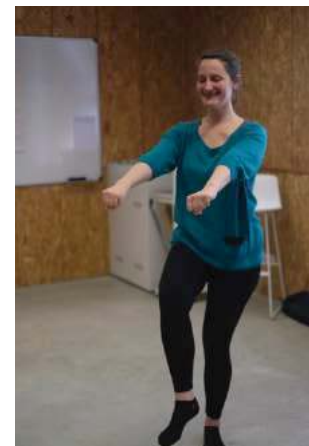
consciousness can also be taken further, as one of the participants noticed, to an awareness of “consumerism” and “commodification” more generally. Practices that express such consciousness were described as *informing yourself*, *making informed decisions* and *thinking about one’s “real needs”*. I interpret this as an awareness that needs can also be created, as degrowth thinker Latouche (2009) for instance discusses. Guided by a mind-set of “less means more”, these practices support a habit of *consuming less* and *forsaking* certain behaviours/goods. Examples included *not needing “to be technologically updated”* or *“trying to waste less”* and *reducing/avoiding plastic consumption*.

### **Sharing**

Participants discussed practices of *sharing*, which similarly to *being conscious* appeared as a cross-cutting activity, i.e. relevant to many areas of life. Sharing could be practiced regarding “anything, from living space to food, to clothes, to help”, as a participant explained. Someone expressed this in the common saying, “sharing is caring”. Sharing does not only apply to material goods, but can also be practiced through *exchanging skills*, which was mentioned in connection to ideas of a gift economy. Furthermore, the practices of open access, open source and digital commons described before represent a way of sharing knowledge and technology.

### **Moving around differently**

Mobility was one of the areas about which participants and scholars showed great awareness. Often mentioned and discussed was the practice of *flying less*, but also *travelling less* in in general or *travelling slow*, for example by train. In one of the improvisation exercises during the workshop some participants played a scene of *sharing a car*, which could also have been interpreted as some kind of public transport. Both during discussion and theatre exercises, *cycling* was a prominent practice. It was portrayed twice as a favourite practice of living degrowth, and described as “regenerating” (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** A statue showing cycling as a favourite practice

### **Sourcing and consuming food ethically**

A range of practices surrounded the *ethical sourcing and consuming of food*. Participants highlighted the importance of *consuming local food*, preferably vegetarian and/or ecologically produced. Practices of producing/sourcing such food were *participating in food cooperatives*, *producing food yourself* (e.g. in a vegetable garden) or the extensive practice of *agroecology*. Another food type and practice described was *recycling food*, for example through food saving initiatives. Two other types of food were discussed and portrayed: *Picking and using wild plants, fruits and berries* and “*eating only wild- or free-range meat animal products*”; the latter could

be sourced through practices of “*hunting and fishing*” yourself. Moving to how food is processed and consumed, participants described *processing food yourself* (producing homemade food, such as bread, pasta or tomato sauce) and *cooking yourself*, even by experimenting with solar ovens (S2). *Sharing food* and *eating together* were mentioned as personally enriching practices, as was “*eating in reasonable quantities*”.

### ***Doing it yourself***

Another set of practices alternative to mainstream consumerism reflect a DIY (do it yourself) mentality. Many of them can be seen as experimenting with low impact lifestyles. Those that appear to me as more common ones included *repairing* things yourself, for example bikes, *sewing or fixing* clothes, or *upcycling* old/waste materials into new things. Practices that I find less common in our societies are *trying to live without electrical household devices*, or *building houses* yourself. Many of these and other practices mentioned before intersect in “*autogestiò*”, a term coined by a participant, which refers to a complex practice of self-management that appears as “do-it-yourself local empowerment” (de la Pena, 2013, p. 11).

### ***Producing cooperatively***

Practices that were less prominent in the workshop and interviews, but nevertheless mentioned, related to *producing cooperatively*. A participant brought up the concept of “*cooperativism*”, which can be understood as “*jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprises*” (ID-Coop, n.d., para. 1), and *food cooperatives* were mentioned. Likewise a scholar discussed *consumer and energy cooperatives* as emerging “in the alternative social and solidarity economy networks” (S2).

### ***Summary***

In short, I described practices of *consuming consciously and less*, *sharing* in manifold ways, alternative *mobility* patterns, *sourcing and consuming food ethically*, *doing things yourself* and *producing cooperatively* – practices that create alternative lifestyles and structures. These practices are mirrored in the degrowth strategy of “*building alternatives*” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 202) or Carlsson’s concept of Nowtopians (2015). However, when reflecting upon this sphere I realize that its emphasis was on very small-scale, local practices. More complex attempts like alternative banks (Demaria et al., 2013) or community currencies (Dittmer, 2015) were missing. Furthermore, when I discussed the key themes from the workshop (Appendix C/D) with the scholars, one of them pointed out that “*reproductivity*” was missing (S1). This feminist term, synonymous to care work, describes all practices that reproduce life from a social point of view, such as “*child rearing, taking care of the sick and the elderly, education, health care and social provisioning*” (Bauhardt, 2014, p. 62). In chapter five I consider reproductivity in my summarizing concept of living degrowth.

#### **4.1.4 Fostering connections**

Living degrowth for almost everyone had something to do with *connecting*. Connections were however not just taken for granted, but seen as something that needs attention and care. Thus I summarized practices that have to do with how people relate to each other and the world under the heading of *fostering connections*.

##### ***Cultivating relationships***

To start with a fundamental element, fostering connections entails *cultivating interpersonal relationships*. This meant for a participant *enjoying* and *fostering* them, e.g. by *drinking beer with friends*, but also through *travelling* to reconnect with loved ones (I discuss related contradictions in chapter 4.3).

Living degrowth is however not only about *having* relationships, but it “can express itself *in the way you build relationships* with others”, in the “quality of the relations between the people [and] the quality of our interactions” (S2). Practices that I interpret as describing this quality and way of relating were *being empathic*, *showing appreciation* and *listening and communicating in different ways*, which can be summarized in the attitude/concept of *care*. An example that I have mentioned before described caring professional relationships with authors of a journal, e.g. through *giving constructive feedback*.

##### ***Nourishing community***

Ideas and practices connected to community are distinctive in my research. To use the words of a participant: “Degrowth is about cooperation, [and] community”. Someone else explained how “it is very hard to have most of these [degrowth] practices without a community support”, e.g. a food cooperative. My insights suggest that communities, just like relationships, need to be nourished to have certain qualities.

Practices for nourishing community were described broadly as “*caring for our community*”, for example by “*taking care of the emotional harmony, managing the emotions* within a group, *dealing with all that emerges*” (S2). Similarly, another scholar said it was about “*trying to make others comfortable*” and *having “a good time together”* (S3). Other ways of nourishing community can be “*caring more for each other* and the common needs” than for individual needs, or to “*improve myself* to improve the community”. Concrete examples of community were the practices of *living collectively* and *collective organizing*.



Very clearly participants enjoyed improvising around the theme “living community” (see Figure 7). The improvisation led to a figure where all participants positioned themselves in fuzzy concentric circles with connected hands. To me this image symbolizes that enjoyable communities are highly interconnected with circular, horizontal structures, and that members need to take efforts to make things work.



**Figure 7.** Outcome of an improvisation exercise about "living community"

Two more community-related themes appeared: First, the importance of diversity was emphasized. *Considering, valuing and strengthening* cultural diversity were suggested as important practices related to degrowth. Second, one of the scholars argued that community plays a central role in finding meaning of life through collective *dépense* (S1). He described the latter as spending the socially accumulated surplus in ways that create meaning “beyond the mere survival” of the people who participate in it (S1). One simple example of collective *dépense* coming from the past is the carnival (S1).

### **Connecting with nature**

Apart from fostering connections in human communities, *connecting with nature* also appeared. Participants described “*enjoying intimate connection with nature* and the more-than human world” and “*being in nature*” as practices. Some of their favourite degrowth-practices were nature-related, e.g. *climbing*, or *cycling* (poetically described as “Fly[ing] with the wind”). Another statue symbolized the connection with nature very figuratively in the message “I am attached to the Earth” (see Figure 8). In contrast *developing “ecosystem understanding”* sounds like a less emotional practice, but was also described as important in order to connect with nature. As a heading for these practices a participant suggested the phrase “*decentring the human*”, meaning that while most other practices were centred around the human, he saw degrowth also about considering the “more-than human world”.



