Can the Global North Learn from the Global South?

Exploring Possibilities for Overcoming the Psychological Barriers to Degrowth

Fabian Simon Bendisch

LUCSUS

Lund University Centre for
Sustainability Studies

Can the Global North Learn from the Global South?

Exploring Possibilities for Overcoming the Psychological Barriers to Degrowth

Fabian Simon Bendisch

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Lund University International

Master's Programme in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science

Submitted May 15, 2018

Supervisor: Genesis Tambang Yengoh, LUCSUS, Lund University

Abstract

The benefits of economic growth (e.g. capital accumulation) are mainly being enjoyed by people in the Global North, while its negative byproducts (e.g. pollution) are mainly being endured by people in the Global South. Our focus on economic growth has led to the erosion of social wellbeing. And continuing economic growth on this planet with finite natural resources could have even more severe consequences for society. Driven by these issues, the social movement *degrowth* has emerged as a critique of growth and development. It envisions a society based on care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity. However, achieving such a society is inhibited by psychological barriers, such as the fear that a decrease in consumption comes with a decrease in wellbeing, but research has so far only paid little attention to how these psychological barriers can be overcome.

Therefore, this thesis explores possibilities for how the support of degrowth ideas can be facilitated. Hypothesizing that temporarily living in the Global South can constitute a learning experience towards degrowth for people from the Global North, I explore the research questions of how this experience can (1) enable them to critically reflect the growth and development paradigms and (2) motivate them to envision degrowth futures. Based on emancipatory education and transformative learning theory, I conducted action research with young German adults who participated in an 11-months volunteer service programme in the Global South. To collect data, I facilitated a reflection workshop and a visioning workshop at two five-day seminars with 17 participants each which they were required to attend shortly after their return from their host countries in the Global South.

Findings show that temporarily living in the Global South can facilitate support of degrowth ideas in people from the Global North by enabling them to experience consequences of consumerist behavior (largescale waste and pollution) and other ways of living together (stronger focus on family and community life), and to interact with people who have vastly different interests and beliefs. These experiences enable both a critical reflection of the growth and development paradigms and an envisioning of a future based on care and simplicity. One important implication of the thesis findings is that degrowth can be advanced without directly criticizing the growth and development paradigms: by emphasizing the positive consequences of practicing degrowth (with emphasis on care and simplicity), people can start pursuing a degrowth lifestyle without having critically reflected growth and development.

Keywords: Growth, Development, Weltwärts, Degrowth Education, Psychological Barriers, Transformative Learning

Word count: 13 578

Acknowledgements

This thesis basically began during a conversation I had with Mandy Singer-Brodowski at a conference on education for sustainable development in November 2017, that inspired me to write my thesis about degrowth in the context of intercultural experiences. Not only this conversation, but also the article on transformative learning in a degrowth society that she had published in collaboration with Sofia Getzin the year before would prove invaluable for the thesis project that I then set out to do.

During the following months, an online course on education for sustainable development introduced me to further theoretical perspectives on education and learning that were very helpful. Arjen Wals, the course coordinator, provided additional mentoring throughout the workshop designing process, which reassured me that I was taking the right approach for the case that I wanted to study.

When I finally conducted my field work at the returnee seminars in February and March, I received great support from the other volunteer educators that were facilitating these seminars with me. Furthermore, I was astonished by the participants' positive responses and reactions, when I told them that I would like to use the materials created during the seminar for my research.

Throughout this entire process, my thesis group (Alici Muhana Iannitelli, Stephanie Touveneau Petersen, and Zmicier Vaskovich) and supervisor (Genesis Tambang Yengoh) where very supportive and believed in me and in my thesis project – even at times, when I didn't do so myself. It was nice to know that there was always someone I could go to if I had any doubts. Your feedback and support have contributed greatly to this thesis project and working with you was always a pleasure – it actually made the past few months quite fun!

Apart from Alici, Stephanie, Zmicier, and Genesis, many others at LUCSUS and LUMES have contributed to this thesis as well. I want to especially mention Johannes Brossman, Philip Scarampi, and Thiago Toste, who went through the effort of reading through my whole thesis and provided valuable feedback.

Thank you to each and every one of you: Without you, this thesis would not have been possible!

And thank you to my family: Without you, I would never have gotten to where I am today!

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Growth as an Unsustainable Paradigm

Each year, the Global Footprint Network (GFN) calculates the date by which we have consumed all the resources that earth can renew in one year. In 2017, this Earth Overshoot Day fell on August 2nd (GFN, n.d. a). For each country, it also calculates a Country Overshoot Day for the case that everyone worldwide would consume as much as their average citizen (GFN, n.d. b). Here are some examples:

- 04/06: Sweden
- 04/24: Germany
- 05/04: United Kingdom

- 07/04: South Africa
- 07/23: Bolivia
- 09/08: Costa Rica

- 09/23: Peru
- 11/21: Ghana
- 11/26: Colombia

These dates clearly show that we are living well above the ecological limits set by a planet with finite natural resources. Yet, we continue to seek economic growth, even long after the Club of Rome cautioned us that doing so could potentially result in a "sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity" (Meadows, Meadows, Randers & Behrens, 1972, p. 29).

To reduce that risk, the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to enhance "global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation" (UN, 2015, p. 24). The feasibility of this plan, however, can be questioned on two grounds: First, countries have so far only managed to increase their GDP while decreasing their material intake by exporting industry to and importing goods from other countries (Lorek, 2015). Second, increased efficiency often drives demand (also known as 'rebound effect'), which reduces its decoupling effects (Lorek, 2015) or may even invert them, so that efficiency increases paradoxically lead to an increase in material intake ('Jevons' Paradox') (Alcott, 2015).

The dates above and our focus on growth, however, carry even more issues within them. On an international scale, the benefits of growth are primarily being enjoyed by people in the Global North[1] through higher consumption (GFN, n.d. b) and higher accumulation of capital (Steffen, Broadgate, Deutsch, Gaffney & Ludwig, 2015), whereas its negative byproducts, such as waste and pollution due to the extraction of natural resources, are mainly being endured by people in the Global South (Kallis, Demaria, D'Alisa, 2015). This injustice can also be observed between the privileged and

---

[1] This thesis uses the terminology 'Global North' vs. 'Global South' instead of 'developed' vs. 'developing' world to contest the Western development paradigm (see subsection 1.2), and to acknowledge an "entire history of colonialism, neo-imperialism, and differential economic and social change through which large inequalities in living standards, life expectancy, and access to resources are maintained." (Dados & Connell, 2012)

underprivileged within countries, where the former group accumulates capital, while polluting industries are located and waste is disposed of in areas home to the latter group (Anguelovski, 2015).

But even the more privileged pay for growth with "bad psychological health, long working hours, congestion and [the commodification of] sociality and mores. Care, hospitality, love, public duty, nature conservation [and] spiritual contemplation [...] increasingly become objects of market exchange [...] and social wellbeing diminishes as a result." (Kallis, Demaria & D'Alisa, 2015, p. 6)

1.2 Degrowth as a Sustainable Alternative

Fueled by the issues outlined above, the social movement *degrowth* emerged in the 1970s as a fundamental critique of growth and has recently started to also criticize (sustainable) development (Kallis, Demaria & D'Alisa, 2015), not only for being growth-supportive, but also for hegemonically advancing a Western development paradigm (Escobar, 2015). Reflecting this critique of development, degrowth "defies a single definition [and is rather] a frame, where different lines of thought, imaginaries, or courses of action come together" (D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2015a, p. xxi). What unites the different streams in one movement is their call for "an equitable down-scaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term" (Schneider, Kallis & Martinez-Alier, 2010, p. 512). With various motivations and growth-critical schools of thought present among degrowth supporters (Schmelzer, 2014), the particular visions and pathways they promote are very diverse, including the commons movement (e.g. Helfrich & Bollier, 2014), the economy for the common good (e.g. Felber, 2012), or the post-growth economy (e.g. Paech, 2013) (as listed by Getzin & Singer-Brodowski (2016)). Despite this diversity in visions, though, five "primary significations of what [a degrowth] society might look like" can be identified (Kallis, Demaria & D'Alisa, 2015, p. 3):

1. Care: the "daily action performed by human beings for their welfare and for the welfare of their [...] family, friendships or the neighbourhood" (D'Alisa, Deriu & Demaria, 2015, p. 63)
2. Commons: the natural, material, or immaterial resources that a community takes care of through joint stewardship, a practice referred to as 'commoning' (Helfrich & Bollier, 2015)
3. Conviviality: the practice that "modern tools are used by everyone in an integrated [...] manner, without reliance on [...] specialists who control" them (Deriu, 2015, p. 79)
4. Sharing: the collective or reciprocal practice of using space and time, providing care, giving assistance, conducting governance, as well as setting and pursuing objectives (Jarvis, 2013)
5. Simplicity: "minimizing wasteful [...] consumption and directing [...] time and energy toward pursuing nonmaterialistic sources of satisfaction and meaning" (Alexander, 2015, p. 133)

1.3 Barriers to Degrowth

To achieve a degrowth society, however, significant barriers must be overcome. Strunz and Schindler (2017) identify unemployment, pension schemes, and GDP remaining as the standard measure for economic welfare as structural barriers to people supporting degrowth. Regarding those who already support the movement, Alexander (2012) identifies the lack of suitable transport options, housing offers, employment opportunities, and social activities as well as inadequate product information and exposure to consumer temptation as barriers to a simpler lifestyle. This, however, would be a "*necessary cultural precondition* to the emergence of a degrowth […] economy [: A] macroeconomics of degrowth imply lifestyles of voluntary simplicity, in much the same way as a macroeconomics of limitless growth imply lifestyles of insatiable consumption." (Alexander, 2012, p. 2)

Since this is an "unlikely cultural revolution", Alexander (2012, p. 2) acknowledges that structural changes are insufficient and must be accompanied by value shifts. Abdallah and Thompson (2008, p. 236) substantiate this necessity by explaining that while "legislation, coercion or need […] may help to instigate behaviour change, the wellbeing benefits of such changes will depend on the individual being able to internalise the motivation such that they value their new lifestyle for its own sake".

Abdallah and Thompson (2008) find that a significant psychological barrier in play here is the fear that a decrease in consumption comes with a decrease in wellbeing. Matthey (2010, p. 1) warns that this fear will exist "as long as people have high reference levels of consumption[. Therefore,] the acceptance of de-growth would be facilitated if people's material aspirations were moderated, and the extent to which material achievements are emphasized in our daily environment were reduced."

Latouche (2014, p. 120) positions the latter proposal from Matthey's quote above as the basis for a successful implementation of the former proposal, believing that "[a]dvertising is the key driver of the **growth** society". He emphasizes that for degrowth to become reality we need to profoundly "decolonize our imaginary" from the growth paradigm (Latouche, 2014, p. 117).

