Contributions from
Feminist and Plural
Peace Perspectives to
Promote Degrowth
—a Dialogic Approach
in Times of Multiple
Interlocking Crises

Marisol C. Bock

PhD in International Peace, Conflict
and Development Studies

Universitat Jaume I

Supervisor Eloísa Nos-Aldás

September 2021

painting by Nancy Jackson

UNIVERSITAT
JAUME·I

Doctoral Program in International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies

Universitat Jaume I Doctoral School

Contributions from Feminist and Plural Peace Perspectives to Promote Degrowth

A Dialogic Approach in Times of Multiple Interlocking Crises

Report submitted by Marisol Cristina Bock in order to be eligible for
a doctoral degree awarded by the Universitat Jaume I

Marisol
Bock

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Doctoral student Marisol Cristina Bock   Thesis supervisor Eloísa Nos-Aldás

Castelló de la Plana, 1 September 2021

To Rosalía,

who has expanded my sense of time, love and home.

Acknowledgements

It is often said that writing a thesis is a solitary journey. This is only a partial truth. Throughout the writing process I have begun to appreciate the relational aspects of research and writing. Here I would like to acknowledge the people that supported me:

Thank you, Eloísa Nos-Aldás, for your steady presence as a tutor and supervisor. I am grateful for your critical and empathic responses as well as your perpetual invitation to find freedom on my own path. Thank you, Alberto Gomes, for your highly instructive advice. Thanks for generously sharing your rich depth of alternative knowledge(s). Thank you, Alexander Horstmann, Andrea Rodríguez, Annette Weber, Catalina Vallejo Piedrahíta, Carlos Cordero Pedrosa, Corinna Dengler, Egidio Alcides de Bustamante Azevedo, Helena Inverno, Irene Comins Mingol, I Jin Jang, José Ignacio Martín Galán, María José Gámez Fuentes, María Lidón Escrig Sos, Minke Sijbrandij, Miriam Arely Vázquez Vidal, Wolfgang Dietrich, Yayo Herrero, for thinking with me in conversation.

Thanks to my parents, Dagmar and Michael Bock, for the innumerable things you did that made writing this thesis possible. Thank you, Anaïs Bock, my inspirer, lifetime accomplice and unconditional supporter. Thank you Olga Palafox for your presence, care and practical guidance. Thanks, Kevin J. Brenneman, for your remarkable editing, input and advice. Thanks, Eun Ah Hong, for your loyal company and for believing in us both. Thanks to my friends at DEEP, Wibke Gehringer, Lina Westermann and Mirko Sbeih.

Thanks to the Innsbruck Peace Master Class of January 2020 for your conviviality and willingness to show up as peace workers. Thanks to FaDA for fostering a much-needed conversation about feminisms and degrowth. Thanks to Adela Almela Escrig and the UJI peace program administration team for sustaining the structures that make this PhD possible.

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Abstract

This thesis examines degrowth theory in the context of global interlocking crises in the economic, ecological and social realms. As an activist-led science, degrowth challenges dominant discourses and growth-based responses to global crises, while proposing radical alternatives that seek to foster more peaceful and sustainable livelihoods.

Departing from a philosophy for making peace(s) and a feminist methodology, this thesis makes a theoretical, dialogical and hermeneutic analysis of interdisciplinary secondary academic literature. It critically analyzes how degrowth can be promoted.

Degrowth is divided into a bioeconomics strand, social strand and strand of the imaginary. Integrating feminism as a part of a degrowth approach serves its aim to be just and thus makes it more peaceful. Different feminisms can enhance degrowth, among which there are feminist economics, ecofeminisms, decolonial and queer (eco)feminism. Diverse degrowth frames are considered and examined alongside alternative and parallel concepts. The novel Coronavirus pandemic is considered a current-day expression of a crisis that affects degrowth communication.

The conclusions of this research point to the need to diversify degrowth-related communication to reach broader audiences. For this purpose, degrowth may benefit from a transrational peace view, and framed in terms of harmony, security and truth. Decolonial and feminist theories have the potential to bridge the limitations that both degrowth and plural peace philosophies yield in terms of their onto-epistemological assumptions. They serve the overall aim to contribute to an expansion and integration of different world views that can help to overcome the dominant obsolete growth paradigm.