**Figure 8.** A statue of a favourite practice with the message "I am attached to the Earth"

## **Summary**

In short, I described *fostering connections* as a sphere of degrowth practices that *cultivate interpersonal relationships*, e.g. through empathy, *nourish community*, and focus on *connecting with nature*. In recent literature “responsible togetherness” and a “harmonious relationship with nature and the earth” have been highlighted (Natale, Di Martino, Procentese, & Arcidiacono, 2016, pp. 51 - 53), and Cattaneo (2015) describes eco-communities as degrowth manifestations. In contrast to these general descriptions my research gives more subjective accounts of the relevance of connections.

### **4.1.5 Unveiling the self**

As became clear during my research, living degrowth does not only entail practices that are oriented outwards (through social, political, intellectual or material interactions), but also practices concerned with the inner world, i.e. the individual *self*. These practices are manifold and potentially contradicting in the way they understand the human self and its importance. With *unveiling the self* I thus tried to find a neutral heading for these practices, one that does not foreclose *how* or *why* people engage with their selves. However, this heading is not absolutely neutral, as it points towards the need to draw focus to the self to understand what living degrowth means.

#### **Being self-aware**

The ability and practice of *knowing yourself* or *being self-aware* seems to play a crucial role for living degrowth, probably feeding into many other practices. A participant mentioned the practice of “*thinking about my real needs*”, which could help to become aware of what matters to oneself. This self-awareness I see as a precondition for what a scholar described as “*having minimal compromises with myself*” (S3). Ultimately, knowing one’s needs and values seems essential to promote well-being.

#### **Fostering well-being**

In fact, well-being and happiness mattered to most participants and scholars, or to use a quote: “*living well and having a good, and probably joyful life*” (S3). I use well-being and happiness here interchangeably, including the understanding of “*happiness in a sense of meaningfulness*” (S2). The practices that help people in *fostering well-being* seem to vary widely, including practices from all described spheres of living degrowth (and beyond). One participant explained that focusing on well-being could be done for instance through “*personal growth, arts, sports, nature*”. While acknowledging these various ways, I see one practice that could have an over-arching nature – *finding balance*. People noted *balancing work/life* or *working less* and a scholar described the wish to balance life in terms of having space for intellectual, political and practical work.

### ***Being mindful***

Living degrowth for some participants was connected to practices of *being mindful*, described in several ways. First, it means “*focusing* on just one thing at the time” and living more presently; secondly, it has a time component, as in “*taking time* to do things” and “*living more slowly*”; and a third aspect is simply *doing less*. An aim well in line with these practices is to “make it simple”. Participants mentioned “meditation” and “mindfulness” as supporting practices for being mindful. This is interesting, as in fact Wamsler et al. (2017) recently argued for the importance of mindfulness in facilitating sustainability.

### ***Being creative***

Interestingly enough, artistic practices were suggested as part of living degrowth. Indeed one of the scholars even named the arts as one out of four areas that she considered key for living degrowth, next to intellectual, political and practical activities. She described them as “non-utilitarian, non-rational type of activities” (S2), such as *drawing, painting, making music* and *dancing*, which were “inspiring” action and bringing an “emotional and motivational component” to degrowth projects. Participants also discussed creativity/arts in connection to degrowth.

### ***Enjoying the body***

Living degrowth to some means considering the body. One of the participants specifically described “*enjoy being in a body*” as a practice. This made me reflect and notice how, although the body is essential for experiencing the world, was not a conscious or outspoken target of many practices discussed so far. Regardless, my observations of improvisation activities during the workshop give me reason to claim that participants enjoy their bodies through diverse practices. When asked to improvise practices that foster well-being, participants were *dancing, playing around, exercising their bodies, massaging each other, meditating* and *laying relaxed on the ground*, all practices that I would argue create pleasant bodily sensations.

### ***Being vulnerable, rejecting self-promotion and facing conflicts***

The self-related practices I discussed so far might appear as oriented towards pleasant experiences or driven by positivity. However, my research suggests that living degrowth is also about facing and unveiling unpleasant (inner) experiences and putting “the vulnerability of life at the centre of a degrowth society” (S1).

A general practice in this regards was described by a scholar as “*presenting the complexity of each personality*”, pointing towards the need of *speaking about “vulnerability”, presenting “our uncertainty”, “our dark side”, “our inability”* and “*our negativity*” (S1). This is important in order to reverse “the idea of self-promotion, [which lies] at the core of the growth society we live in” (S1). He described self-promotion as the attitude and need “to be good, to sell yourself as a fit, smart,

rational, polite, civil” person in order to successfully inhabit growth-society (S1). However, this “anthropological subject” produced by western, modern, industrial societies should be problematized (S1). Indeed, self-promotion and the liberation of “all the potentiality each subject has” in order to “find its meaning of life” are the fundamental points that justify “the right to mobilize all the resources that one thinks are useful and necessary in order to unveil all the potentiality of this self “ (S1). The scholar argued that this self-promotional narrative is key to understand why western societies mobilize so many material resources at societal level (S1). By rejecting self-promotion and aspiring “to create an anthropology of absence”, i.e. “to be forgotten”, the push towards the mobilization of resource will deflate.

Brought forward by another scholar, for me related to being vulnerable, are practices of “*learning to deal with inner conflicts*” and “*learning to deal with challenges*” (S2). They appear as an answer to the experience of conflicts, challenges and contradictions that seem to be inevitable parts of living degrowth (see chapter 4.3). One way of dealing with contradictions for instance is to integrate them by acknowledging that “when we face a contradiction, we have (...) polar sides inside of us” (S2). By not rejecting or oppressing any of the positions one might become able “to act from a different position” and in a wiser way (S2).

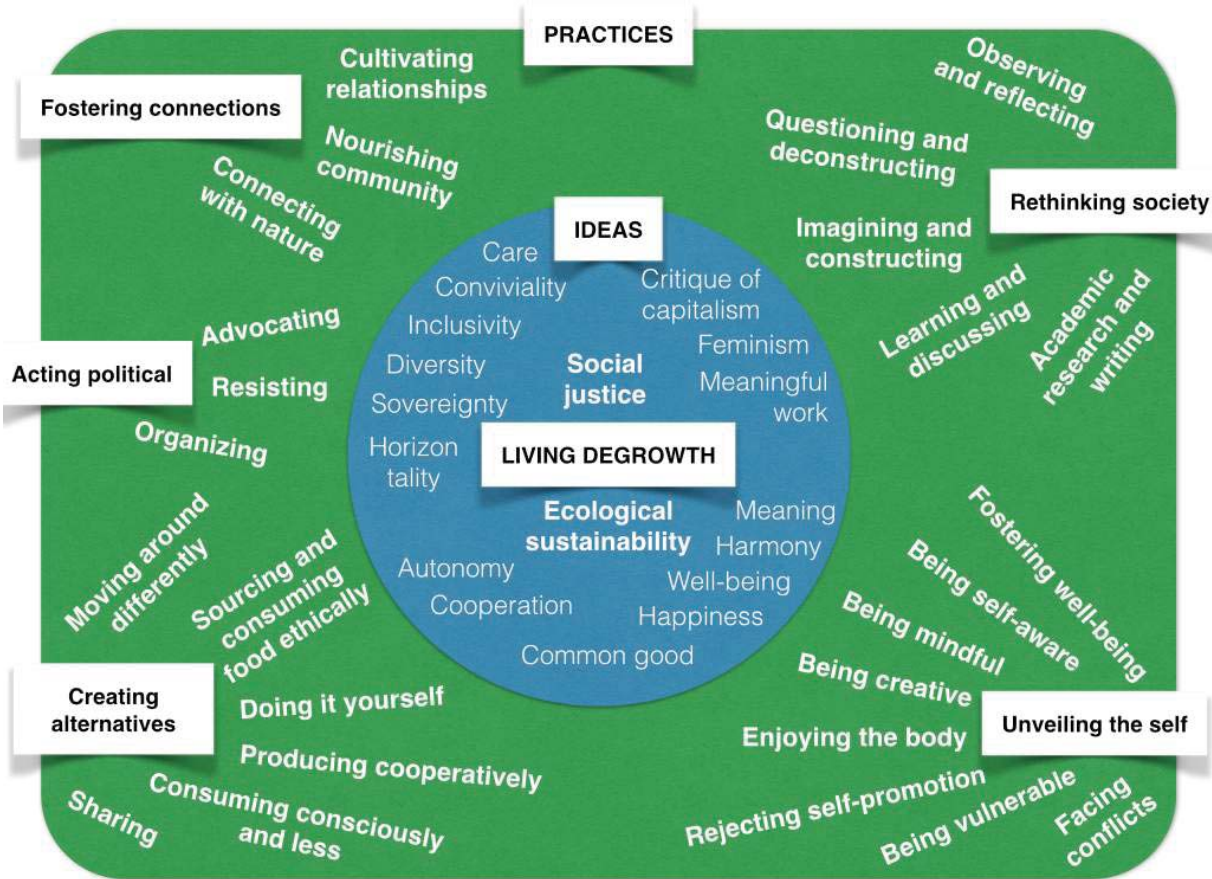
### **Summary**

In this last section the human self took centre stage. I portrayed different practices around the self such as *being self-aware* and *fostering well-being*, *being mindful*, *practising arts* and *enjoying the body*, and *showing vulnerability*, *rejecting self-promotion* and *facing conflicts*. In the prominent degrowth literature I cited so far such practices are hardly visible. I concede that well-being is clearly discussed by authors like Demaria et al. (2013) and Sekulova (2015), but for practices concerning creativity, mindfulness, the body or conflicts/challenges I did not find references. Here my research suggests that degrowth literature needs to recognize and discuss practice areas related to the self and brings forward some questions for this discussion.