Neither Matthey (2010), nor Latouche (2014), though, explain how this decolonization of the imaginary can be facilitated beyond the reduction of advertisement. This question has been addressed by Matthey and Dwenger (unpublished paper, as cited in Abdallah & Thompson, 2008) and Vohs, Mead, and Goode (2006), but only in laboratory experiments and with short-term success.

So while structural barriers to degrowth and how to overcome them have been studied extensively, our knowledge on how to overcome the psychological barriers apart from reducing advertisement, i.e. on how to profoundly decolonize our imaginary from the growth paradigm, remains limited.

1.4 Research Objective and Questions

Given this gap in research, *the objective of this Master's thesis is to explore ways in which the psychological barriers to degrowth can be overcome.*

Matthey (2010) believes that our high reference levels of consumption play an important role here. Unfortunately, everyday life does not provide us with deep experiences of lower reference levels of consumption. However, for people from the Global North, temporarily living in the Global South may constitute an opportunity for that, especially because some countries there show higher levels of happiness despite lower levels of consumption (New Economics Foundation, n.d.). This contradicts the growth "ideology that supposes a direct correlation between an increase in **GDP** and collective **happiness**" (Romano, 2015, p. 23). Experiencing these empirical facts first-hand might reveal to people from the Global North that material aspirations are not that important for or may even be impedimentary to their wellbeing aspirations, as well as introduce them to other ways of achieving well-being and happiness. Furthermore, experiencing the differences in the realities of life between the Global North and South, which are at the core of the degrowth movement (see subsection 1.1), may induce shame about one's lifestyle in comparison to the lifestyle of people in the Global South or even guilt about the impact that one's own lifestyle has on people elsewhere on the planet. These emotional experiences may prompt or enable participants to reflect the growth and development paradigms, which may motivate them to pursue their newly found ways of achieving wellbeing.

Based on these assumptions, I aim to answer the following research question: *How can having lived in the Global South facilitate the support of degrowth in people from the Global North?*

Given that the psychological barriers to degrowth are of concern to this thesis, its goal is not finding out whether people who temporarily lived in the Global South 'practice degrowth' after returning to the Global North, but instead how this experience may facilitate their support of degrowth ideas. As described in the previous subsections, two fundamental degrowth ideas are the critique of the current growth and development paradigms and the vision of a different future that is based on care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity. Reflecting these two spheres of degrowth ideas, I operationalize my overarching research question through the following two sub research questions:

1. *How can having lived in the Global South enable people from the Global North to critically reflect on and assess the growth and development paradigms?*
2. *How can having lived in the Global South motivate people from the Global North to envision a future society based on care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity?*

1.5 Potential for Sustainability Science

By addressing these research questions, I study the result of interactions between people from the Global North and people from the Global South to understand the "learning that takes place when [their] divergent interests, norms, values and constructions of reality meet", a process referred to as social learning by Wals and van der Leij (2007, p. 18). Thereby, this research project contributes to sustainability science by addressing one of the central questions that Miller et al. (2014, p. 243) have identified for this field: "What are effective forms of social learning in advancing sustainable outcomes?" Embracing the normative stance that a degrowth society based on care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity is such a 'sustainable outcome', this thesis tests how engaging in social learning with people from the Global South can advance degrowth ideas amongst people from the Global North.

However, studying this instance of social learning is only used as a critical case for more broadly exploring ways how the psychological barriers to degrowth can be overcome (research objective). Therefore, the findings of this thesis will be discussed in terms of their insights for how people can come to support degrowth ideas without having to temporarily live in completely different contexts. Given this broader perspective, this thesis can potentially uncover pathways from the current 'growth society' towards a future degrowth society as well as illustrate means of making a possible top-down implementation of degrowth feasible. Thereby, this thesis operates within the sphere of the three-dimensional matrix Jerneck et al. (2011, p. 73) advance for structuring sustainability science that uses problem-solving approaches to research sustainability pathways, strategies and means of implementation.

2 Theory

Reflecting the intention of this thesis to contribute to knowledge on social learning within the area of sustainability science, I conceptualize its research questions as an inquiry into how having lived in the Global South may facilitate a learning experience towards degrowth for people from the Global North. Following Getzin's and Singer-Brodowski's (2016) suggestion to integrate emancipatory education and transformative learning as an educational framework for the degrowth context, I approach this challenge from these two theoretical perspectives, which are presented hereafter.

2.1 Emancipatory Education

There are two basic perspectives on the relationship between education and sustainability (Vare & Scott, 2007; Wals, Geerling-Eijff, Hubeek, van der Kroon & Vader, 2008): The instrumental approach, on the one hand, uses education and, by extension, learners to promote and implement sustainable solutions and lifestyles by conducting carefully designed learning activities. The emancipatory approach, on the other hand, provides space for critical reflection of problems by engaging "citizens in an active dialogue to establish co-owned objectives, shared meanings, and a joint, self-determined plan of action to make changes they themselves consider desirable" (Wals et al., 2008, p. 56). Wals (2016) positions this latter approach as more apt for problems where solutions are not universal and cannot be pre-defined by experts, but are contextual and must be driven and owned by citizens.

In the specific context of degrowth, applying an emancipatory approach to education means that the objective is not convincing learners to embrace a growth or development critical perspective and to act accordingly, but assisting them in the critical questioning of prevalent assumptions that have become part of their identity through their socialization in a growth culture (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016, p. 41). To achieve this objective, educators should facilitate a discussion of different values (introducing and/or emphasizing the values of nature and care, if participants do not properly address these themselves), a questioning of public and political discourses, and a critical reflection of the historical context of the 'development' paradigm (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016).

This approach to education connects well to my research project in two ways: First, the growth and development paradigms are examples of wicked challenges with various valid solutions (Schmelzer, 2014) that will only become practical alternatives once citizens support their ideas (Alexander, 2013; Fournier, 2008). Second, I do not aim to instrumentalize the experience of having lived in the Global South to manipulate people from the Global North into supporting degrowth, but to study if this experience can be a source for emancipation from the current growth and development paradigms.

2.2 Transformative Learning

How this emancipation may take place can be explained theoretically through transformative learning theory. Essentially, this theory is "concerned with construing meaning from experience as a guide to action" (Clark & Wilson, 1991, p. 75) and describes the learning "process of examining, questioning, and revising [old] perceptions" (Cranton & Taylor, 2012, p. 5), which can lead to transformed worldviews. It emerged in the 1970s, when Mezirow (1978) studied the reentry of women into education or the workforce after a longer period of absence. By exploring other issues, integrating insights from other theories, and responding to criticism, it has since developed into an important adult education theory (Baumgartner, 2012) with many different variations (Tisdell, 2012).

The theory's core, as Cranton and Taylor (2012) explain, is based on humanism, constructivism, and critical theory: The theory assumes that humans are morally good, make their own choices, and define their individual reality (humanism). More specifically, it assumes that they construct their individual realities by interpreting their experiences and take over beliefs, values, assumptions, and perspectives from the people they interact with (constructivism). Since this assimilation of ideas occurs largely uncritically and unconsciously, a dominant ideology may manage to outlast several generations, even if it does not (anymore) serve the interest of the person assimilating its ideas, which must be exposed and challenged (critical theory). (Cranton & Taylor, 2012)

Directly based on this theoretical foundation (Cranton & Taylor, 2012), one of today's three major conceptualizations of transformative learning was established by Mezirow (Tisdell, 2012). Derived from transformation theory, it centers around the following ten-step process (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22):

"1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a Course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective"

While transformative learning theory generally is based on constructivism, as explained above, Mezirow's conceptualization essentially integrates constructivist and critical epistemology as it "goes beyond the constructivist goal of understanding a phenomenon and seeks to empower participants to be able to change their lives for the better [as] can be seen […] most prominently in [its] critical reflection and action components" (Kim & Merriam, 2011, p. 364). 'Critical reflection' is defined by Mezirow by contrasting it with 'uncritical' reflection and lies at the core of his philosophy of learning:

> Reflection enables us to correct distortions in our beliefs and errors in problem-solving. Critical reflection involves a critique of the presuppositions on which our beliefs have been built. Learning may be defined as 'the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action'. (1990, p. 1)

In other words, transformative learning is the process of changing one's worldview by reflecting and revising old interpretations of experiences, which will influence future interpretations and actions.

Thereby, transformative learning theory in general and Mezirow's conceptualization in particular suit this research project well for three reasons: First, degrowth discourse understands growth as ideology (e.g. Romano, 2015; Deriu, 2015), which resonates with the theory's root in critical theory and Mezirow's critical epistemology. Second, my research is based on the hypothesis that the intense experience of living in the Global South can lead to feelings of shame and guilt about one's lifestyle and its negative impacts, which is reflected in Mezirow's first two transformative learning steps. And finally, in my research project, I aim to inquire how that experience can enable a critical assessment of the growth and development paradigms and motivate an envisioning of a degrowth society, which is supported by Mezirow's transformative learning steps 3 and 5, respectively.

In the particular context of degrowth, applying transformative learning theory means that educators should use the learning setting to introduce degrowth visions (e.g. commons movement, economy for the common good), explain their historical, scientific, and political context, and facilitate learners' critical reflection or scientific assessment of these visions (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016). However, the emancipatory approach to education dictates that educators may not instrumentalize the transformative learning process for advancing degrowth ideas against learner's will, meaning that learners must be allowed and feel comfortable to, e.g., advocate for green growth at the end of the learning process (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016). This means that the educator has to emphasize that the degrowth visions they introduce are only possible alternatives, and not the 'correct' answers that the learners should adopt.

3 Methodology

For studying transformative learning, Kim and Merriam (2011) suggest narrative inquiry, critical and emancipatory approaches, arts-based, and action research. This thesis uses the latter methodology, whose purpose is not "solely to understand social arrangements, but also to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge" (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, p. 93). This reflects the constructivist and critical epistemology of Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning theory and allows me not only to inquire how the experience of living in the Global South, in itself, constituted a learning experience towards degrowth, but also to test how this experience may provide a basis for facilitated reflection or visioning processes.

3.1 Participant Selection

The participants for this action research must be adults, since some capabilities necessary for transformative learning to occur are only developed during adolescence (Mezirow, 2000). Fulfilling this requirement, I studied the case of young German adults who participated in the volunteer program *weltwärts*[2], living with host families and working with projects in the Global South for eleven months. This case is especially interesting, because the programme explicitly aims to nurture the next generation of 'development workers' (Engagement Global, n.d.). However, the choice of this programme may surprise, given that *weltwärts* has received much criticism for reinforcing colonial power relations between the Global North and South (e.g. Kontzi, 2015; Buckendahl, 2012; Polster, 2015). Polster (2015), e.g., points out that the programme's structure strongly reflects a development paradigm rooted in modernization theory and its global power relations, which puts pressure on participants to help their host communities 'develop' (Kontzi, 2011).