Keywords: Sustainable Economic Degrowth, Feminism(s), Peace(s) philosophy, Transrational peace, Decolonial

Preface

The knowledge we humans can gain is limited by the fact that we are embodied beings. The time and place we were born, the way we were brought up as well as the culture we are part of shape our vision of the world and how we learn about it (Haraway, 1991b). Consequently, all thoughts that form this thesis stem from the partial and situated understanding determined by my educational background and cultural context. It is because of this that in this preface I provide the reader with my own perspective as an author.

My current home is in the countryside close to Candeleda, a small town in the Spanish interior, a bit over two hours west from Madrid. By coming here in 2017, I consciously chose to leave behind the urban lifestyle in general, including a number of cities in and outside of Europe I have called home throughout my life.

My partner and I are what people here commonly refer to as neo-rurals because we came here not to live off the land, but to live on it and enjoy some of its benefits. For me one of its many benefits refers to the vastness of space and time that this place offers. It allows me to read, develop ideas for my research, write, practice music and meditate.

Moreover, it gives me access to closer experience of community with other people living in this area. Many of the people here are critical about the consumerist, highly work intensive, alienating urban lifestyle and have, at least in part, traded making a lot of money for time, where reciprocal meaningful human relations can be built and sustained.

This setting permits me to live aligned with my values and come closer to what I deem to be a sustainable lifestyle: strong local bonds, in touch with nature, community ties and freedom to creatively approach the question of how to live in ways that benefit ourselves, others and nature.

Of course, the pursuit of such a good life is a work in progress with inconsistencies, in my case related to the use of fossil fuels for transport to name just one example. While the attempt to live according to the values I believe in at an individual level is an important process, a collective re-thinking of values and lifestyles and a dialog with people who have different values than mine is necessary for effective change to take place on a larger scale.

At this point, I would like to give visibility to the fact that my writing of this PhD is only possible due to the privilege of being financially and emotionally supported by my family who has granted me the conditions necessary for continuing my studies.

My sister and I were raised by two loving parents. My father, a German diplomat, who is passionate about his work my mother: a Venezuelan versatile, creative and energetic woman who was able to provide a sense of well-being and a deep connection within the family throughout the adventures and challenges of our nomadic upbringing.

Growing up in this family meant getting to know different parts of the world, not as a tourist, but as an expatriate. It included learning languages at a young age so that, by the age of five, I was able to speak fluent English, German and Spanish - in addition to basic notions of several other languages.

It meant feeling at ease in different places in the world and meeting people from all walks of like. However, it also meant missing a stable sense of home as my sister and I were uprooted every two to three years and had to start all over again several times as we grew up. This implied finding new friends, getting to know a new place and learning the unspoken rules. There were new schools, new languages, new customs and so on. The changes in our lives were our adventures, which we loved, but they were also connected with a sense of loss and grief that came with relocating.

People like us are called *third culture kids* (Van Reken et al., 2017) because we have been brought up in different countries, forming a third culture that is like a mosaic, mixing elements from their parents and the different cultural contexts we were raised in. It also refers to the fact that we tend to feel at home in international spaces, be good at intercultural communication and can more easily adapt to unknown surroundings. However, we are also inclined to have doubts about where we belong and are quite sensitive to the needs and grievances of others, no matter how far away in the world. My mother would tell us that, rather than having no roots, we have ours in the air, like orchids.

In 2013, I discovered the Master program in Peace, Conflict and Development studies at Jaume I University (UJI) in Castellón, Spain. I enrolled because it resonated with my deep longing for making the world a better place, and in this case, through learning about peacebuilding and making use of my sense of intercultural sensitivity and understanding. Soon, the peace program at UJI became my intellectual home, and to a certain extent, a place of spiritual inquiry. It helped me to stand up for who I am, to dare to situate myself as a peace-loving and peace-seeking person, both in my personal life and in the external world.

In 2016—a year after I finished my master's degree, and while teaching languages and music in Madrid—I felt thirsty for studying more, which is what motivated me to enroll in UJI's PhD program. The reasons I am on this PhD journey are manifold. I believe in life-long learning and love to experience how thinking becomes more refined and deeper through writing, which to me can be both a great challenge and a great pleasure. Moreover, I enjoy thinking in groups and facilitating learning processes. Getting a PhD also opens opportunities to continue doing so in an academic setting.