After all, depending on how we interpret practices that *unveil the self* they can support or contradict each other. Could, for example, the focus on well-being be part of the self-promotion or self-liberation that causes excessive resource exploitation? Or is it exactly the opposite – that by caring about well-being (instead of material rewards) one might live more simply and presently and aspire to be forgotten in the long run (instead of materially leaving one’s mark)?

**4.1.6 Summary**

To conclude, in this chapter I described practices of living degrowth that I received and constructed from my empirical research. To give a comprehensive overview I present a graphic that includes all *spheres of practices* and their *subcategories* (see Figure 9). During the process of analysis and writing I focused on *verbs* to describe practices, which echoes the concept of *doings* provided by practice theory (chapter 2.2). However, this is not sufficient to portray living degrowth adequately. Thus I included guiding ideas, aims, values or principles in the graphic. These ideas, all original material from the workshop and interviews, contextualise and orient the practices. At the heart of them lie social justice and ecological sustainability. Overall these ideas could be understood as *sayings* of the practices, i.e. the language and discourses used to comprehend, justify and orient the practices of living degrowth (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014).



**Figure 9.** A preliminary account of practices of *living degrowth*, grouped into five spheres of practices and their subcategories (green field). These practices are guided by ideas and principles (blue field). (Own graphic)

## 4.2 Motivating and supporting factors

After portraying degrowth-practices, I now describe *why* the people I interacted with perform these practices, i.e. what motivates and supports them. Similarly to the guiding ideas portrayed in section 4.1.6 discussing these factors allows us to see what orientates practices from a subjective perspective. Due to blariness in my material the emergent categories below blend motivating and supporting factors.

### ***Dissatisfaction with status quo***

A clear motivation for living degrowth is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the status quo: people interested in degrowth seem “to know that there is something deeply problematic with the world that we live in” (S3). A participant stated that she felt an “impossibility to accept and live in the current hegemonic model of society”. Target and reason of discontent amongst participants and scholars were ecological destruction, social injustices, unequal distribution, privilege, capitalism, economic growth, the centrality of the economy and productivism. The “concern with the individual impact on the environment ... and society” (S2) can also be seen as a source of dissatisfying feelings.

### ***A wish and hope for a different future – personally and collectively***

Clearly related to the dissatisfaction with current developments is the wish and hope for a different future on a personal and collective dimension. Personally the wish concerned “to live differently”; collectively it centred on the vision and utopia of ecological sustainability, socio-ecological justice and a “different type of socio-economic arrangement” (S2). Other wishes included new political and social patterns, specified by inclusivity and horizontality. Degrowth was seen as offering such alternatives and new visions.

### ***A shared sense of struggle and the value of community***

Both a key motivating and supporting factor was the experience and awareness of living degrowth as a shared concern and common endeavour. Participants expressed this as “Knowing that I am not the only one who wants to live in this way” or portrayed it in a statue as a “shared sense of identity and struggle” (see Figure 10). The existence of an empathic community “that has an interest in doing this” offers “strong motivation”, serves as a “huge basis” for mutual inspiration and learning and creates a safe space for self-development (see below).

Community and human connection are however not only a means of motivation, but have inherent value. Participants expressed a “need for sharing and community” and valued both family



**Figure 10.** A statue representing a "shared sense of identity and struggle"

and friends. The wish for connection seems to be driven by deep feelings of care (see Figure 11 below), love, sympathy and empathy for others.

### ***Striving for well-being and self-development***

Living degrowth is also strongly motivated and supported by a strive for and experience of well-being and self-development. Participants and scholars clearly mentioned the pursuit of individual and collective happiness and meaningfulness as a motivation, but they also explained that they live degrowth because “it makes me happy”, “it is more fun” and more “healthy”, and/or helps to not “get crazy”. Engaging in degrowth practices was also portrayed as something that requires and enables self-development. “Personal development” was seen important for achieving “harmony” with community, but the latter also seems helpful in being and discovering oneself more. Similarly, a participant stated to “experiment my own full potential” as a motivation, but also “empowering others to experience it too”.

### ***Getting active***

Beyond wishing a different future motivation exists to *get active* for it. Participants explained the need “to act, not only to react”, and for “getting more involved”. Similarly, scholars described that people engaged in degrowth share not only an awareness of problematic realities, but also the understanding “that we should do something about it” (S3). In addition they share “the concern and desire to talk about it in public, to express it, to manifest it in a political way” (S2).

### ***The thrill of rethinking society***

Living degrowth can also be motivated and supported by the thrill of rethinking society. Engaging with degrowth activated creativity and imagination in a participant, because it places many questions: “How should it be? What could we change? What’s our Utopia?”. It also triggered stimulating personal intellectual development. Besides, the “curiosity and the challenge of deconstructing” was embraced and one participant experienced to “constantly question everything” as supporting degrowth practices.

### ***Connecting with nature***

In addition to human connection, connecting with nature also serves as motivation and support. “Being in nature” was described as helping to live degrowth, as was a sense of “symbiosis with environment” – applying to all kinds of environments, both human and non-human. “Connections” and “relation” with nature mattered to participants in context of a degrowth life, again driven by feelings of care (see Figure 11) and love, e.g. “love for life itself”.



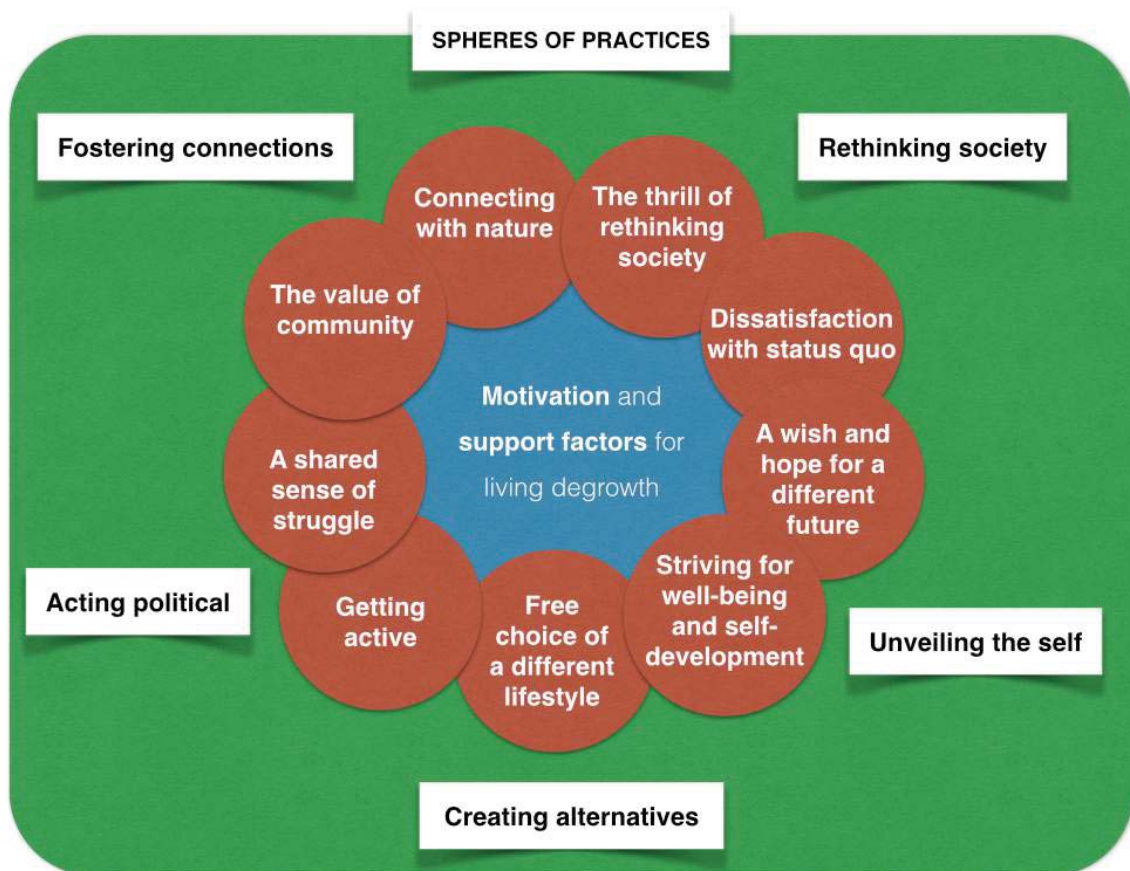
**Figure 11.** A statue representing a feeling of “care”