However, Polster (2015) also expresses hope that participants' interactions with people in the Global South may constitute learning experiences that change their ideas about the superiority of the West and its donor-role in international development and that they bring this change in perspective into the development discourse in Germany. Given that *weltwärts* returnees show relatively high levels of involvement in society after their return (Polak, Guffler & Scheinert, 2017), this would likely have a substantial impact. By choosing the case of *weltwärts* participants for studying my research questions, I, therefore, can also contribute to the critical discussion that surrounds this programme.

---

[2] The program is for German passport or permanent residence permit holders of 18 to 28 years of age who have graduated school, funded by the German government, and conducted by different public organizations.

In cooperation with one of the organizations offering such volunteer programs, I conducted my action research at the five-day seminars[3] that their program participants are required to attend shortly after their return to Germany. Using this setting for my action research had four benefits:

1. It allowed for the group learning processes emphasized by emancipatory education and transformative learning as the theoretical framework of this study (see section 2).
2. Since these seminars are usually attended by participants returning from multiple different countries, it also enabled me to work with participants with very diverse experiences of living in the Global South.
3. Using a mandatory seminar increased the chance of working with people with diverse levels of interest in and critical attitude towards growth and development (as compared to the option of conducting my research apart from these seminars and having to invite people).
4. Having a group with different experiences of living in the Global South and different levels of interest in growth and development increased the potential of this thesis to contribute to sustainability science, as it opened up the possibility to researching the social learning between people from the Global North who have temporarily lived in the Global South.

On the other hand, however, conducting my action research only with people who participated in *weltwärts* also increased bias due to the group of people that usually partake in this programme, namely mostly well-educated young adults (Polak, Guffler & Scheinert, 2017).

3.2 Action Research Design

Based on the assumption that temporarily living in the Global South (during the volunteer service program) constituted transformative learning steps 1 and 2 (see subsections 1.4 and 2.2), I used this setting to conduct a reflection workshop to facilitate steps 3 and 4 as a means of addressing sub research question 1 (see subsection 3.3) as well as a visioning workshop to facilitate steps 5 and 6 as a means of addressing sub research question 2 (see subsection 3.4) (as presented below). The remaining four steps are out of the scope of this research, but I still provided an online platform after the seminar for participants to share their experiences and thoughts throughout these remaining four steps. Figure 1 summarizes this research design.

A draft version of this research design was tested at one seminar for 25 participants having returned from Costa Rica. The final version was then used to collect data at two seminars for 17 participants

---

[3] These seminars take place at youth hostels or self-catering houses, last five days (Friday to Wednesday), are led by six volunteer educators, and essentially consist of different workshops (appendix 1).

each. The first seminar was attended by participants having returned from Costa Rica (1 participant), Ghana (6), Great Britain (1)[4], Kenya (7), and South Africa (2), while the second one was attended by participants having returned from Bolivia (4), Colombia (1), India (1), Peru (9), and South Africa (2)[5]. I was present for the entire duration of the seminars and involved in their facilitation as one of the six volunteer educators. This allowed me to get to know participants well, which enabled me to conduct my action research more effectively, as it created a more personal atmosphere. Also, it allowed me to talk to and interact with participants after the respective workshop, which enabled me to approach participants if something remained open or unclear during the workshop.

Transformative Learning Steps	Processes
1. Disorienting dilemma	Volunteer Program
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame	
3. Critical assessment of assumptions	Reflection Workshop addressing sub research question 1
4. Recognition that discontent and transformation process are shared	
5. Exploration of new roles, relationships, and actions	Visioning Workshop addressing sub research question 2
6. Planning a course of action	
	Action Research
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans	Online Platform
8. Provisional trying of new roles	
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles	
10. Reintegration into one's life based on new perspectives	

Figure 1. Research Design. Mezirow's transformative learning steps 1 and 2 are assumed to be facilitated by living in the Global South during the volunteer service (see subsections 1.4 and 2.2), and steps 3 and 4 as well as 5 and 6 are facilitated through two workshops addressing one sub research question each. Steps 7 through 10 are out of the scope of this research, but an online platform is provided for participants to share experiences and thoughts throughout these remaining four steps. Source for transformative learning steps: Mezirow, J. (2000, p. 22). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, 3-33. (Own illustration).

---

[4] One of the 34 research participants spent their volunteer program in the Global North (Great Britain) through a similar volunteer program called International Youth Voluntary Service.
[5] Four of the 34 research participants took part in a similar, but self-funded volunteer program of only six months.

3.3 Reflection Workshop

The reflection workshop facilitates transformative learning steps 3 and 4 and is held two days into the seminar. It starts out by uncritically presenting the SDG framework based on a presentation provided by the United Nations Department for Public Information (UNDPI, n.d.). It then gives participants the opportunity to reflect individually which SDGs or framework aspects they support or criticize as well as to discuss their thoughts with the rest of the group. This reflection and discussion process allows testing how growth- and development-critical participants are of their own accord.

Afterwards, the workshop provides space for a critical assessment of the growth and development paradigms in a guided group discussion of the assumption 'growth is the basis of any development'. This is one of twenty hypotheses proposed by Krämer (2011) for introducing important development issues to people with a basic interest for global relations and developmental questions, a trait that can be ascribed to the participants, since they participated in a developmental volunteer service.

Meeting the organization's expectation that participants reflect their experience broadly and keeping discussion groups small and productive, another three of those 20 hypotheses are discussed at the same time[6]. Every hypothesis is presented at one table, each equipped with a handout listing counter-arguments and presenting a counter-thesis (provided by Krämer (2011)). In four rounds, every participant visits each table once, where a discussion of the respective hypothesis is being guided by one of the educators and protocolled by the participants themselves on a flipchart. This technique, called world café, constitutes

> a conversational process that helps groups to engage in constructive dialogue around critical questions, to build personal relationships, and to foster collaborative learning. [It] is powerful in terms of the use of cross-pollination of ideas through evolving rounds of information exchange and the use of a café-style social context that allows the sharing of information in an equitable and non-threatening manner. (Fouché & Light, 2010, p. 1)

These aspects make the world café an adequate technique for facilitating a critical assessment of the growth and development paradigms that focuses on the group's shared experience of having lived in the Global South. While the precise course of this dynamic discussion cannot be planned beforehand, the researcher facilitates the desired focus by guiding it with the questions such as the following: What is your notion of development? In your opinion, what should the objectives of development

---

[6] The other three hypotheses used are "The conditions for our children are worsening" (hypothesis #2), "Free worldtrade is unfair" (#11), "We are growing together and becoming 'one world'" (#19) (Krämer, 2011)

be? During your volunteer service, what affected your wellbeing positively or negatively as compared to when you are in Germany? What did you miss the most? What did you appreciate the most?

Since testing this method showed that participants may tend to discuss abstract or scientific concepts instead of reflecting their individual experiences of having lived in the Global South, several handouts were created based on issues and topics raised by D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis (2015b) as well as Getzin and Singer-Brodowski (2016) (namely great acceleration, happy planet index, Jevons' paradox, Kuznets curve, and planetary boundaries) as a means of containing those discussions.

On the one hand, these handouts can give simple responses to participants' questions and concerns, so that the focus of the discussion can be placed on reflecting personal experiences again. On the other hand, they can show that there are different scientific standpoints on certain issues, which can motivate participants to use their own personal experiences to reflect the growth paradigm instead of participating in a controversial debate without any significant scientific knowledge. If a participant, e.g., advocates for efficiency increases, the handouts on the Jevons' paradox and the rebound effect can show that efficiency increases alone may not solve the environmental consequences of growth.

By focusing the discussion on participants' experiences of having lived in the Global South, the world café allows testing whether this experience enables a critical reflection of growth and development.

After and based on the world café, the researcher gives participants the possibility to reflect the SDG framework once again. This allows testing how reflecting the growth and development paradigms based on their experience of living in the Global South affects their perspective on these paradigms.

To complete the learning process, the researcher ends the workshop by facilitating a more critical reflection of the growth and (sustainable) development discourses by posing the following questions (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016, p. 40):

- Who shapes the discourses?
- What interests do these actors have?
- Who profits from the discourses?
- What function does the proclaimed value neutrality serve?

Data is collected through the participants' SDG reflection sheets, world café discussion protocol, and the researcher's notes. This data allows analyzing how growth and development critical participants are of their own accord, how having lived in the Global South enables a critical reflection of these paradigms, and how this reflection influences their perspectives on these paradigms (see figure 2).

3.4 Visioning Workshop

The visioning workshop facilitates transformative learning steps 5 and 6 and is held four days into the seminar (i.e. two days after the reflection workshop). It provides space for envisioning better futures and creating action plans for working towards these. In four workshop parts, participants

1. reflect their visions of a better future,
2. refine and prepare visualizations of these visions,
3. identify and list measures for working towards these visions in their own lives, and
4. reflect in writing on how living in the Global South influenced their visions.

At the beginning, the researcher explains this outline and suggests considering the spheres of economy, environment, and society during the visioning process (since testing this method showed that participants require some guidance with this). In workshop parts 2 and 3, participants may exchange ideas or even collaborate with others, in accordance with emancipatory education's purpose to facilitate the creation of "a joint, self-determined plan of action" (Wals et al., 2008, p. 56).

Towards the end, the researcher briefly introduces posters that present and contextualize different degrowth visions[7], as suggested by Getzin and Singer-Brodowski (2016).

- Buen Vivir
- Commons Movement
- Degrowth
- Economy for the Common Good
- Post-Growth Economy

These posters are only introduced at the end to prevent an instrumentalization of the learning setting. These posters as well as the visions and lists of measures created by participants are hung up on the walls for everyone to examine and reflect upon at the end of the workshop.

Data is collected through the participants' visualizations of visions, lists of measures, and written reflections about how living in the Global South had influenced these visions. This data serves the purpose of analyzing whether participants' visions and action plans show common degrowth features and how having lived in the Global South influences people's visions of a better future (see figure 2).

---

[7] The first four posters present the respective visions' core ideas as according to https://www.degrowth.info/de/dib/degrowth-in-bewegungen/, while the fifth poster presents the respective vision's main features as according to http://www.postwachstumsoekonomie.de/material/grundzuege/.