In addition, my love for knowledge gains a whole new dimension when it is aimed

at solving day-to-day problems affecting human life, animals and plants on the planet. In light of this, I find peace studies the most adequate field, since I believe peace work is what we humans need the most. I understand *peace* holistically, as a multi-layered process that happens inside individuals as well as in society, both in theory and in practice. I elaborate on what I mean by this in the Theoretical Orientation of this thesis.

While working on my PhD, I also facilitate education workshops around peace, gender-based violence, ecology and music through a non-profit organization that I co-founded [1]. Furthermore, I collaborate with my partner Rosalía on her musical and educational projects as a co-producer and a musician.

My research is based on the desire to be an active part of a transformation that will allow for more peaceful and sustainable ways of living on Earth. In my view, such a transformation needs to consider what it means to respect the limits of the planet and what it means to do so in peaceful ways. For this purpose, I consider it an urgent and a profound matter to identify and transform the dynamics underlying the multiple global crises we are facing today.

Simultaneously, since peace starts in the minds of people, I consider that this issue merits a reflection as slow and thorough as a PhD thesis. This reflection ought to address the violence of the global economic system which is based on infinite growth on a planet with limits. However, it should also deal with systemic violence or inequalities that are embedded in social systems and which are causing unnecessary human suffering. I believe that while systemic violence affects us humans and the non-human world profoundly, it is ultimately human-made and can thus be challenged and changed by humans.

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[1] The organization is called DEEP Deutschland and it is the German circle of the Global DEEP Network. The acronym stands for Dialogue, Empathic Engagement and Peacebuilding (Gomes, 2015).

The degrowth movement is one such challenge confronting systemic violence, and seeks to transform the world, seeking change from within[2] and the ideas in question. I see degrowth as a peaceful, radical and promising theory and action that deserves profound scrutiny from the interdisciplinary field of peace studies.

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[2] Within here refers to the privileged societies from which the paradigm of infinite economic growth emerged.

I Introduction—Crises, Challenges and Alternative Futures

I want you to act as if your house is on fire. Because it is. Greta Thunberg

You never change things by fighting reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. Richard Buckminster Fuller

I.1. Global Interlocking Crises

Throughout the past decades the world has been struck by several global crises. The financial crash of 2008 sparked a global economic crisis that was paid for by society through austerity measures and increased privatization (Karanikolos et al., 2013). The term crisis has also become a term employed to substitute the commonly term 'climate change' and give it the urgency that it merits (Crist, 2007, Ripple et al., 2019). Most recently, the outbreak of the global pandemic caused by the novel Coronavirus COVID-19, beginning in 2020, has taken over 2.7 million lives globally in the first year alone to date and caused a major public health crisis and socio-economic disruption (World Health Organization, 2021).

In light of this, the meaning of crisis merits some attention. Etymologically, the Greek term *krisis* means decision. In the English language of the seventeenth century the term crisis was used to refer to the progress of an illness, and later on more generally of anything (Williams, 2012). The description of crisis in the context of illness is a useful metaphor, since it refers to "the point in the progress of a disease when an important development or change takes place which is decisive for recovery or death; the turning-point of a disease for better or for worse" (De Rycker and Don, 2013: 6). In this sense, crisis may be viewed as a symptomatic convulsion indicating the beginning of profound systemic change (Sbeih, 2014)**.**

Across different disciplines scholars have stated that we are facing multiple global interlocking crises in the economic, social and ecological realms (Brand, 2016, Haase et al., 2018). Growth critics have claimed that the origin of these crises can be traced back to the pursuit of infinite economic growth (Brownhill et al., 2012, Alexander and Yacoumis, 2018, Buch-Hansen, 2018).

Continued economic growth is an inherent principle of modern capitalism. Growth is a result of increasing consumption, production and resource exploitation, and is often measured at the national level by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the 1970s it became scientifically established that growth cannot be infinite since the Earth's resources are finite (Meadows et al., 1972).

At this point it is essential to point out the difference between economic growth in terms of the GDP and material growth (Kallis et al., 2020). The latter is the increase of matter and energy transformed by human societies. It can be measured through material flows analysis and ecological footprints. Historically, there is a tight relation between both, GDP and growth, and the increase of material and energy used. Supporters of green growth, however, count on the decoupling of these from each other. There have, in fact, been scientific studies that identify countries where reduced CO2 emissions have not reduced GDP growth. Yet, so far, no evidence has been found that the economy-wide use of resource and waste production have been decoupled from GPD on national or international scales (Parrique et al., 2019, Vadén et al., 2020).