### ***Free choice of a different lifestyle***

Finally, a different lifestyle adopted by free choice appears as a support factor for living degrowth. Examples such as “living outside the city”, thus being less exposed to advertisements and shops, or “using my computer less” were described by a participant as supporting a low consumption lifestyle that allows also to “be more present”. In addition, working less reduces income, but frees up time to dedicate to oneself, others, political action, nature and creativity. In this I see a reinforcing loop: by making time for these activities one might access additional motivating and supporting factors that help sustaining degrowth inspired practices. However, one of the participants also acknowledged the support factor of “being privileged”, as in having time and financial resources to live degrowth as a free choice and not out of necessity.

### ***Summary***

In this section I analysed motivating and supporting factors for living degrowth in emergent themes. During this analysis I realised that these factors can be associated to particular spheres of practices, as presented in Figure 12. Indeed, I see that each sphere of practices is at least motivated and supported by one factor.



**Figure 12.** Motivating and supporting factors (red fields) for living degrowth in relation to spheres of practices (green field) (Own graphic)



### 4.3 Challenges

After analysing what motivates and supports people practicing degrowth, I now move on to *how* degrowth-practices are experienced regarding challenges they might cause. Indeed, challenges, conflicts and contradictions appear inherent to living for a new era, as “almost everything is challenge” (S2) and as “there are always contradictions” (S3).

Through my research I learned about those manifold challenges and found particular ones corresponding to each sphere of practices. Due to the limited scope of this thesis I will only discuss cross-cutting themes of challenges that relate to all practices.

#### ***Being embedded in manifold social contexts and structures***

The practices of living degrowth, as any other practices, are not performed in isolation, but in contexts. As discussed in chapter 3, these contexts can be described as *sites*, also called *practice architectures*, that enable or constrain practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014). However, no “spatialized ‘degrowth world’” yet exists, but only small experiments inspired by it (Kallis & March, 2015, p. 361). Hence, sites for degrowth practices are rather rare, small or fragmented. Living degrowth thus means to constantly experience and handle the reality of being embedded in manifold social contexts and structures that are *not degrowth-inspired*, but “still very much pro-growth” (S3). For instance, a variety of relations, such as professional, family or community relations, can “constrain and push you towards different kind of decisions and create new conflicts” (S1).

Examples of this challenging experience were diverse. A participant described having “strong cultural ties” with his religion but being “frustrated by the discourse of the community”, which conflicted with his degrowth views. A scholar also discussed the difficulty of living in structures “which are not collective or cooperative” while holding on to principles such as care (S3). Other examples included expectations and practices of family and friends that clashed with personal wishes of living differently, which could even lead to “being excluded” (see Figure 13). These examples show that even with a strong willingness to live degrowth, the manifold social structures one is part of can hamper new practices and cause conflicts and challenges.



**Figure 13.** A statue expressing the experience of “Changing practice and being excluded”

#### ***Finding your own path***

Because people are socially embedded, living degrowth confronts them with challenges of finding their individual paths. This appears first in relation to the growth oriented mainstream, for instance when searching for a “different” professional path, one that does not serve competitive

cooperate interests. Or to look at academia, not wanting to “play the game” impairs career chances (S3). A participant described how “in Europe (...) you always have a path” – e.g a predetermined way of passing through education – and once she had left this path she got completely lost, stating “I need to lead myself, and I have no idea how to.”

However, finding one’s own path can also be challenging *within* a degrowth context. After an improvisation exercise around degrowth practices a participant described how challenging it was to *find her own way* of doing things instead of joining what the majority did. The latter felt to her like an “easy solution” that was not in tune with herself. At the same time, diverse ways of living degrowth can also lead to clashes within the broader community, as people interpret degrowth differently (S3).

### ***Balancing (contradictive) practices and aims***

The manifold practices that living degrowth entails can become contradictive in themselves. For instance, the practice of *cultivating personal relationships* might include (unavoidable) flying, which contradicts with the aim of *flying less*. Likewise, scholars described how academic research *advocating degrowth* might lead to conference invitations that require long-distance flights. In fact, the question of flying (less) was much discussed, revealing it as caused by internally contradictive wishes and/or external social expectations.

While not contradictive per se, other practices cause challenges regarding their time intensity. Practices that *create alternatives* or *political actions* are time consuming, thus hard to integrate as long as one is (or has to be) part of a full-time job. Hence it is not surprising that *time allocation* was a reoccurring challenge brought up by participants and scholars.

### ***Walking the talk without becoming dogmatic***

A two-sided challenge that relates to all spheres of practices relates to authenticity and dogmatism. On the one side, participants and scholars described contradictions between what they *talk/know/think* about and what they *do*, which I colloquially call the challenge of *walking the talk*. While closing this gap might be desirable, though hard to achieve, it might also carry the danger of becoming “fundamentalist” about “certain types of voluntary simplicity” (S2). Being “evangelic about certain kind of consumption pattern” (S1) was also deemed problematic, as was “being dogmatic or having a mission”. At the same time, the fear of being dogmatic might impede advocating for degrowth, as a participant pointed out that “to get a change we need to have initiative”, even without everyone’s consent.

### ***Integrating individuality and collectivity***

Collectivity is important for living degrowth, but might clash with individuality. A participant struggled with the feeling that “everything has to be a community-future”, but she actually preferred to live on her own. More generally, a scholar perceived in “leftist collectives” the tendency to

prioritize the collective and compromise “the rest” (S3), i.e. individual needs. By contrast, even while fostering more collective approaches, “there should be space for the individual” to be oneself (S3). Interestingly, while this challenge appeared, participants also discussed the importance to integrate individuality with collectivity.

**Keeping well and mindful**

With a focus on personal and collective well-being, happiness and meaningfulness, comes also an awareness of difficulties to achieve it. A scholar pointed to the challenge of “losing motivation” or reaching “your human limits” (S2) and participants questioned themselves whether their actions were “enough or not”, and how much one can or should do. Someone also pointed out that it can be hard to keep positive about “our potential” in confrontation with manifold struggles. Likewise a participant

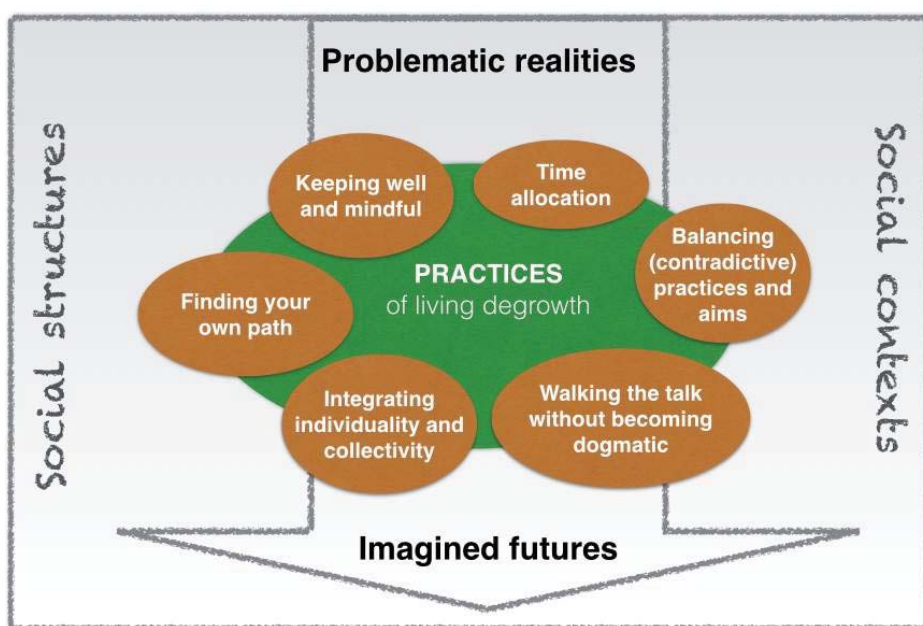
created a statue that portrayed the challenge of “staying present and looking forward” in context of practicing degrowth (see Figure 14).