Transformative Learning Steps	Processes	Data	Questions Addressed
1. Disorienting dilemma	Volunteer Program		**Regarding Sub Research Question 1**
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame	*Provides the basis for the reflection*	Participants' SDG reflection sheets and researcher's respective notes	How are the paradigms viewed before reflection?
3. Critical assessment of assumptions	Reflection Workshop	Participants' table discussion protocol and researcher's respective notes	How does the experience enable a critical reflection of the paradigms?
4. Recognition that discontent and transformation process are shared	*Provides a basis for envisioning futures*	Researcher's notes on revisiting the SDGs after the world café	How are the paradigms viewed after reflection?
5. Exploration of new roles, relationships, and actions	Visioning Workshop	Participants' vision visualizations and researcher's respective notes	Do returnees' visions show common degrowth features?
6. Planning a course of action	*Provides content for the online interaction platform*	Participants' plans of action and researcher's respective notes	Do returnees' plans of action show common degrowth features?
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans	Online Platform	Participants' reflections on influence of volunteer service on their visions	How did the experience influence returnees' visions?
8. Provisional trying of new roles			**Regarding Sub Research Question 2**
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles			
10. Reintegration into one's life based on new perspectives			

Figure 2. Data Collection. Mezirow's transformative learning steps 1 and 2 are assumed to be facilitated by living in the Global South during the volunteer service (see subsections 1.4 and 2.2), and steps 3 and 4 as well as 5 and 6 are facilitated through two workshops addressing one sub research question each. Steps 7 through 10 are out of the scope of this thesis, but an online platform is provided for participants to share experiences and thoughts throughout these remaining four steps. Black arrows point at the data that the different methods produce and at the question that the respective data primarily addresses. Green arrows show how processes inform each other. Source for transformative learning steps: Mezirow, J. (2000, p. 22). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*, 3-33. (Own illustration).

3.5 Research Ethics

The fact that participation in the seminar and, by extension, the reflection and visioning workshops is mandatory for returnees created a dilemma for me as a researcher: Whether I would disclose my research intentions and ask participants for their consent at the beginning or at the end of the seminar, I would inevitably run the risk of them feeling uncomfortable about being or having been in an action research setting without wanting to be there. Estimating this risk to be lower at the end of the seminar after having established a certain trust to and relationship with the participants throughout the five days of the seminar, I chose to only disclose my research intentions at the end.

When doing so in front of the whole group after the visioning workshop, I explained the purpose of my study, listed the materials that I was going to use for my analysis, assured participants anonymity in my thesis, and offered to respond to any questions or concerns. Afterwards, I asked for oral consent, but offered participants to approach me individually or send me an email if they had any further questions or concerns, or if they did not want certain or all material they created or notes that I took about their participation throughout the seminar to be used for my thesis.

Participants' reactions to my research intentions were generally positive. Some had questions about my study, others had concerns about the significance of the material they had created. Only very few participants objected to certain material being used, but no one wanted no material to be analyzed (see appendix 2 for details). On the other hand, many participants wanted to expand on their written reflections about the influence that the volunteer service had had on their visions of a better future, so that I would have more in-depth data for my analysis. Also, some participants approached me to voice their excitement about my research and to wish me luck with the analysis. Furthermore, many participants expressed interest in reading the thesis once it is completed. Based on this positive reaction, I believe that disclosing my research intentions only at the end of the seminar was an appropriate choice in terms of research ethics for the participants that I interacted with.

3.6 Limitations

The decision to only disclose my research intentions at the end of the seminar, however, also had implications for my data collection. First, it reduced the data quantity, because it made seeking consent for audiotaping sessions in advance impossible, so that I had to rely on material participants created themselves and on notes I took during these sessions. Second, it reduced the depth of the data, because it meant that participants perceived the seminar only as a learning setting and not as a research environment, so that they may not have voiced every thought process they went through.

On the other hand, for the same reason, though, the decision led to an increase in the quality and validity of my data, because participants could speak more freely, openly, and honestly without having the feeling of being evaluated and without being afraid of saying something wrong.

Conducting my action research at seminars hosted by an organization as a regular part of the volunteer service program also had implications for my research. On the one hand, I had to fit my workshops into the seminar schedule and could not focus the entire reflection workshop on the issues of growth and development due to the organization's interests in the seminar (see subsection 3.3). On the other hand, it gave me access to many participants with different levels of interest in the topics of growth and development at the same time, which enabled me to facilitate the group learning processes emphasized by emancipatory education and transformative learning.

However, the approach of using group learning processes for my research also had implications for the nature of the data: If one participant mentioned something in one workshop, other participants who agree with what has been said will not necessarily voice that agreement. Similarly, in the visioning workshop, if groups of participants created joint visions, it was unclear whether all aspects are equally important to everyone. Therefore, it is difficult for me to make judgements as to which aspects are most important and which opinions are most common among the research participants. However, since my research questions only aim at identifying different ways of how living in the Global South can facilitate the support of degrowth ideas in people from the Global North, this limitation is acceptable for the scope of this study. Furthermore, whenever possible and useful, participants worked individually, e.g. in the initial SDG reflections and in the written reflections about the influence of the volunteer service program on their vision of a better society.

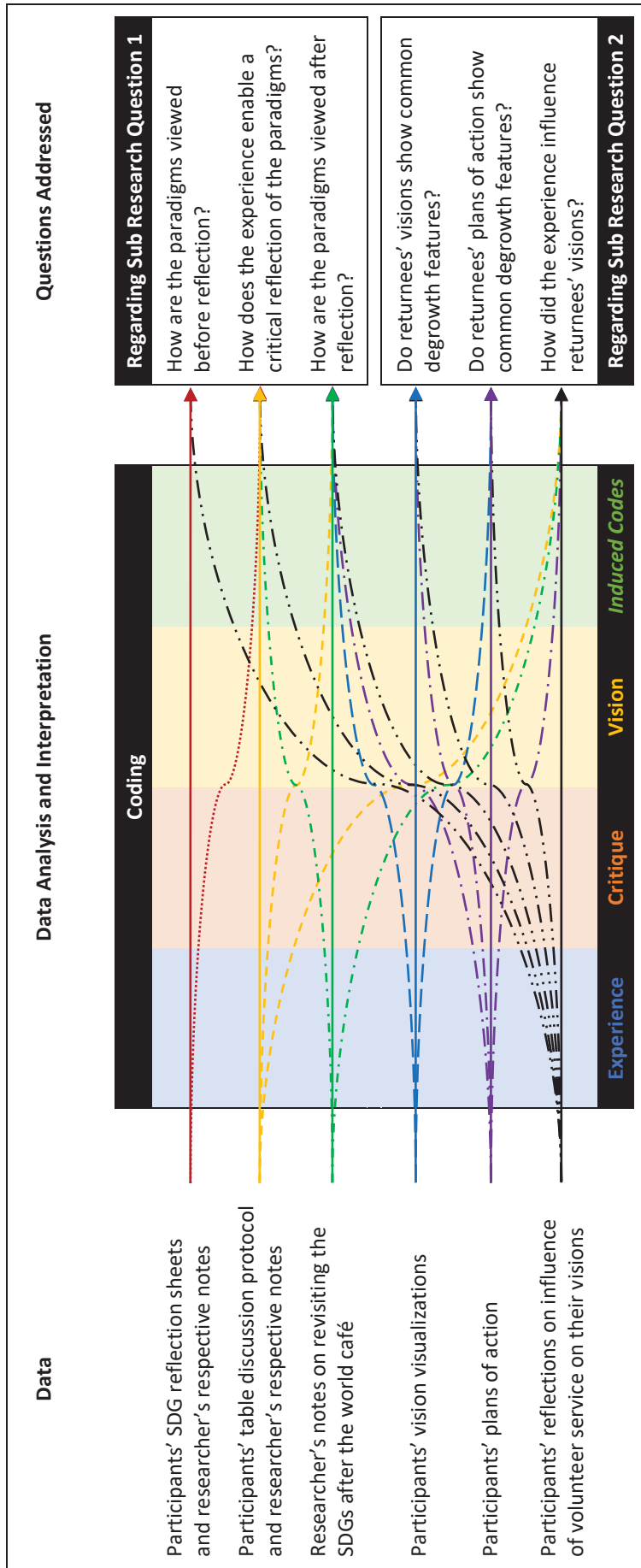### 3.7 Data Analysis and Interpretation

As presented above, the two workshops produce a very diverse collection of data (see figure 2) (see appendix 2 for list of items of each type of data that was used for analysis). I analyze this data collection by following the directed content analysis method, which is a deductive approach that uses theory and previous research to establish codes with which to make sense of qualitative data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). From previous research on transformative learning theory and degrowth, I deduced three code groups relevant for my research project:

The first code group *experience* consists of the codes *disorientation*, *anger*, *fear*, *guilt*, and *shame*, reflecting the first two steps of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000), and aims at creating an understanding of how living in the Global South during the volunteer service enabled a

transformative learning experience. The second code group *critique* consists of the codes *growth* and *development*, which are the basic criticisms on which degrowth is founded (D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2015a), and aims at creating an understanding of how participants reflect the growth and development paradigms, which helps answer research question 1. Finally, the third code group *vision* consists of the codes *care*, *commons*, *conviviality*, *sharing*, and *simplicity*, which are the five "primary significations of what [a degrowth] society might look like" (D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2015a, p. 3), and aims at creating an understanding of how participants' visions of a future society resemble how degrowth envisions that future society, which helps answer research question 2.

To capture all the data's content that is relevant for the research questions, I complemented this deductive approach by also approaching the data collection inductively: Based on the code groups established through the deductive approach, I studied the data to see if additional codes could help answer the research questions. During that process, I created a set of *induced codes* consisting of *happiness* and *despair* (which connect to the code group *experience*) as well as *connectedness with nature* (which connects to the code group *vision*).

As explained in subsections 3.3 and 3.4, the different workshops aim at answering different research questions and the different types of data which are created during these workshops aim at answering different questions relevant to those research questions (see figure 2). And as explained in this subsection, the different code groups help answer different research questions. Nevertheless, since participants could potentially mention things relevant to questions not addressed in the workshop during which they mentioned them, all codes were applied to all data types and the coded data from each data type was used for answering all the questions that that data type could potentially be useful for (see figure 3). The findings from the analysis of the coded data are presented in section 4.

Data

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Questions Addressed

Coding

Experience | Critique | Vision | Induced Codes

Participants' SDG reflection sheets and researcher's respective notes

Participants' table discussion protocol and researcher's respective notes

Researcher's notes on revisiting the SDGs after the world café

Participants' vision visualizations

Participants' plans of action

Participants' reflections on influence of volunteer service on their visions

Regarding Sub Research Question 1

How are the paradigms viewed before reflection?

How does the experience enable a critical reflection of the paradigms?