Based on this insight, the United Nations made a call for sustainable development in 1987, meaning development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Keeble, 1988). Yet, the international buzzword of sustainability was appropriated by businesses in terms

of 'sustainable growth', an oxymoron which defied its purpose and did not address the original problem (Fournier, 2008).

The deeper consideration of ecological and social needs stayed at the margins in comparison to the idea of economic growth as a foundation for development and prosperity. Consequently, this infinite growth imperative penetrated the United Nation's global development agenda and still remains a crucial aspect of its development discourse. The current global development agenda includes seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that all UN Member States have agreed to work towards achieving by the year 2030. Besides lacking critical engagement with past failures and number of other flaws, the agenda advocates 'sustained economic growth', which is at odds with the majority of the SDGs (Kothari et al., 2019).

Considering the overall dreary circumstances of the overdeveloped world and the poor majority world[3] at the verge of collapse, the current global agenda of sustainable development has been considered a misnomer in the sense that it should rather be addressed in terms of "Sustainable Survival Goals" (Kothari et al., 2019: xiii). The reformist solutions of the global development agenda exhibit internal inconsistencies that are incoherent and are prone to becoming "ecologically wasteful profit-making distractions" (xix). In light of this, it seems appropriate to reconsider the global interlocking crises from a more radical place. The term *radical* might trigger contradicting opinions, since it is often portrayed negatively and as a cause of violent extremism (Borum, 2011). In this thesis I aim to rescue the original meaning of radical which stems from the Latin term *radix, radic-* (root) and can be interpreted as addressing the root of a problem (Urban, 2014).

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[3]I sometimes use the terms *overdeveloped world* and *majority world* to highlight the link between the global socio-economic and political areas commonly called the Global North and Global South. The alternative terms appear in John Barry's (2012) *The Politics of Actually Existing Unsustainability: Human Flourishing in a Climate-changed, Carbon Constrained World*.

The action-based science called sustainable economic degrowth, or simply degrowth, emerged as an activist slogan in France in 2001 (Demaria et al., 2013). It provides a critical analysis and a matrix of alternatives in response to existing global interlocking crises at the economic, environmental and social levels. Degrowth scholars argue that the hegemonic imperative of infinite economic growth is the underlying cause of the previously mentioned global interlocking crises and therefore has to be abandoned.

In light of this, the so-called missile concept of degrowth clearly points at the necessity to *degrow* so as to avoid the fate of other less specific concepts related to sustainability, which can be hijacked by businesses (Demaria et al., 2013). In other words, setting a limit to the paradigm of endless economic growth is seen as a necessary condition for truly sustaining life on Earth. This restriction necessarily needs to go hand in hand with social measures and thus requires to re-politicize concepts like development, prosperity and the good life.

I.2. Problem Statement

The global sustainable development agenda has left the dominant economic growth paradigm unchallenged, while ecological and social disruption continue at unprecedented levels. This has made me consider degrowth as an alternative response to the global interlocking crises. I consider that degrowth deserves to be assessed from a peace studies perspective to evaluate its capacity to bring about peaceful societal transformation and sustainable livelihoods. As a feminist, I also deem it necessary to actively contest the gender inequalities that continue to exist across cultures and settings. I thus contend that degrowth cannot be peaceful unless it is feminist too.

My PhD topic represents a continuation and deepening of previous research I have carried out on degrowth and feminism, in my master's dissertation (Bock, 2015). In this

PhD thesis I consider the evolution of the degrowth field and the unfolding of my own research process as I take the topic up once again, several years later. The following ideas from my previous work serve as preliminary observations that lead to the research question and demarcate the analytical frame for this research.

The pursuit of unlimited economic growth embedded in the global capitalist system is at odds with the ecological limits of the planet and social well-being. It is detrimental for nature since economic growth leads to more resource extraction and consequently more waste. Moreover, economic wealth has been concentrated on a few hands to an unprecedented level while a very large number of people do not have the means to satisfy even their basic human needs (Raworth, 2017, Gough, 2019, Robinson, 2014). In other words, it has made the rich much richer and the poor poorer, which can be considered structural violence (Galtung, 1990). Economic inequalities are furthermore contingent on people's gender and other intersectional criteria. Hence, the violence in the capitalist growth economy is also deeply interwoven with other systems of oppression such as patriarchy.