**Figure 14.** A statue describing the challenge of "Staying present and looking forward"

**Summary**

In short, living degrowth brings along many challenges, conflicts and contradictions. As a summary I visualised the cross-cutting challenges discussed in this section (see Figure 15). The grey frame surrounding the graphic symbolizes that living degrowth does not happen in isolation, but is embedded in manifold social structures and contexts, which are most likely reflecting the dominant imaginary of capitalist growth-society and thus causing most of the challenges.



**Figure 15.** Challenges of living degrowth (brown fields) arising from practices that aim at transforming problematic realities into imagined futures

#### 4.4 Summary

In this chapter I offered a preliminary account of living degrowth based on my research, showing practices, supporting and motivating factors and challenges. By that I answered the first research question, which aimed at exploring what it means to live degrowth. Instead of a classical recap, I present the picture of a statue that participants created at the end of the workshop. It highlights aspects of living degrowth that were important to them in retrospection of the process (see Figure 16).



**Figure 16.** A collective statue representing aspects of living degrowth that participants cared about. Word bubbles voice their articulation of what they represent (own graphic)

This statue represents *content* and *process* of the workshop in a powerful and well-rounded way. The *process* of the workshop was characterized by a great willingness to discuss degrowth from a personal perspective, and an openness to explore it through the creative and bodily approach of applied theatre.

To comment on the *content*, I see each sphere of practices represented: Portraying “Strength” and “Saying ‘No’” can indicate *acting political*. “Saying ‘No’” can also be a part of *creating alternatives* by resisting unsustainable practices and structures. “Inclusivity” and “Harmony” remind me of *fostering connections*, and “Imagination” of *rethinking society*. “Well-being”, “Mindfulness”

and “Moving core” are for me related to *unveiling the self*. The participant in the centre of the statue took the posture of praying, and described his position as “moving core”. He thus related the topic of religion to his personal way of living degrowth. This made another participant reflect on the statue, saying that it brought aspects to the forefront, such as religion, “that were never talked” about in degrowth theory. This to me reveals the inclusive character of performative methods, as they create a “safe space for discussion” and allowing for “diverse opinions and positions” to surface (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 390).

## 5 Final discussion and conclusion

This chapter moves on a more general level to (1) answer my second research question by conceptualizing living degrowth as a transformative social endeavour and (2) highlights the contribution of this thesis.

### 5.1 Living degrowth – a transformative endeavour?

Please follow me on a little thought experiment: if we take a bird's eye perspective and look at the field of degrowth as *a* practice, like we can describe education or medicine as *a* practice – “practices at a very high level of generality” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 52) – then I would claim that living degrowth is a “practice-changing practice” or “meta-practice” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 467). The author used these notions to describe *action research* as a practice that aims at changing other practices. Based on the insight of my thesis I suggest to look at degrowth as a “practice-changing practice”, because it transforms practices rooted in the imaginary of growth into practices reflecting an imaginary of degrowth.

This idea relates to my second research question, in which I asked how living degrowth could be conceptualized as a transformative endeavour, i.e. a practice transforming other practices. This question is ultimately a hypothesis that calls for backing. I support it by saying that the five suggested spheres of degrowth practices transform five realms of life by finding new and/or different answers to five guiding questions. I argue that people engaged in degrowth perform

- a) practices of *rethinking society*, thus transforming **ideas, principles and discourses** in our society, guided by the question “*How do we understand the world and how do we want it to be in an imagined future?*”;
- b) practices of *acting political*, thus transforming **processes of social/political choice**, guided by the question “*How do we collectively decide on and bring about what we want (and what not) for an imagined future?*”;
- c) practices of *creating alternatives*, thus transforming **re/productive structures and processes**, guided by the question “*How do we provide for our needs enabling an imagined future?*”
- d) practices of *fostering connections*, thus transforming **interpersonal relationships, communities and humans' place in nature**, guided by the question “*How do we relate to each other and the more-than-human world to support an imagined future?*”
- e) practices of *unveiling the self*, thus transforming **(our conception of) the self**, guided by the question “*How do we present and relate with ourselves allowing for an imagined future?*”

I have conceptualized these ideas visually in Figure 17.

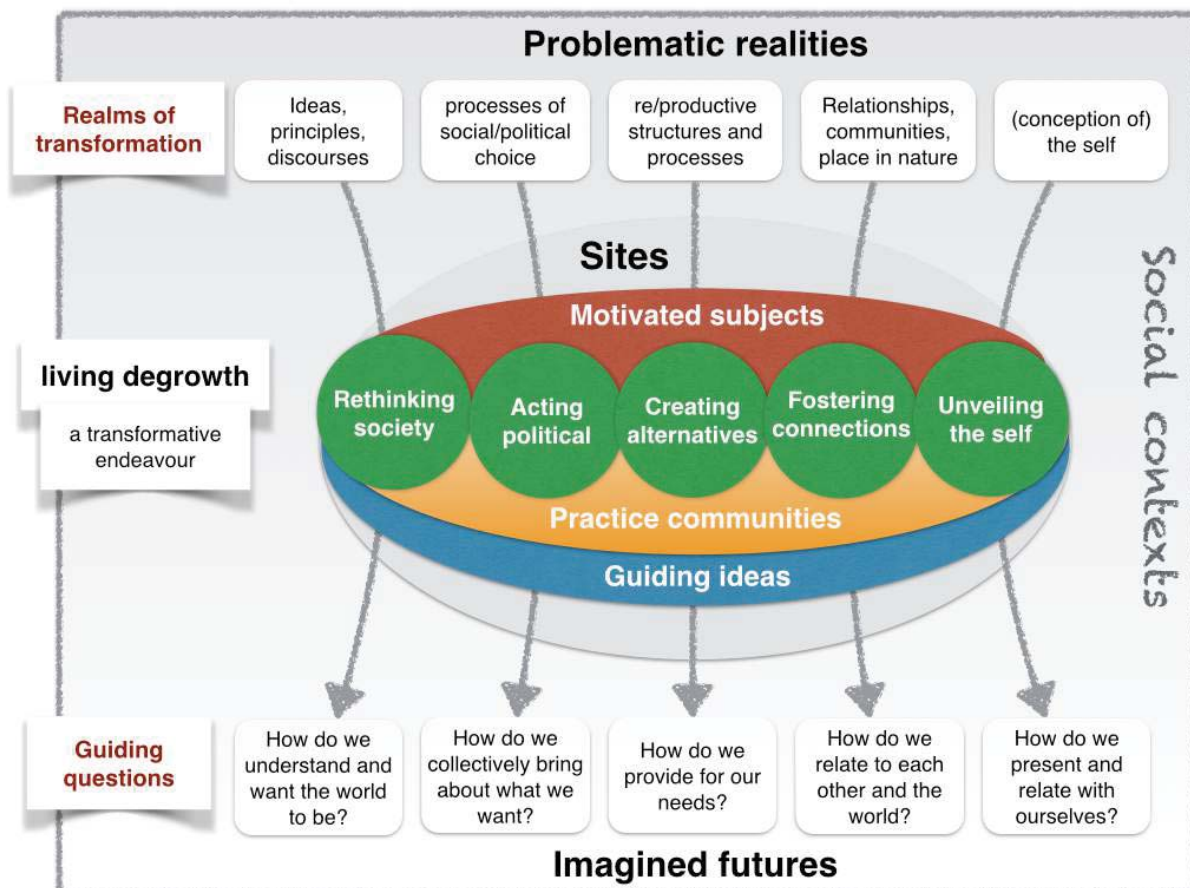


Figure 17. Living degrowth as a transformative endeavour (own graphic)

The figure presents our currently problematic realities in five *realms* in the top of the graphic. These realms need to be and are transformed through five spheres of *practices* (green circles; see chapter 4.1) that belong to the endeavour of *living degrowth*. These practices can be seen as guided by *questions* (at the bottom of the graphic) that are/need to be answered in new/different ways to realize imagined futures. The practices of living degrowth are carried out by *subjects/agents* motivated and supported by diverse factors (red field; see chapter 4.2) and connected in *practice communities* (orange field, not explored in my research). Practices, agents and communities are oriented by a set of *guiding ideas*, in which social justice and ecological sustainability form the core (blue field; see chapter 4.1.6).

All of these – subjects, practices, communities and ideas – are situated in *sites*, hold in place by *practice architectures* that through their cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements enable and constrain the practices (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014), as theoretically explained in chapter 3.2, though not empirically explored in my thesis. By contrast, clearly revealed by my empirical work are the *challenges* that arise from living degrowth, which are related to being embedded in manifold *social contexts* (grey frame of the graphic; see chapter 4.3).