How are the paradigms viewed after reflection?

Regarding Sub Research Question 2

Do returnees' visions show common degrowth features?

Do returnees' plans of action show common degrowth features?

How did the experience influence returnees' visions?

Figure 3. Data Analysis and Interpretation. The data analysis follows the directed qualitative content analysis method. Three code groups were deduced from previous research on degrowth and transformative learning theory: *experience* (consisting of the codes *disorientation, anger, fear, guilt,* and *shame*), *critique* (consisting of the codes *growth* and *development*), and *vision* (consisting of the codes *care, commons, conviviality, sharing,* and *simplicity*). Additionally, three codes were induced from the data: *happiness, despair* (both connecting to the code group *critique*) and *connectedness with nature* (connecting to the code group *vision*). Even though the different data types and codes primarily address certain questions, all data is analyzed using all codes and all coded data of each data type is used for answering all the questions that it could potentially be useful for, as displayed by the different dotted and/or dashed arrows. Source for code groups critique and vision: D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (Eds.). (2015). Degrowth: a vocabulary for a new era. Routledge. Source for code group feelings: Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress,* 3-33. (Own illustration).

4 Findings

The coded data has provided valuable insights into how having lived in the Global South can facilitate the support of degrowth ideas in people from the Global North. The next five subsections illustrate ways through which the experience of living in the Global South can influence people from the Global North in this regard. Subsections 4.6 and 4.7 illustrate the visions that *weltwärts* returnees have of a better future. Based on these findings, subsection 4.8 briefly answers the sub research questions.

Quotes from research participants will be used to illustrate and substantiate findings. All of these quotes were translated from German to English by the author. To ensure anonymity, the references for these quotes will only include the code that has been assigned to the respective participant, which consist of a letter and a two-digit number: The letter (A or B) represents the seminar, the number (1 through 17) the individual participant of that seminar.

Reflecting the constructivist foundation of this thesis, these findings are not to be generalized, because they are insights from the individual realities of the volunteer program returnees who took part in this action research. In other words: The following findings do not state what impacts living in the Global South *has*, but what influences it *may (but must not necessarily) have*.

4.1 Instigating Critique of Consumer Society

Seeing large amounts of waste both in landfills within cities and villages and in the oceans first-hand induced some participants with shame about their consumerist lifestyle at home. This set them thinking more about the environment and increased their ecological consciousness, which motivated them to use less plastics and to generally live more simply and less wasteful. Also, experiencing a different consumption pattern prompted some participants to reflect on the consumer society that they have grown up in by revealing to them how "unnecessary the consumption pattern in Germany is" (A07). Furthermore, building personal connections and friendships can be one cause for feeling shame, as one participant noted during the world café: "How can I throw away food when my friends in *host country* do not have enough to eat?" (A03)

The contrast between the life that participants experienced in the Global South on the one hand and the life that they are used to in the Global North on the other hand cannot only induce shame, but also guilt: Some participants did not (only) reflect on their own actions and behavior, but also saw that their lifestyle at home can have a negative impact on the realities of life of people in the Global South. Specifically, participants mentioned experiencing poverty and environmental pollution as

things that made them more aware of structural inequality and the negative impact that their lifestyle in Germany has on people in the Global South.

4.2 Enabling Questioning of Performance Focus

Multiple differences in social interaction between what participants perceived in their host country on the one hand and what they are used to in Germany on the other hand were mentioned throughout the world café. For example, participants mentioned that much more emphasis was placed on family life in their host countries and that they felt more support and unity within their respective host families. Also, they mentioned that people in their host countries were generally very helpful and made them feel very welcome and at home. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they have come to feel that in Germany, work and career advancements and achievements are the priority for many people and society in general, whereas in their host country, on the other hand, priority was placed rather on being with family and friends.

Based on these experiences being shared, some participants started reflecting the disadvantages of focusing too much on performance, achievements, and work, instead of family and friends. They reflected that a focus on always achieving more leads to other, more important things such as family life being neglected. One participant even started to question whether studying a degree and working part-time to financially sustain their studies – which is what they are doing at the moment – was the right choice, because it inhibits them from spending enough time with their family.

The reflection on the volunteer service's influence on their visions of a better future written by one participant showed another aspect of how the volunteer service can enable a questioning of a performance focus: Volunteering at a school, where the students they worked with were very cooperative and always supported each other, made them aware of how people in Germany often see others as competitors and how that hinders people from doing what they would be capable to do if there was a more cooperative culture.

4.3 Turning Growth-Supportive People Growth-Critical – and Vice-Versa

In the written SDG reflections, two participants directly advocated for growth: Its potential for decreasing hunger, promoting education, creating feelings of self-worth, provoking more innovation, increasing motivation, and generally having positive impacts were mentioned as positive aspects of growth. Furthermore, one participant indirectly advocated for growth, saying that innovations in the energy sector are needed to make this sector more sustainable and to contribute to economic growth. On the other hand, seven participants criticized or questioned growth in their SDG

21

reflections on different grounds: Some questioned who profits from it, how it affects the environment, how it is compatible with other goals and how it can be sustainable, while others argued for moving away from the growth paradigm due to it being Eurocentric and pulling attention away from social issues. This showed that participants were generally rather critical towards growth already.

The world café facilitated a more critical reflection of the growth paradigm based on participants' personal experience of living in the Global South. Table 1 presents the aspects in Germany as well as in their respective host countries that participants mentioned as having positive or negative influence on their quality of life. The table puts these aspects into categories based on whether and, if so, how they are impacted by economic growth or a focus on it. Interestingly, the only aspects mentioned that are negatively impacted by (a focus on) economic growth were things that positively impacted their quality of life whilst living in the Global South.

Based on this reflection that enabled a comparison of their own, personal sense of wellbeing between living in their respective host countries and living in Germany, participants started assessing the growth paradigm more critically, as they became more confident in their critique of growth. One participant even changed their opinion: While they had voiced support for growth before the world café, they now started actively arguing against it.

However, there was also one participant who was critical towards growth at first and, through the critical reflection of their experience of living in the Global South in connection to the growth and development paradigms, started being more supportive of growth as a goal of development. During the world café, this participant had placed much emphasis on the lower quality of and the lesser access to infrastructure such as public transport in their host country as compared to Germany.

4.4 Enhancing Appreciation and Promotion of Diversity and Pluralism

Throughout the world café, many participants were very eager to point out that development cannot mean the same thing for everyone. Their individual reflections of the volunteer service's influence on their visions of a better future showed how the experience of living in the Global South had contributed to that opinion: Meeting people with values that are vastly different to one's own as well as living in a host family and having to adapt to their family culture were mentioned as aspects of the volunteer service that enabled a change in participants' perspective on development. Outcomes of this shift were higher acceptance and appreciation of other ways of living and of other beliefs, even if these contradict beliefs that participants themselves hold very strongly, such as democracy. One

Table 1. Aspects that impact wellbeing. Aspects in the host or home country mentioned as positive or negative for participants' wellbeing. Aspects are categorized by the author's judgement of whether growth influences them positively (indicated by the "+" in the left column), negatively ("–"), or not at all ("/"). (Own illustration).

	Aspects in the host country mentioned during the reflection workshop as...		Aspects in Germany mentioned during the reflection workshop as...	
	...positive for participants' wellbeing.	...negative for participants' wellbeing.	...positive for participants' wellbeing.	...negative for participants' wellbeing.
+	-	- Basic needs not met for everyone - Quality of medical care - Quality of public transport - Access to public transport	- Infrastructure - running and warm water - not having to go fetch water	- Performance society - Focus on work - 'You are what you achieve' - One must 'gain' love and niceness
/	- Weather - Social Interaction - Convenient currency exchange rate	- No mental challenges at the project - Trust and honesty - Time and space (quietness) - Discrimination due to skin color	- Social circles (family and friends) - Feeling of being 'at home' - Direct and deep communication - Gender and age roles	-
-	- Social interaction, social closeness - Perception of time - Focus on family - Unity in the family	-	-	-

23

participant noted the following in their individual reflections on the influence that their volunteer service had had on their vision of a better future: "Before my volunteer service, I was looking for the one solution, the one concept, the one society. Due to my volunteer service, I now believe that an 'ideal world' can only be one that includes diversity on many different levels." (B02)

However, in their SDG reflections only two participants criticized the concept of sustainable development. In their opinions, it is a Eurocentric concept and ignores cultural differences. But even after the world café, during which many participants said that development cannot mean the same thing for everyone, no-one else criticized the SDGs for being universalist, not even when they were confronted with the SDGs assuming universal applicability. The only thing that participants were really critical towards is the feasibility of achieving the SDGs.

4.5 Alienating from German Society

Some participants also expressed that they felt despair about the hegemony of Western development. One participant, in particular, reflected that they did not think that countries in the Global South could develop how they want to develop anymore, because the world has become Westernized and now everybody has to develop in the same way. Other participants expressed anger about these issues. Both emotions seemed to make participants feel not at home in Germany anymore. Therefore, some participants considered moving back to their host country.

4.6 Participants' Visions Compared to Degrowth

This subsection presents how participants' visions and action plans reflected the five "primary significations of what [a degrowth] society might look like" (Kallis, Demaria & D'Alisa, 2015, p. 3): care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity.

4.6.1 Care

Many participants emphasized care in that they envisioned a society that values communal and peaceful life, in which people provide support for one another. One vision even included that everyone must work a certain amount of hours for the wellbeing of society. Some participants want to get involved in refugee aid and charity work. By living in the Global South, participants became more aware of the value of living in a community, because support and being with one another was more important in both their host families and, more generally, their host countries. One participant said that they learned "how it is to not live past each other" (A11).

4.6.2 Commons

Commons or communing were only touched upon in one vision, which includes the notion that it is the task for everyone to jointly take care of the diverse ecosystems that nature provides. Apart from that, no vision or action plan emphasized a joint stewardship of resources.

4.6.3 Conviviality

Conviviality in the sense that "modern tools are used by everyone in an integrated [...] manner, without reliance on [...] specialists who control" them (Deriu, 2015, p. 79) was part of three visions, in which everyone should, in principle, have access to everything. One of these visions was more explicit in demanding that patents should be abolished.

4.6.4 Sharing

A few visions and action plans emphasized the importance of sharing. For example, participants envisioned a society in which people share living spaces instead of having individual apartments. Also, they were planning to use more shared means of transportation, such as carpooling or buses. One vision went as far as to suggest the very extreme version of sharing in which everything is owned by everyone.

4.6.5 Simplicity

Many visions and action plans emphasized less consumption: Participants advocated for consuming only what is necessary, using a sharing economy, and buying second hand products. Also, many supported consumption of ethically and organically produced products. Apart from consumption, participants also envisioned a society with less focus on work and performance and with more time for family and friends.