However, the dominant universalizing development discourse described in the United Nations Global Agenda of Sustainable Development (Kothari et al., 2019)does not call for limits to growth. Instead, it includes economic growth among its development goals—in Sustainable Development Goal number eight—and thus continues the longstanding global trend to propagate development in connection with the imperative of economic growth.

Degrowth, which is a *missile word* (Demaria et al., 2013) directly opposes the economic growth paradigm in a way that cannot be hijacked. This positioning makes degrowth radical—addressing the root of a problem—and marginal since it goes against the global development agenda. Degrowth theory explains how the growth-based

economy conflicts with the limits of the planet and social well-being then proposes a matrix of alternatives. The general approach of degrowth is to downscale production, consumption and extraction democratically—a non-violent transition toward truly sustainable livelihoods (Schneider et al., 2010).

For degrowth to be transformative, it might benefit from engaging with other transformative movements and perspectives. This can help to critically revise its own assumptions, to enhance and to promote its cause and form alliances with other movements (Akbulut et al., 2019). As a feminist I am particularly interested in the ways in which feminist perspectives can enhance degrowth.

Whereas growth is patriarchal, not all strands of feminism are growth critical. Thus, we cannot claim that feminism *in general* is in line with degrowth ideals—certain strands of feminism are while others are not. In line with the identity statement of the Feminisms and Degrowth alliance (FaDA), I follow the aim to make feminist reasoning an integral part of degrowth activism and scholarship (Dengler et al., 2016: 1). In this context, I integrate FaDA's notion that within feminism, the likely fellow travelers of the degrowth movement also subscribe to ecofeminism, materialist feminism, postcolonial feminism and the more radical parts of feminist economics.

I.3. Thesis Question, Objectives and Methodology

Based on the reflections and problem as explained above, the thesis question of this PhD reads as follows:

How can degrowth be promoted through a feminist and plural peace perspective?

This research is guided by the following objectives:

Thesis Objectives:

1. Explain the topic, thesis question and philosophical groundwork of this thesis. (Introduction)
2. Outline the main argumentative structures of the degrowth agenda in relation to global interlocking crises. (Chapter 1)
3. Discuss how feminisms challenge the economic growth paradigm and enhance degrowth theory. (Chapter 2)
4. Explore communicative strategies that degrowth can adopt to attract a broader audience from plural peace approaches and adjacent theoretical perspectives. (Chapter 3)
5. Discuss the overall findings of this thesis and draw a general conclusion. (Chapter 4)

I.3.1 Structure and Research Methods

This thesis is a theoretical, dialogical and hermeneutic analysis of secondary academic literature, which includes the interdisciplinary fields of degrowth, feminism(s) and peace studies. It is structured into five parts, which include this Introductory Chapter followed by Degrowth (Chapter 1), Feminist Degrowth (Chapter 2), Promoting Feminist Degrowth (Chapter 3) the Discussion and Conclusion (Chapter 4). It is constructive in the sense that through it I seek to respond to a social problem by building rather than just by dissecting theory. Sociologist Alphonse Clemens (1940) made a point of advocating constructive sociological theory claiming that it was more difficult but less prominent and as important as analytical approaches. In his words

> we can scarcely expect to reconstruct society with the dead weight of vivisected social forms alone. The much more arduous task awaits us in our sociological research of synthesizing the scattered material at our disposal. We must yet gather the scattered skeins of analytical thinking and weave them into a tapestry of enduring social worth. Our task is not merely the diagnosis of sociological truths and errors; it is also preventive, and what is more, remedial. (77)

In peace philosophy a similar distinction is made between critical and constructive approaches, both of which are necessary and complementary lines. The former refers to

the analysis of different kinds of violence. The latter reconstructs and makes human competencies visible to make peace(s) while searching creatively for pacific human-human and human-nature relations as it proposes alternatives that allow to construct new futures (Comins-Mingol, 2018).

My goal is to engage in constructive peace research in a way that conclusions may be drawn for the practical side of this problem and which offer new ways of thinking about it.

The hermeneutic aspect of this thesis is given since it addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding (Bleicher, 2017) and because it represents a search for meaning through direct interpretation of what I observe .