Because the stated realms and described practices reach from the outer to the inner and vice versa – touching upon theoretical, political, material, economical, social and personal dimensions of

world and life – I suggest to call living degrowth *a transformative endeavour*. I think it is transformative because it aims for radical, systemic and holistic change, rather than taking a narrow approach, such as only considering technological innovation or green consumerism.

## 5.2 Contribution of this thesis

To relate back to the introduction, where I situated my research within the bigger quest of encouraging more people for degrowth, I now describe the contribution of my thesis regarding this quest and in relation to other aspects that guided my approach (see chapter 1.2):

(1) By applying *performative methods* I made use of an innovative methodological approach in sustainability science, which allowed for a “meaningful integration of various sources of knowledge and judgement, in combination with emotion-rich expressions and affective communication” (Heras & Tàbara, 2014, p. 388), as evident in the pictures from the theatre workshop.

(2) By putting forward the idea of *living degrowth* I investigated degrowth’s “large array of concerns, goals, strategies and actions” (Demaria et al., 2013, p. 193) as *lived experiences*. The resulting *preliminary account* of living degrowth offered in this thesis may provide orientation for “what is to be done?” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 425) in a way that makes degrowth thinking more accessible and applicable to everyday life without losing its intriguing complexity.

(3) By exploring degrowth from a *subjective perspective* through participatory and innovative methods my research opened new spaces of investigation. Through this opening degrowth appeared relevant beyond an academic debate or realm of activism into the intimate spheres of relationships, individual life paths and conceptions of self. In this sense my thesis recognizes, reveals and supports the crucial role that “individual and subjective modes of being” play in the context of sustainability science and practice (Wamsler et al., 2017, p. 9).

(4) By showing this *wide range of practices* connected to degrowth – bridging the inner and outer – I hope to contribute to overcoming narrow, one-sided either/or approaches to what needs to be done, and embrace a *this-and-that* approach to what degrowth means, supporting the argument by Demaria et al. (2013) that diverse strategies can be compatible and important for a transformation. The question “What role can I play in this future?” (Heras et al., 2016, p. 10) can thus be answered in manifold individually appealing and meaningful ways, hopefully encouraging more people to see their role in bringing about imagined futures.

(5) By relating *practice theory* to degrowth I highlight that “[t]o transform our world, we need to transform our practices” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 49), and the practice architectures that hold them in place. Based on this I claimed that living degrowth consists of five spheres of *transformative practices*, which change problematic practices (and architectures) of current realities into practices (and architectures) for a new era of imagined socio-ecologically sustainable futures.



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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix A – Detailed plan of the *living degrowth* theatre-workshop

This workshop took place March 18-19, 2017, at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA), Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB).

Time	Duration	What?	Who?	Documentation	Material
<b>SATURDAY 18TH</b>					
10:00 - 10:45	45'	<b>Arrival, Registration, Name tags, Research Ethics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greet participants</li> <li>- Check/sign in on participant list</li> <li>- Ask to sign research consent forms</li> <li>- make name-tags</li> </ul>	Johannes & Benno ->outside!	Participant list, consent forms	“Welcome Flipchart”, Masking tape for name tags
10:45 - 10:55	10'	<b>Get to know each other and Arriving (Gesture circle)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pat and shake your body parts</li> <li>- Connecting Names with a gesture or movement (how am I at the moment); Repetition of both through group</li> <li>- How ready do I feel for a theatre workshop?</li> <li>- How would I like to feel tonight after the workshop?</li> </ul>	Benno ->outside		
10:55 - 11:10	15'	<b>Welcome and introduction</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Welcome and introducing ourselves (Name, studies, actinGreen, Jolanda explains rules for use of the ICTA facilities)</li> <li>2. What are your expectations? (pop corn sharing)</li> <li>3. Introducing our research ethic suggestions</li> </ol>	Benno & Johannes		Flip: Program day 1 Flip: Principals Flip: Research Ethics Flip: expectations Paper & pens

		<p>4. Presenting the program for Saturday/day 1</p> <p>5. Introducing our principals + invitation to suggest additional principals</p>			
11:10 – 11:25	15'	<p><b>Warm-Up (People to people)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walking through the room (focus on yourself, own body, body scan)</li> <li>- Focus on the room - trying to fill out the room as evenly as possible</li> <li>- Focus on others - notice each other with a smile, eye contact</li> <li>- Greeting each other (shake as many hands as possible, try to always be connected)</li> <li>- Now we will move on, greeting each other in less conventional ways: only touch each other elbow to elbow</li> <li>- Now knees to knees</li> <li>- Different types of walking (city, plaza, slow mo...) FREEZE</li> <li>- find your way of walking, what is your pace, your way of putting your feet on the ground, how do you move your hip, where do you look.</li> <li>- Finish: when I say STOP, stand on one leg and reach out with both of your hands to grab other people's hands</li> <li>- And now once more, but with a smile on your face :)</li> </ul>	Johannes		
		<b>THEME: PRACTICES - How am I/are we <i>living degrowth</i>?</b>			
11:25 - 11:45	20'	<p><b>Statue-Dialogue (Boal, 2002)</b></p> <p>Free warm up in pairs, with changing partners</p> <p>2 pairs form a group of four</p> <p>Facilitator picks one image and asks the group to remain in a freeze position</p> <p>Question to the rest of the group: What do you see here?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> emphasising how manifold we can interpret things in general</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> And do you see any connections to degrowth in this image?</li> </ul>	Benno	<b>Video</b> for second part	
11:45 - 11:50	5'	<p><b>Introduction of the idea <i>living degrowth</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- we see degrowth not only as a debate, but something that inspires people to live and act differently in manifold ways</li> <li>- we want to use the word <i>practices</i> for all these ways of integrating degrowth in</li> </ul>	Johannes	<b>Audio</b>	Poster

		<p>our and each others lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- practices can be seen on very different levels and scales, from “obvious daily tasks” to more general life decisive questions (profession, living arrangements,...) and in every aspect of live (practical, social, philosophical, spiritual, theoretical,...)</li> <li>- to encompass these diverse ways of being inspired by degrowth we want to introduce the term <i>living degrowth</i></li> <li>- we use <i>Living degrowth</i> as an idea, because what we are interested in is not the abstract, but what is <b>lived</b> (and what influences lives), and because it is <b>living</b>, as it is not a fixed idea, but an evolving set of practices.</li> <li>- The purpose of this weekend is to explore what <i>living degrowth</i> could mean, through looking at (y)our practices, the related challenges and conflicts, and what drives us to engage with this idea</li> <li>- In the spirit of critical participatory action research we want to offer a space to be reflexive, questioning and challenging our theories and actions and how they are merged in our practices</li> <li>- Any questions?</li> </ul>			
11:50 - 12:27	37'	<p><b>Statue-museum (Boal, 2002)</b></p> <p>We combine now our first theatre tool (building statues) with the idea of <i>living degrowth</i> as practices. But in a fun and playful way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You will go together in pairs</li> <li>- One becomes the artist, the other the raw material (clay)</li> <li>- The artist has various ways of forming the material into a statue (marionette technique, mirror technique)</li> <li>- find a partner (maybe someone you haven't worked with yet)</li> <li>- and here is your first task:</li> </ul> <p>2 rounds for each questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) My favourite practice of <i>living degrowth</i> for me - 15' -&gt; changing partners</li> <li>2) The most challenging practice of <i>living degrowth</i> for me - 15'</li> </ol>	Johannes	<b>Photo &amp; Audio</b> record of each statue & statement	
12:18					



		<p><i>Reflection (10')</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did you feel in the different roles?</li> <li>- How was it to visit the statue-museum?</li> <li>- Were there any depictions that were surprising to you? Anything that strongly resonated with you?</li> </ul>		<b>Audio recording</b> of reflection	
12:27 - 13:00	33'	<b>BREAK</b>			
13:00 - 14:15	75' (10')  (65')	<p><b>Mapping our practices</b></p> <p>Transition – from examples of the museum to broader view</p> <p>Individual brainstorming about the practices of <i>living degrowth</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- on pen &amp; paper (writing in big letters)</li> </ul> <p>Collective gathering and grouping of practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- in half-circle (1 element per person, then next)</li> <li>- participants decide where to place their practices</li> </ul>	Johannes	<p><b>Audio</b> recording of gathering ideas and discussion,</p> <p><b>Photo</b> of pinboard</p>	Many moderation cards, Pinboard & pins (whiteboard & magnets/tape)
14:15 - 15:45	90'	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>			
15:35 - 15:45	10'	<p><b>Presenting &amp; Discussing headings for practice areas</b></p> <p>During the lunch break we as facilitators came up with 6 umbrella terms to structure the collective gathering of practices (see Appendix D). We discussed these terms with the group, who accepted our suggestion in general. One area was added and one was renamed.</p>			
15:45- 16:30	10''	<p><b>Playing our practices</b></p> <p>Walking through the spheres of practices, play out what you like to do in this area of living a degrowth life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Starting with short “energizer” / body wake up</li> <li>-Sequently we touched upon all 7 areas of practices, allowing people to find body movements that represent their practices.</li> </ul>	Benno	<b>Video recording</b> of improvisation	