4.7 Connectedness with Nature

Many participants envisioned a future with more nature protection through, e.g., eco-friendly houses, animal welfare, rainforest preservation, etc. Many visions, however, went further to embrace a more biocentric perspective, in which humans and the non-human world co-exist in harmony, balance, or symbiosis. For example, one vision includes the following statement: "humans count as one species among many others and as equal to them, and not as the crown of creation. We perceive ourselves as part of a bigger thing. Everything is integrated: We are part of everything, and everything is part of us." (B04)

Aspects of living in the Global South that participants mentioned as playing a role in finding their newly felt appreciation of nature were seeing overcrowded national parks (which are supposed to provide space for nature, but end up being overused by humans), "experiencing the preciousness and beauty of nature anew" (A10), or getting to know and interacting with people who are more connected with nature and rely on leaves as medicine. One participant reflected that having lived in the Amazon gave them "a connection to nature and its animals. It has taught [them] that the consumption of animals is based on a cruel exploitation of animals and that a tremendous part of our planet is suffering because of us." (B05)

4.8 Résumé

Temporarily living in the Global South can enable a critical reflection of the growth paradigm for people from the Global North in two primary ways: First, it can present them with the consequences of wasteful and consumerist behavior (such as landfills and polluted oceans), which can instigate a critique of the consumer society. Second, it can provide them with other ways of living together, namely with a stronger focus on family and community life, which can enable a questioning of a society's focus on performance. Reflecting these aspects even has the potential to turn growth-supportive people growth-critical.

Going beyond the findings on how having lived in the Global South can enable a critical reflection of the growth paradigm, this experience can also enable a critical reflection of the Western development paradigm: by interacting with people who have very different beliefs and interests, people can start to appreciate and promote diversity and pluralism more. However, this is not strong enough for people to speak up against the SDGs, even though this is a universalist concept of development that advances a Western development paradigm.

Finally, living in the Global South can introduce people from the Global North to other ways of living together and achieving wellbeing and happiness, namely through a focus on family and community instead of work and consumption. Also, it can introduce them to new ways of living with nature, e.g. by relying on leaves for medicine. Thereby, it can motivate people to envision and pursue futures focused on care and simplicity, which are essential aspects of the visions that degrowth puts forth.

5 Discussion

The findings of this thesis provide not only answers to the research questions, but also valuable insights for the broader contexts of degrowth, development, and transformative learning theory, as will be discussed in the following three subsections. Afterwards, I will summarize how this thesis has contributed to sustainability science, briefly reflect on my role as a researcher in this project, and outline possible areas for future research.

5.1 Transformative Learning Theory

This thesis applied Mezirow's (2000, p. 22) conceptualization of transformative learning theory, which holds that transformative learning follows a ten-step process, whose first three steps are a "disorienting dilemma", a "[s]elf-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame", and a "critical assessment of assumptions". This thesis challenges this conceptualization by identifying additional (and especially positive) feelings as possible initiators of such learning processes and by questioning the necessity of the critical assessment of assumptions for transformative learning to occur.

5.1.1 Positive Feelings Can Instigate Transformative Learning

This action research identified shame and guilt as enabling factors for participants' reflection of the growth paradigm or, more specifically, of the consumer culture and performance focus in Germany. This connects to transformative learning step 3, the "critical assessment of assumptions" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). Furthermore, it found anger to potentially alienate participants from their home culture and motivate them to return to their host country. This connects to transformative learning step 10, the "reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). So far, these findings confirm Mezirow's conceptualization.

However, in addition to these negative emotions, positive feelings were found to enable transformative learning experiences towards degrowth as well: feeling happiness was the result of experiencing a different way of living together in families as well as communities that made participants envision a society that is focused more on care and simplicity instead of growth and material consumption. This suggests that positive feelings (such as happiness) can instigate transformative learning processes as well, which challenges Mezirow's (2000) conceptualization that is focused on negative emotions.

Thereby, the findings of this thesis contribute to a wider critique of Mezirow's conceptualization. Marmon (2010), e.g., suggests that in addition to the feelings of anger, fear, guilt, and shame, simply feeling surprised can instigate transformative learning processes. Taylor (2001), more broadly, criticizes that Mezirow's conceptualization "is overly dependent on critical reflection, such that it minimizes the role of feelings" (p. 218) and draws upon findings from the areas of neurobiology and psychology to advance the discussion of their importance. He suggests that emotions are the "rudder for reason, without which it wanders aimlessly with little or no bearing in the process of making decisions" (Taylor, 2001, p. 234). This thesis suggests that positive emotions can be that driving force for action-oriented transformative learning processes – and turn them into more positive experiences than those promised by Mezirow's conceptualization that focuses on negative emotions.

5.1.2 Transformative Learning Without Critical Assessment of Assumptions

Due to Mezirow's focus on critical reflection in his conceptualization of transformative learning theory, one of the central components of this action research was the reflection workshop. This thesis has found that reflecting, as a group, on the experience of having lived in the Global South can, indeed, enable a critical assessment of the growth paradigm, and lead to a revised perspective on growth. So far, again, the findings of this thesis confirm Mezirow's conceptualization.

However, findings also suggest that critical reflection is not indispensable for transformative learning to occur: Based on having experienced the positive feelings discussed above, many participants envisioned a completely different society due to their experience of having lived in the Global South, without having expressed an active process of critical reflection. Contradicting Mezirow's conceptualization, this suggests that there are ways of transformative learning that do not require the active and conscious process of critically assessing one's assumptions.

This critique of Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning theory is, again, supported by Taylor (2001): He argues that Mezirow "overlooks transformation through the unconscious development of thoughts and actions" (p. 218) and substantiates this critique by drawing on the fields of neurobiology and psychology.

5.2 Advancing Degrowth

While the findings on emotions and the necessity of critical reflection directly challenge Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning theory, as discussed above, they also have important implications for degrowth and especially degrowth education, which has received very little attention in the scientific community so far, with Getzin and Singer-Brodowski (2016) being one exception.

5.2.1 Negative Emotions in Degrowth Education

Regarding the role of emotions and feelings, however, Getzin and Singer-Brodowski (2016) have only cautioned that degrowth education can be emotionally agitating by, e.g., challenging learner's privileges of having grown up in a global elite. This thesis, however, can provide new insights into the role of emotions or feelings in the context of degrowth education.

With regards to negative emotions and feelings, i.e. those that might make degrowth education emotionally agitating, this thesis finds that shame about one's wasteful lifestyle, guilt about one's lifestyle's impact on people in the Global South, and anger or despair about Western hegemony in advancing its development paradigm are emotions that can constitute sources for emancipation from the current growth and development paradigms. While the former two emotions, shame and guilt, motivated participants of this action research to envision and make plans for pursuing a degrowth society, the latter two emotions, anger and despair, rather motivated them to return to their host countries instead of supporting degrowth in Germany.

This means that while shame and guilt may, by themselves, constitute positive forces for an action-oriented degrowth education that aims at increasing support for degrowth among learners, anger and despair seem more likely to produce resistance to the action component of this learning process. However, Young, Mountford and Skrla (2006, p. 267) point out that such resistance is "a natural response to transformational learning pedagogy, which can, if addressed, promote learning. It is not a reaction that faculty should fear or use as a rationale for avoiding the inclusion of controversial content in the curriculum." For the degrowth context, this means that educators should not shy away from discussing the hegemony of the Global North in advancing its development paradigm and the impact that this has on people in the Global South, but be aware of the negative emotions and the resistance that may arise amongst learners as a result of discussing this topic.

To then turn this resistance into motivation for action, it is important that learners believe in the potential for change as well as in their capacity to contribute to that change (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016). From the perspective of Mezirow's conceptualization of transformative learning, facilitating steps 7 through 10 (which were not part of the workshops that I conducted) becomes very important here, because these are the steps where learners start turning the outcomes of their learning experience into practice. At these stages, educators could illustrate options of how learners can become involved in social change that corresponds with their newly found perspectives.

5.2.2 Promoting Degrowth Without Criticizing Growth?

However, as the discussion on transformative learning theory has shown, critically reflecting the foundations of degrowth (such as Western hegemony in advancing its development paradigm) and the negative emotions (and the resistance to learning) that may arise as a result must not necessarily be part of transformative learning experiences aimed at promoting degrowth: the happiness that participants felt by getting to know a different way of living together motivated them to envision and make plans for pursuing a society that is focused on care and simplicity instead of consumption and performance. This shows that it is not necessary for people to understand the issues of growth and development in order to support degrowth visions.

Therefore, I suggest that degrowth advocates interested in mobilizing more people for their cause should consider emphasizing the visionary aspects and the positive consequences that we, as a society, can expect from degrowth visions being pursued or implemented. Instead of making their audience feel bad about the present, they would make them feel good about a different future. That this can inspire action is supported by various studies in environmental psychology, which find that "positive psychological consequences (satisfaction, psychological well-being, and happiness) of [sustainable behavior] are also significant determinants of pro-environmental actions". The decolonization of the imaginary from growth ideology (Latouche, 2015) could, in that sense, be facilitated by challenging it with alternative images stemming from degrowth visions.

This does not mean that criticizing growth and development cannot be part of degrowth education, but that more emphasis should be placed on the positive instead of the negative aspects in order to make the learning experience more worthwhile for the audience. Possibly, providing positive degrowth images may even create a learning environment in which learners are more open to critique of the status quo, because it provides them with a vision and possibilities of action that might help them cope with the negative emotions arising from that critical discussion.

5.2.3 Situating Degrowth Education

While the discussion above focuses on the content of degrowth education, it is also important to discuss how to situate degrowth education in the current educational landscape, given that it is not only a new field in theory, but also a new field in practice (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016).

Since "mainstream education for sustainable development tacitly embraces economic growth and an instrumentalist and managerial view of nature" (Selby & Kagawa, 2010, p. 38) and since it promotes the problematic Western development paradigm that degrowth contests, Getzin and Singer-

Brodowski (2016) argue against situating degrowth education within education for sustainable development (ESD) and advocate for advancing it as an independent concept instead. This approach would mean that ESD could continue to address important ecological and societal issues through larger educational institutions, while degrowth education could point at blind spots in ESD and serve as a source of inspiration for more critical content (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016).

However, developing degrowth education only as a source of inspiration for ESD might not properly reflect the counter-hegemonic nature of the degrowth movement. Furthermore, the reason for the current lack of growth-critical education is not a lack of growth-critical educators, but a lack of support and funding for such education (Getzin & Singer-Brodowski, 2016, with reference to Selby & Kagawa, 2011). Hence, degrowth education could face major difficulties in gaining traction, if it establishes itself solely as an alternative to ESD. Therefore, I suggest that degrowth education also explores ways of utilizing platforms created by the dominant paradigm of ESD for advancing degrowth ideas. This would more adequately mirror the counter-hegemonic nature of degrowth.