The dialogical aspect of this thesis is derived from Russian philosopher and linguist Mikhail Bakhtin's theory (2010). Bakhtin's dialogical approach understands research in terms of an ongoing dialog that allows participants to continue forming themselves, "as they continue to become who they may yet be" (Frank, 2005: 967). This ties to Bakhtin's idea that language and meaning-making cannot be finalized, which stresses the partiality and contingency of research truths (Frølunde, 2013).

The orientation of this thesis is hence towards building and reviewing consensus through an intersubjective recognition of validity claims that can be criticized while acknowledging that diverse approaches can coexist. The dialogical method stands in contrast to the dialectical Hegelian approach that focuses on a more rigid structure where the truth is approached through thesis-antithesis-synthesis sequences. While the dialogical aspect is more relativist, allowing for contradicting views to coexist and not needing to establish what the definite reality is, I avoid extreme relativism, thanks to the normative character of peace research, where peace is in itself a value pursued and which can serve

as a compass for balancing relativist positions by seeking minimum consensus about values through intersubjective dialog (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000).

The social problem I address in this PhD is the global interlocking crises I refer to in the introductory section (I.1). Degrowth is an alternative response to the dominant sustainable development discourses through which the international community addresses these crises at the economic, ecological and social levels and represents my object of study.

My research question however moves from a general description of the problem to a more specific one. As pointed out in the introductory section of this thesis (I.1), degrowth is a response to global interlocking crises worth studying from a philosophical peace perspective. The theoretical side of degrowth is interdisciplinary. It has been argued to stand on three distinct bodies of research: ecological economics, post-development and feminism (Demaria et al., 2020). Since peace studies is interdisciplinary as well, it is pertinent to consider the ways in which these heterogeneous research fields overlap.

The specific research question I investigate derives from two converging questions: What does it take for degrowth to be peaceful, if we adopt a positive understanding of peace which moves beyond just the absence of direct violence? Moreover, if degrowth is peaceful, what could make the movement more successful? Hence, I aim to examine the legitimacy of degrowth on the one hand and its effectiveness on the other. The two aspects are not completely separate from each other, but are pragmatically interrelated. There is no point in promoting a movement that is not peaceful and there is no point in enhancing a movement if it cannot affect real life.

In terms of legitimacy there are a range of limitations of degrowth, which I examine in Chapter section 1.5.2. In this thesis I focus on the notion that degrowth is far from having fully integrated a feminist agenda (Hanaček et al., 2020, Dengler and

Seebacher, 2019, Akbulut, 2017). Gender equality is an aspect of justice, which needs to be addressed to overcome violent, patriarchal oppressive structures, and hence a transversal aspect of peacebuilding and peace studies. In other words, from a peace(s) philosophy perspective, if degrowth is not feminist it cannot be peaceful.

Hence, my aim is to approach degrowth from certain feminist perspectives to enhance it. I deliberately state feminist perspectives in the plural since feminism is a heterogeneous field and not all feminisms are critical of the growth paradigm. This means that not all, but certain feminist perspectives can enhance degrowth. As I scrutinize degrowth from a feminist standpoint I touch upon further intersectional criteria, which deserve attention for the legitimacy of degrowth. Over the past few years, the main reflections in this sense point towards a need for having a degrowth research agenda from the margins (Hanaček et al., 2020). This entails decolonial thinking and perspectives from the Global South.

Although this thesis does not integrate decoloniality as an aim or method from the outset, decolonial thinking emerges both as a consideration beyond intersectionality and as a necessary transversal aspect of a future research agenda. The former is reflected foremost as I acknowledge my own privilege as an author positioned in the Global North with enough financial means and time to sustain the undertaking of this research. This implies that I reject the seemingly neutral position often assumed in the Western scientific canon in which an objective study is expected. This is because it actually reflects a position of power that does not recognize itself and has been called *point zero* by Ramón Grosfoguel (2011).

In my research I aim to contribute to change from within the social structures I am part of, as explained in the preface. While this is in itself an ethically valuable undertaking, the inward-looking degrowth approach risks possible negative effects for

societies and livelihoods in the Global South (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019). Though the intertwined complexities of the larger system eventually find a new equilibrium in the long run, the short-term impact of degrowth initiatives cannot all be foreseen.