	15'	<p>-As a final step we laid out the headings of the practices on the floor, asking people to move to their favourite area and find a movement to represent this practice area for them.</p> <p>-Then we asked them to see if they could connect their movements with other people's movements close by.</p> <p>-This lead to a group improvisation using body movement and sound</p> <p>- <u>Reflection:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How was it to connect your movement &amp; practice with other peoples movements? What did you experience in this exercise?</li> <li>- Did it feel like the practices connected to a living system of practices?</li> <li>- Just to reveal our thought behind this exercise: in the practice theory we are inspired by they talk about "ecologies of practices" - about how different practices are interconnected/dependent/supporting each other.</li> </ul>	Johannes	Audio recording of reflection	
		<b>THEME: CHALLENGES</b>			
16:30 - 17:20	50' [35']	<p><b>Newspaper theatre (Boal, 2008)</b></p> <p>Connection to outer world, starting to explore how I react/connect to the broader reality (more detailed explanation/justification: so far we were connecting existing ideas and images, now through the newspapers we look out, take the view of another reality to broaden our understanding)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Reading through newspapers</li> <li>2) Finding a sentence/thought that appeals/provokes one</li> <li>3) Working with this sentence (walking through the room, saying out the sentence, bringing in different emotions)</li> </ol> <p><u>Reflection</u></p> <p>Why did I pick this particular sentence? What resonated in me with this sentence?</p> <p>What are the conflicts that emerge?</p> <p>Did my relation to the conflict change?</p>	Benno	Photos of process  Audio recording of reflection	Different newspapers (in English, Spanish, Catalan), Many scissors  Moderation cards and markers
17:20 -	40'	<b>Image theatre - representing challenges (Boal, 2002, 2008)</b>	Johannes		Moderation cards,

18:00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Based on the challenges/conflicts discussed before, each group drew one and developed a still image about it</li> <li>- Groups present their image to each other, audience describe what they see: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you see in this image?</li> <li>- What are the interactions, relations, emotions?</li> <li>- Who are the agents?</li> <li>- What could this image represent overall?</li> <li>- Do you see any challenges or conflicts in this image?</li> <li>- What could be a title for this image?</li> </ul> </li> <li>- facilitator may bring the image alive (hear voices of actors in their roles/positions) to help audience understand what the group intended to represent</li> </ul>	(Benno supports groups in developing their still image)	<b>Video</b> when groups present their image and audience discusses;  <b>photo</b> of each image	markers
18:00 - 18:05	5'	<b>Gesture Circle</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are you feeling right now?</li> <li>- What was your favourite moment of the day?</li> <li>- Do you have any feedback for us?</li> </ul>	Johannes		
<b>SUNDAY 19th</b>					
		<b>Topics: Subject &amp; Roles</b>			
10:47 - 10:50	3'	<b>Body wake up</b>	Johannes		
10:50- 11:04	14'	<b>Energizer - Ball Game</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1. Name</li> <li>- 2. Practice of degrowth</li> </ul>	Benno		
11:04 -	10'	<b>Short look back</b>	Johannes	<b>Audio recording</b>	

11:14		<p><b>Short check-in</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How are you today?</li> <li>- Did any thoughts arise over night? Anything you would like to share?</li> </ul> <p><b>Look ahead (presenting program of the day)</b></p>	Benno		talking piece
11:14 - 11:48	34' [20']	<p><b>Columbian hypnosis (Boal, 2002)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find together in pairs. Decide who is Player A and Player B</li> <li>• Have partners check in with each other about any physical needs or limitations they might have today (e.g. “Getting up and down off the ground is hard for me”).</li> <li>• Player A holds the palm of his or her hand about 20 cm from Player B’s face. Ask Player B to imagine that her or his partner’s hand has hypnotized him/her and that s/he has to follow it anywhere it goes, keeping the same distance between her/his face and the palm at all times.</li> <li>• Please be careful and respectful, and rather slow in your movements.</li> <li>• Player A moves around the room, Player B follows. After a set time, switch and let B’s lead.</li> </ul> <p><i>Reflection questions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did it feel for you to participate in this activity?</li> <li>• Which did you prefer—being the leader or being led? Why?</li> </ul>	Benno		
	18' (5-10')			<b>Audio recording</b> of reflection	
		<b>THEME: CHALLENGES</b>			
11:48 - 12:28	40'	<p><b>Feeling our practices - “dream journey”</b></p> <p>Reconnecting with the spheres of practices that we outlined on Saturday using a dream journey. We guided the participants in their imagination through the 7 spheres of practices asking them to perceive their emotional connection with them and reflect on each area to find out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In which areas do I feel comfortable? Where do I feel I am content with my/our practices?</li> <li>- In which areas do I feel uncomfortable and dissatisfied?</li> </ul>	Johannes	<b>Audio recording</b>	<p>moderation cards &amp; pens for group decision process</p> <p>topics from day before</p>

12:00		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Finding stories</u>: Now, please recall the areas of (your) practice that you felt uncomfortable with, that evoked dissatisfaction, confusion, or other unpleasant emotions. a) Please think of a concrete situation, practice, where you were doing something, but didn't feel at ease with it (for whatever purpose). b) Or think of an area in your life where you have a wish of how you would like to live degrowth, but where something blocks yourself from realising it.</li> </ul>			
12:08		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Collection Process</u>: Everyone can note down max. two stories (one a card each)</li> <li>● Cards will be laid out on the floor outside of three circles Participants present their stories in a short way (2-3 sentences per story) <u>Decision Process</u>: Everyone has 3 moves (back and/or forth) to rank their favourite (usable for 1 or more stories) if more than 1 story finds equal interest in the group, lay out the stories in the room and ask people to position themselves Discussion about the ranking &amp; decision of story (final agreement of originator is important!)</li> </ul>		Audio recording of story collection process	
12:28 - 12:31	3'	<b>Toilet BREAK</b>			
12:31 - 13:33	62'  (5')	<p><b>Cops in our Head (Boal &amp; Jackson, 1995)</b></p> <p>Introduction: Before the break we started to look at <i>what we are doing regarding "living degrowth", but are struggling with</i> Now we will find out why we might be struggling with these things. The method that Benno is gonna facilitate for us is called "Cops in the head". It's gonna deal with inner voices that get in the way of living how we want to live.</p>			

	<p>(10-15')</p> <p>(5')</p> <p>(10-15')</p> <p>(10-15')</p> <p>(5'-10')</p> <p>(10')</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Setting up</u></li> <li>● Information on longer process of cops of the head (short explanation of steps)</li> <li>● Detailed sharing of selected story &amp; finding characters to stage the scene</li> <li>● <u>Improvisation of scene &amp; formation of cops</u> Spectators then place and sculpt themselves as “cops in the head” when they identified one specific character with influence on the protagonist. The protagonist is asked in the end if he can identify with the images that are shown, or if an important voice is missing.</li> <li>● <u>Hearing the cops</u> Inner voices of cops get audible at first one by one Spectators &amp; protagonist can walk around the scene and listen to the cops</li> <li>● <u>Confrontation &amp; Lightning Forum</u> All Cops are lined up and one by one the protagonist gets in a dialogue with them. The audience can replace the protagonist to try other interventions against the cops and to find new arguments. As soon as anyone in the audience can comprehend an argument and feels able to argue against the cop he/she stands behind the cop as an antibody.</li> <li>● <u>The fair:</u> Cops and their antibodies prepare a short convincing speech, relating to concepts and ideologies which relate to their position. They are totally convinced of their position and even try to intensify or overact, similar to strong political speeches. One by one is performed, possibly as pairs of the confronting parties.</li> <li>● <u>Re-localisation</u> of the cops through protagonist (antibodies back in audience) &amp; relating to real, known people Guiding questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Which relationship exists to the character</li> <li>● What is the distance to yourself, are they facing you</li> <li>● How is the constellation between the cops (are they united, is there dispositions between them?)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Antibodies come into the now frozen scene (no speech anymore) and relate to the cops in a position to take their power.</li> </ul>	Benno	<p><b>Audio</b> recording of story</p> <p><b>Video</b> recording here after</p>	
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	(10-20')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1-2-3-4-5 Shake it out</li> <li>Reflection</li> </ul> <p><i>Order of Interrogation</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cops &amp; Antibodies</li> <li>Spectators</li> <li>Protagonist</li> </ol> <p><i>Questions</i></p> <p>How did you feel</p> <p>Was it easy to be in this role</p> <p>Could you be convinced/convincing</p> <p>What did you observe</p> <p>Did you find new inspiration/ways to deal with it</p> <p>Could you take some arguments</p>		Audio & Video recording of reflection	
13:33-14:50	77'	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>			
14:50-15:00	10'	<b>Energizer - Umpa Umpa</b>	Johannes		
		<b>THEME: MOTIVATING AND SUPPORTING FACTORS</b>			
15:00 - 15:30	30' 10' 15' 5'	<b>Connecting to the core: What drives, fuels and sustains our ambition of “living degrowth”?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introducing the idea</li> <li>- Individual Brainstorming - please write down what else energizes, drives and sustains you to “live degrowth”? What helps you in “living degrowth”? These could be values, feelings, ideas,...</li> <li>- Sharing in the 2 small groups of 4 people</li> <li>- finding a common motivation/theme</li> </ul>	Johannes	Audio recording	
15:30 - 15:42	12'	<b>Group image - motivation for living degrowth (Boal, 2002, 2008)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- developing an image in 2 groups</li> <li>- presentation of images</li> </ul>	Benno & Johannes	Video recording of Statues, Photos of group sculptures	