The reflection workshop of this action research can serve as an inspiration for such approaches: At the beginning of this workshop, the SDGs were introduced based on a presentation provided by the United Nations. Participants were then given the opportunity to first reflect the framework by themselves and then discuss their thoughts with the rest of the group. The subsequent world café provided the opportunity to reflect the growth and development paradigms more in-depth. While these learning activities would fit within the framework of ESD, they simultaneously have the potential to provide space for discussing degrowth ideas: Very early in their discussions, each of the three groups that I conducted this workshop with started debating the benefits and fallacies of growth. This suggests that discussions of the SDGs can autonomously develop into discussions of fundamental degrowth ideas without educators having to instrumentalize the learning setting.

5.3 Learning from the South

Apart from discussing the implications of this research for transformative learning theory and degrowth education, I also want to use the findings of this thesis to respond to criticism of the volunteer programme *weltwärts* as well as discuss their meaning for the potential that North-South collaboration in form of such intercultural experiences has for development education in general.

5.3.1 Weltwärts Programme

As mentioned in subsection 3.1, *weltwärts* has received much criticism due to the programme's structure. However, there have also been expressions of hope that the programme may lead to a

new perspective on development in the German participants (Polster, 2015). Given that many of them end up in the development field and the impact that they will, therefore, have on the future of development discourse in Germany, I conducted my action research with *weltwärts* returnees.

My findings suggest that *weltwärts* may, as hoped by Polster (2015), indeed lead to a change in participants' ideas about the superiority of the West, as it can make them appreciate and promote diversity and pluralism more. This was a result of their interaction with people with different interests, norms, and values, i.e. it was precisely the social learning that Polster (2015) hopes would take place. Given that many research participants want to become more involved in society after their return, it is also likely that they will bring this change in perspective into the societal discourse in Germany.

However, the positive public image of the SDGs, which advance a Western development paradigm based on ecological modernization and growth, may present an obstacle to this change in perspectives materializing as profound impact on the development discourse in Germany: even after reflecting their experiences against the growth and development paradigms, many participants did not oppose the SDGs, not even when they were confronted with the issue that the SDGs explicitly embrace a universalist perspective on development. Even though this directly challenges their newly found appreciation of diversity and pluralism, they did not object to this characteristic of the SDGs.

The question arises whether better designed seminars could potentially facilitate a stronger change in perspectives that enables participants to be more critical towards universalist concepts of development such as the SDGs. Therefore, I support Polster's (2015) call for more educational research into the possible influences of the mandatory educational programme that accompanies this volunteer service. Future action research could use the mandatory seminars before, during, and after the volunteer service to find out how these can help participants overcome colonial thinking most effectively. Martin and Griffiths (2012) suggest that utilizing this whole spectrum is, indeed, necessary if such intercultural experiences are supposed to help learners overcome colonial thinking.

5.3.2 North-South Collaboration in Development Education

The outcomes of such research would not only be valuable for *weltwärts*, but could also inform other types of North-South collaboration within development education. Especially institutions for tertiary education that offer degree programs in the development field could use the findings of such research for designing new or improving existing study abroad programs.

This is also true for the findings of this thesis: Many of the participants of this action research reported that they were aware of global inequalities before their volunteer service, but that the experience of living in the Global South gave them a new, more profound, albeit less academic understanding of these issues. Coupled with effective seminars that help participants overcome colonial thinking, study abroad programs could, therefore, be a truly emancipatory learning experience for students participating in them. Therefore, educational institutions offering degree programs in the development field should consider including studies abroad, possibly connected to home stays, as optional or even mandatory parts of their curricula, as it can help nurture a generation of development theorists and practitioners capable of contributing positively to this field.

5.4 Contribution to Sustainability Science

This thesis has found that temporarily living in the Global South can, through various ways (see subsection 4.8), constitute an effective form of social learning in advancing degrowth ideas among people from the Global North. Furthermore, it has found that such an experience can also constitute an effective form of social learning in advancing sustainable outcomes in general, as participants reported that they want to start using less plastics, eating less meat, and using cleaner transport.

Additionally, the methodological approach to this thesis allowed studying another instance of social learning, namely the learning that occurs when a group of people from the Global North who have temporarily lived in the Global South come together to reflect their experiences. Simply providing space for an individual reflection of the SDGs and a subsequent discussion about them proved to be a very simple technique for allowing individuals to debate their "divergent interests, norms, values and constructions of reality", which is central to social learning (Wals & van der Leij, 2007, p. 18). Providing a frame within which people can reflect their very own experiences in light of sustainability questions also proved an effective way of facilitating social learning. In these cases, the learning environment did not have to be instrumentalized, but provided a platform for emancipation.

5.5 Researchers' Reflections

As discussed in subsection 1.5, this thesis takes a normative stance by embracing a degrowth society as a sustainable future. While I justified this decisions with previous research (see subsection 1.1), it also reflects my personal conviction that degrowth is a valuable pathway and vision. This conviction as well as my academic background in sustainability science have not only motivated the choice of my research objective and questions, but have also influenced the methodological approach to this

research project as well as the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. However, by using emancipatory education and deductive content analysis, I tried to reduce bias as much as possible.

5.6 Future Research

Future research can build upon these findings to investigate diverse research questions. With regards to *weltwärts* or similar international experiences, researchers could study under what conditions the presented findings apply by, e.g., conducting targeted interviews. With regards to advancing a degrowth transition through means on a smaller level, they could study if and how the experiences presented in the findings can be translated into measures or learning activities for classroom settings. In both cases, conducting long-term studies to also be able to investigate what impact these ways of overcoming the psychological barriers have on the actual behavior of learners, which was not possible within the scope of this Master's thesis, would be valuable.

5.6.1 Learning from the North

Degrowth can be misunderstood as the idea that the Global North has to clear up ecological space so that the Global South can develop. However, quite to the contrary, degrowth may just as well serve as a viable alternative to development for the Global South (Kallis, 2015). Given the negative consequences of growth ideology (see subsection 1.1), the possibility for emancipation from this paradigm should be facilitated not only for people from the Global North, but also for people from the Global South. The findings of this thesis (e.g. table 1) do, in a certain way, suggest that temporarily living in the Global North may constitute a learning experience towards degrowth for people from the Global South as well. At the same time, many participants of this action research mentioned throughout the world café, that that would likely not be the case. What is certain is that it would be very interesting to turn this research project around and explore how the experience of temporarily living in the Global North may constitute or enable a learning experience towards degrowth for people from the Global South.

6 Conclusion

While structural barriers to degrowth and how to overcome them have been studied extensively, our knowledge on how to overcome the psychological barriers to degrowth remains limited. The objective of this thesis was to contribute to that knowledge by exploring how having lived in the Global South can facilitate the support of degrowth ideas in people from the Global North. Conceptualizing degrowth as a critique of the status quo and as a vision of a different society, this thesis, more precisely, studied how having lived in the Global South can enable a critical reflection of the growth and development paradigms, as well as motivate an envisioning of a society based on care, commons, conviviality, sharing, and simplicity.

This thesis finds that living in the Global South can instigate a critique of the consumer society by presenting consequences of wasteful and consumerist behavior (namely largescale waste and pollution) and enable a questioning of a focus on performance by providing experiences of other ways of living together (namely with a stronger focus on family and community). Thereby, it can facilitate a critical reflection of the growth paradigm, which can even turn growth-supportive people growth-critical.

Furthermore, living in the Global South can enhance the appreciation of diversity and pluralism by providing encounters with people who have very different beliefs and interests. Thereby, it can facilitate a critical reflection of the Western development paradigm.

Finally, living in the Global South can introduce people from the Global North to other ways of living together and achieving wellbeing and happiness, namely through a focus on family and community instead of work and consumption. Also, it can introduce them to new ways of living with nature, e.g. by relying on leaves for medicine. Thereby, it can motivate people to pursue futures that are focused on care and simplicity, which are essential aspects of the visions that degrowth puts forth, and that embrace more connectedness with nature.

Future research can build upon these findings by addressing two principal questions: Under what conditions do the identified aspects of living in the Global South that can potentially facilitate the support of degrowth ideas in people from the Global North actually lead to support of degrowth ideas? And how effective are the identified aspects of living in the Global South in facilitating degrowth ideas in people from the Global North?

7 References

Abdallah, S., & Thompson, S. (2008). Psychological barriers to de-growth: Values mediate the relationship between well-being and income. In F. Flipo & F. Schneider (Eds.), *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Economic De-Growth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity* (pp. 236-242).

Alcott, B., & Kallis, G. (2015). Jevon's paradox. In G. D'Alisa & F. Demaria (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 121-124). New York, NY: Routledge.

Alexander, S. (2012). Degrowth implies voluntary simplicity: overcoming barriers to sustainable consumption. *Simplicity Institute Report*, *12*, 1-17.

Alexander, S. (2013). Voluntary simplicity and the social reconstruction of law: Degrowth from the grassroots up. *Environmental Values*, *22*(2), 287-308.

Alexander, S. (2015). Simplicity. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 133-136). New York, NY: Routledge.

Anguelovski, I., (2015). Environmental justice. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 33-36). New York, NY: Routledge.

Baumgartner, L. M. (2012). Mezirow's theory of transformative learning from 1975 to present. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 99-115). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd

Bradbury-Huang, H. (2010). What is good action research? Why the resurgent interest?. *Action Research*, *8*(1), 93-109.

Brock, C., Wallace, J., Herschbach, M., Johnson, C., Raikes, B., Warren, K., ... & Poulsen, H. (2006). Negotiating displacement spaces: Exploring teachers' stories about learning and diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *36*(1), 35-62.

Buckendahl, P. (2012). Empfänger-Kritik am "weltwärts"-Programm?! (Diploma thesis). Retrieved from http://othes.univie.ac.at/19699/

Clark, M. C., & Wilson, A. L. (1991). Context and rationality in Mezirow's theory of transformational learning. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *41*(2), 75-91.

Cranton, P., & Hoggan, C. (2012). Evaluating transformative learning. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 520-535). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd

Cranton, P., & Taylor, E. W. (2012). Transformative learning theory: Seeking a more unified theory. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 3-20). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd

D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (2015a). Preface. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. xx-xxii). New York, NY: Routledge.

D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., & Kallis, G. (Eds.). (2015b). *Degrowth: a vocabulary for a new era*. New York, NY: Routledge.

D'Alisa, G., Deriu, M., & Demaria, F. (2015). Care. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 63-66). New York, NY: Routledge.