15:42 - 15:47	5'	<b>Final image of "living degrowth"</b> In a final improvisation we asked participants to develop a collective image representing "living degrowth"	Johannes	<b>Video recording</b>	
15:47 - 16:00	13'	<b>Final reflection</b> - using a taking piece, each person gets the opportunity to share regarding the question: What are you taking home from this weekend for "living degrowth"?	Benno & Johannes	<b>Audio recording</b>	
16:00 - 16:05	5'	<b>Evaluation board</b>	Benno & Johannes	<b>Photo</b>	



## Appendix B – Guide for interviews with degrowth-scholars

### Part 1: General questions regarding the topic of my research

*Thanks for offering your time to do this interview with me. Would it be ok to **record** this interview? The interview has three parts: first, I have some general questions regarding my research topic; then I will ask you some details related to areas/publications you have worked on, and third I would like to discuss some of my initial findings from my fieldwork (the theatre workshop) with you.*

*To start off with, just some general questions:*

#### Interview with Scholar 1:

**Q1.1: How did you get interested in degrowth in the first place?**

#### Interview with Scholar 2:

Since time was limited for this interview and I knew the scholar from previous interactions I skipped the introduction question.

#### Interview with Scholar 1:

**Q1.1: What is your entry point and interest in degrowth?**

*Now, I want to move on to my research topic. I am curious to find out*

**Q1.2: What does it mean to live degrowth in general?**

*(in case clarification is needed I would add: Let's say people are inspired by the idea of degrowth, then how could they shape their lives to reflect those ideas)*

**Q1.3: Are there specific ways of living degrowth that are personally very important/relevant to you?**

*In my thesis I use a "practice lens". Now you have already named several practices connected to degrowth, in general and more personal. I propose to look at degrowth not only as an (academic) debate, but as a big transformative project, constituted by practices on different levels and scales, from daily actions to more general life decisive questions (like choosing a profession, a living arrangement,...). However, I wonder if or how we could classify all these practices in more or less distinct groups.*

**Q1.4: Connecting to what you mentioned regarding living degrowth so far, could you formulate any umbrella categories that encompass the different practices you named?**

*(Alternative phrasing: Could you group practices that constitute degrowth into areas/domains of practices?)*

*Now I presume that practices in general are not happening in isolation, but they are connected.*

**Q1.7: How do the umbrella categories of degrowth practices relate to each other?** (eg. Are some supporting or contradicting each other, or maybe not related at all? Are there any dominating ones?)

**Q1.8: Where do you see conflicts and challenges that arise from living degrowth?** (both on an individual level, as well as in a broader social view)

*Now we have discussed practices a lot. The theory of practice I am using portrays practices as something shared, something social, existing beyond the individual. However, without individuals they won't be sustained or further developed. That's why I am interested in the **subject** of degrowth. I don't want to demarcate people, nor lump them all together, but I wonder if there is something that connects people who engage with degrowth.*

**Q1.8: What do you think people who engage in degrowth share?** (e.g. In terms of values, goals, mindsets,...)

Part 2: Specific questions relating to the scholars previous work

Scholar 1: You have recently published the degrowth vocabulary book.

**Q2.1:** In the epilogue of the book you talk about “the sober subject of degrowth”. Could you explain a bit more detailed what you mean by that?

**Q2.2:** In the same section you also state that this subject already exists, but that the question is how it can spread and replicate. You call this a “political”, not an “individual” question – could you elaborate on this?

Scholar 2: You have connected your academic work a lot to the concept of happiness.

**Q2.1:** What role does happiness and well-being play in living degrowth?

Scholar 3: You have in your academic work focused a lot on the topic of work.

**Q2.1:** What role does work play in an idea of living degrowth?

Part 3: Questions building on first insights from the theatre workshop

- *Relating back to the beginning of the interview I quickly want to discuss some questions I got from my fieldwork so far.* In the workshop we held last weekend, we brainstormed with the participants what it means to live degrowth. We filled an entire wall with cards and ideas. In a first attempt, we categorized those practices into following umbrella terms:
  - 1) Being & acting political 2) Rethinking and reframing society 3) Consuming less and differently 4) Fostering well-being and connection 5) Pursuing alternative self-sustaining practices 6) Living community 7) Decentering the human
- **Q3.1:** What do you think about these broad areas/categories of practices? What is missing?
- **Q3.2:** I personally missed the areas of **business, production and professional life**? There was some talk about working less and questioning what work means, but hardly any talk about business or production. So what do you think would constitute living degrowth in these areas?
- **Q3.3:** Several times participants talked about experiencing a lot of **contradictions** in bringing degrowth into their lives. How do you think we can deal with these contradictions fruitfully so they do not become barriers to a sustained engagement for societal transformation?
- Would you like to add anything to this interview? Would you like to stay anonymous or be named in case I use material from our interview?

*Thanks a lot for taking time for this interview – I highly appreciate it.*

## Appendix C – List of interviewed degrowth-scholars

Scholar 1 (S1), Giacomo D’Alisa is currently<sup>5</sup> based at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). I approached Giacomo because he co-edited the recently published book *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a New Era*, which had caught my attention. I conducted the interview on March 22, 2017 at ICTA and it lasted for 1h and 13min.

Scholar 2 (S2), Filka Sekulova is currently based at the Institute of Environmental Science and Technology (ICTA) at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). I approached Filka because we got to know each other at a two-day symposium on degrowth held at the Pufendorf Institute in May 2016<sup>6</sup> and because we were in contact during the preparations for the theatre-workshop. I conducted the interview on March 22, 2017 at ICTA and it lasted for 41 min.

Scholar 3 (S3), Ekaterina Chertkovskaya is currently based at the Department of Political Science at Lund University. I approached Ekaterina because we had met during the two-day symposium on degrowth mentioned above as well as during other events around Lund. I conducted the interview on April 6, 2017 at Lund University and it lasted for 1h and 28min.

## Appendix D – Themes for thematic analysis

These are the seven themes that I used for *thematic analysis* of my data in a thematic framework (see chapter 2.3):

- 1) Being and acting political
- 2) Rethinking and reframing society
- 3) Consuming less and differently
- 4) Fostering well-being and connection
- 5) Pursuing alternative self-sustaining practices
- 6) Living community
- 7) Decentring the human

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of the interview and the hand in of this thesis on May 16, 2017

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://www.pi.lu.se/en/activities/previous-activities>; and: [http://www.pi.lu.se/sites/pi.lu.se/en/files/poster\\_12maj\\_4.pdf](http://www.pi.lu.se/sites/pi.lu.se/en/files/poster_12maj_4.pdf)

Appendix E – Example of matrix/spreadsheet for thematic analysis

Sources of data (workshop activities and interviews)

Seven key themes (see appendix 4)

Theme	Source of data	Key themes identified	Key themes identified	Key themes identified	Key themes identified	Key themes identified
Theme 1	Workshop 1	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 2	Workshop 2	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 3	Workshop 3	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 4	Workshop 4	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 5	Workshop 5	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 6	Workshop 6	...	...	...	...	...
Theme 7	Workshop 7	...	...	...	...	...

Example of data from transcripts