Dados, N., & Connell, R. (2012). The global south. *Contexts*, *11*(1), 12-13.

Deriu, M. (2015). Conviviality. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 79-82). New York, NY: Routledge.

Engagement Global (n.d.). Our objectives: Weltwärts is a development learning service. Retrieved from https://www.weltwaerts.de/en/our-objectives.html

Escobar, A. (2015). Development, critiques of. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 29-32). New York, NY: Routledge.

Felber, C. (2012). *Die Gemeinwohlökonomie: Eine demokratische Alternative wächst*. Vienna, Austria: Deuticke.

Fiedler, M. (2007). Postcolonial learning spaces for global citizenship. *Critical Literacy: Theories and Practices*, *1*(2), 50-57.

Fouché, C., & Light, G. (2011). An Invitation to Dialogue: 'The World Café' In Social Work Research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *10*(1), 28-48.

Fournier, V. (2008). Escaping from the economy: the politics of degrowth. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *28*(11/12), 528-545.

Getzin, S., & Singer-Brodowski, M. (2016). Transformatives Lernen in einer Degrowth-Gesellschaft. *SOCIENCE-Journal of Science-Society Interfaces*, *1*(1), 33-46.

Global Footprint Network (GFN). (n.d. a). Past Earth Overshoot Days. Retrieved May 10, 2018, from https://www.overshootday.org/newsroom/past-earth-overshoot-days/

Global Footprint Network (GFN). (n.d. b). Country Overshoot Days. Retrieved May 10, 2018, from https://www.overshootday.org/about-earth-overshoot-day/country-overshoot-days/

Helfrich, S., & Bollier, D. (2014). Commons als transformative Kraft. In S. Helfrich (Ed.), *Commons. Für eine neue Politik jenseits von Markt und Staat* (pp. 15-23). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Helfrich, S., & Bollier, D. (2015). Commons. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 75-78). New York, NY: Routledge.

Heward, W. L., & Chance, P. (2010). Introduction: Dealing with what is. *The Behavior Analyst*, *33*(2), 145-151.

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative health research*, *15*(9), 1277-1288.

Jarvis, H. (2013). Sharing, Conviviality and Degrowth, presented at 11th International Conference of the International Communal Studies Association, Findhorn, 2013.

Jerneck, A., Olsson, L., Ness, B., Anderberg, S., Baier, M., Clark, E., ... & Persson, J. (2011). Structuring sustainability science. *Sustainability science*, *6*(1), 69-82.

Kallis, G. (2015, February). *The Degrowth Alternative*. Retrieved from http://www.greattransition.org/publication/the-degrowth-alternative

Kallis, G., Demaria, F., & D'Alisa, G. (2015). Introduction. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 1-18). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kim, S. J., & Merriam, S. B. (2011). Methodological challenges in studying transformative learning, presented at Adult Education Research Conference, Toronto, 2011.

Kontzi, K. (2011). Ich helfe, du hilfst,... ihnen wird geholfen. Der Freiwilligendienst weltwärts reproduziert altbekannte Strukturen. *iz3w*, *323*(2011), 40-42.

Kontzi, K. (2015). *Postkoloniale Perspektiven auf "weltwärts"*. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG.

Krämer, G. (2011). *Global denken-Widersprüche aushalten: Begleitmaterialien zu 20 entwicklungspolitischen Thesen: Lehrerheft für Oberstufe und Erwachsenenbildung*. Bielefeld, Germany: Welthaus.

Latouche, S. (2015). Imaginary, decolonization of. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 117-120). New York, NY: Routledge.

Lorek, S. (2015). Dematerialization. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 83-85). New York, NY: Routledge.

Marmon, E. L. (2010). Cross-cultural field education: A transformative learning experience. *Christian Education Journal*, *7*(1), 70.

Martin, F., & Griffiths, H. (2012). Power and representation: A postcolonial reading of global partnerships and teacher development through North—South study visits. *British Educational Research Journal*, *38*(6), 907-927.

Matthey, A. (2010). Less is more: the influence of aspirations and priming on well-being. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *18*(6), 567-570.

McAllister, L., Whiteford, G., Hill, B., Thomas, N., & Fitzgerald, M. (2006). Reflection in intercultural learning: examining the international experience through a critical incident approach. *Reflective Practice*, *7*(3), 367-381.

Meadows, D. H., Meadows, D. L., Randers, J., & Behrens, W. W. (1972). The limits to growth. *New York*, *102*, 27.

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult education*, *28*(2), 100-110.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How Critical Reflection triggers Transformative Learning. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (pp. 1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult. In J. Mezirow (Ed.), *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp. 3-33). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miller, T. R., Wiek, A., Sarewitz, D., Robinson, J., Olsson, L., Kriebel, D., & Loorbach, D. (2014). The future of sustainability science: a solutions-oriented research agenda. *Sustainability science*, *9*(2), 239-246.

New Economics Foundation. (n.d.). About the HPI. Retrieved May 10, 2018, from
    http://happyplanetindex.org/about

Paech, N. (2012). *Befreiung vom Überfluss: Auf dem Weg in die Postwachstumsökonomie*. Munich:
    oekom.

Polak, J. T., Guffler, K., & Scheinert, L. (2017). weltwärts-Freiwillige und ihr Engagement in
    Deutschland.

Polster, T. (2015). Egotrip ins Elend? Eine kritische Evaluation des weltwärts Freiwilligendienstes in
    Quito, Ecuador.

Romano, O. (2015). Anti-utilitarianism. In G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria & G. Kallis (Eds.), *Degrowth: A
    vocabulary for a new era* (pp. 21-24). New York, NY: Routledge.

Schmelzer, M. (2014). Gutes Leben statt Wachstum: Degrowth, Klimagerechtigkeit, Subsistenz–eine
    Einführung in die Begriffe und Ansätze der Postwachstumsbewegung. *Atlas der
    Globalisierung: Weniger wird mehr. Der Postwachstumsatlas.* Berlin: Le Monde
    Diplomatique, 116-121.

Schneider, F., Kallis, G., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2010). Crisis or opportunity? Economic degrowth for
    social equity and ecological sustainability. Introduction to this special issue. *Journal of cleaner
    production*, *18*(6), 511-518.

Selby, D., & Kagawa, F. (2014). Striking a Faustian bargain? Development education, education for
    sustainable development and the economic growth agenda. In S. McCloskey
    (Ed.), *Development Education in Policy and Practice* (pp. 143-157). London, United Kingdom:
    Palgrave Macmillan.

Selby, D., & Kagawa, F. (2010). Runaway climate change as challenge to the 'closing circle' of
    education for sustainable development. *Journal of education for sustainable
    development*, *4*(1), 37-50.

Steffen, W., Broadgate, W., Deutsch, L., Gaffney, O., & Ludwig, C. (2015). The trajectory of the
    Anthropocene: the great acceleration. *The Anthropocene Review*, *2*(1), 81-98.

Strunz, S., & Schindler, H. (2017). *Identifying barriers towards a post-growth economy: A political
    economy view* (No. 6/2017). UFZ Discussion Papers.

Taylor, E. W. (2001). Transformative learning theory: A neurobiological perspective of the role of emotions and unconscious ways of knowing. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *20*(3), 218-236.

Tisdell, E. J. (2012). Themes and variations of transformational learning: Interdisciplinary perspectives on forms that transform. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 21-36). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons Ltd

United Nations (UN). (2015). Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Retrieved from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication

United Nations Department for Public Information (UNDPI). (n.d.). Sustainable Development Goals Overview. Retrieved May 10, 2018, from https://www.slideshare.net/mes0/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-70859274

Vare, P., & Scott, W. (2007). Learning for a change: Exploring the relationship between education and sustainable development. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development*, *1*(2), 191-198.

Verdugo, V. C. (2012). The positive psychology of sustainability. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, *14*(5), 651-666.

Vohs, K. D., Mead, N. L., & Goode, M. R. (2006). The psychological consequences of money. *science*, *314*(5802), 1154-1156.

Wals, A. E. [GlobalEE]. (2016, September 28) *An introduction to wicked sustainability problems* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1erCuhNVg6k&feature=youtu.be

Wals, A. E., Geerling-Eijff, F., Hubeek, F., van der Kroon, S., & Vader, J. (2008). All mixed up? Instrumental and emancipatory learning toward a more sustainable world: Considerations for EE policymakers. *Applied Environmental Education and Communication*, *7*(3), 55-65.

Wals, A. E., & van der Leij, T. (2007). Introduction. In A. E. Wals (Ed.), *Social learning: towards a sustainable world* (pp. 17-32). Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Young, M., Mountford, M., & Skrla, L. (2006). Infusing gender and diversity issues into educational leadership programs: Transformational learning and resistance. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *44*(3), 264-277.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Seminar Schedule

The seminars begin Friday afternoon and finish Wednesday at noon. Friday evening is used for getting to know each other, while Wednesday morning is used for rounding up and giving feedback. Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday are made up of different workshops both in the morning and in the afternoon. Additionally, there are evening meetings to reflect the learning that took place during the day. Figure 1 shows the seminar schedule, excluding Friday and Wednesday. The research workshops took place Sunday and Tuesday afternoon, respectively.

Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
Breakfast			
Personal Reflection	Racism	Participants' Contributions	Volunteering with the Organization
Lunch			
Feedback to Administration	**Reflection Workshop**	Workshop on Giving Workshops	**Visioning Workshop**
Dinner			
Evening Reflection Meetings			

Figure 1. Seminar Schedule. Seminars run from Friday evening to Wednesday noon. This seminar schedule only presents the days when workshops are being held. The two research workshops are marked in bold font.

Appendix 2 – List of Items per Type of Data Used for Analysis

For the data analysis, I used the SDG reflection sheets, the visualizations of visions, the lists of measures, the written reflections on the volunteer service's influence on participants' visions, the world café discussion protocols, as well as my notes on the world café discussion and the discussion of the SDGs before and after the world café.

Both seminars were attended by 17 participants. However, since some participants did not want all the data that I collected to be used for the data analysis and since some participants had to leave the seminar early and, hence, could not attend the visioning workshop, I do not have 17 items of each type of data of each seminar. Table 1 lists the number of items per type of data collected from the respective seminar that I used for data analysis.

Table 1. Number of Items per Type of Data from Each Seminar. This table shows how many items of each type of data I could collect from the two seminars and use for data analysis.

Type of Data	Seminar A	Seminar B
SDG Reflection Sheets (Individual)	15	16
Visualizations of Visions (Individual or Group)	4	6
Lists of Measures (Individual or Group)	4	6
Reflections on Volunteer Service's Influence on Visions (Individual)	13	15