The limitation in terms of effectiveness refers to the fact that, so far, degrowth has not become a strong enough movement to bring about the change necessary to meet the urgency of the global interlocking crises at hand (Conrad, 2020, Rigon, 2017). Hence, the aim to find ways to promote degrowth which addresses the aspect of effectiveness. In chapter 3 approaching the effectiveness of degrowth, I make use of communication for peace methods, in particular the practice of framing, both in an analytical and a constructive way. Frames are mental structures that shape the ways in which we see the world, allow us to understand reality and shape the way we perceive reality through discourse (Lakoff, 2006). The practice of framing in communication is also called second level agenda setting. In other words, framing deals with *how* to think about certain aspects, as opposed to what to think about them (Goffman, 1974). Framing is done through a range of rhetorical devices, including the use of key words, metaphors and technical devices like pictures, layout and quotes (Linstrom and Marais, 2012). Hence, frame analysis is useful to unravel the ways in which a communicated text exerts its power (Entman, 1993).

More specifically, my aim with regards to framing is to critically assess the frames that the degrowth concept evokes as well as alternative words that might trigger frames to promote degrowth. In the discussion of these matters I rely on George Lakoff's (2010) work on environmental framing, in particular the explanations and advice he gives on why framing matters and how it should be done. In this context, I consider the need for frames to find resonance with a broad audience, while simultaneously proposing significant shifts in what is considered common sense regarding the economic growth

paradigm.

My search for degrowth frames is also informed by the research report 'Finding frames new ways to engage the UK public in global poverty', by Andrew Darnton and Martin Kirk (2011), as well as by Manuela Mesa and Laura Alonso's (2013) *Visibles y Transgresoras* research on narratives and visual proposals for peace and equality. Both research projects search for frames in a social change context. In the first case, to improve engagement to tackle global poverty and in the second, to give visibility to the impact that women have in the area of peace to go beyond sexist and victimizing stereotypes.

As I discuss different frames, I do not only refer to existing secondary academic literature, but also include texts written for lay audiences, such as blog entries, public statements and newspaper articles in the sources analyzed. The guiding question here is how can degrowth be communicated to reach broader audiences.

In this context, I undertake this analytical excursion to framing theory and frame analysis. I specifically pay attention to the Coronavirus pandemic that first struck the globe in the year 2020. I do so to anchor the debates around framing and degrowth in a current, real-life expression of crisis. This way, I reveal existing tensions between the ways in which the crisis is framed in media and by politicians versus how it is framed from a degrowth perspective. These reflections are necessarily limited due to the rapid unfolding of events and the lack of coolness that an analysis in retrospect could provide.

Besides the specific practical reflections on framing, I draw from feminist and plural peace approaches to derive principles and ideas that might contribute to the purpose of promoting degrowth and which also inform my overall research. These include a range of different onto-epistemological reflections and methodological principles which I briefly summarize here.

Following the feminist epistemological position proposed by Stanley and Wise (2002) I reveal my background as an author, which is in line with politics of location (Rich, 2003) and situated knowledge(s) (Haraway, 1988). This is employed to acknowledge that the person behind the research influences the research process. From this perspective there is no such thing as disembodied and objective knowledge, only embodied and contextual knowledge.

The peace studies perspective for my analysis is explained more in detail in the section I.4 Theoretical Framework. Within peace studies, I touch upon different areas and perspectives, such as philosophy for peace, communication for peace and peace education. Moreover, to link the interdisciplinary peace research field to degrowth I expose links between development and peace studies through a critical analysis of peace interpretations that development discourses offer.

Furthermore, I take on a pluralist approach to peace, meaning that I position myself in line with those peace schools that claim there is no such thing as one peace for all, but peace in itself must incorporate diversity. In this sense, my research approach is strongly influenced by Vicent Martínez-Guzmán's (2000) philosophy of making peace(s).

A further plural peace perspective I draw from is the transrational approach to peace studies, explained in Wolfgang Dietrich's Many Peaces trilogy (2018a, 2013, 2012), as well as literature by scholars who have researched and taught in the realm of the Innsbruck school (Alvarez et al., 2018). What stands out from the transrational approach is its intention to add a theoretical framework, what John Paul Lederach (1996) has called elicitive conflict transformation (Dietrich, 2018a).

This type of conflict transformation views conflict not as a threat, but an inherent part of life and an integral aspect of human relations (Lederach, 2003). It is relational in the following sense: Whereas an *episode* can be defined as the "visible expression of

conflict" which "generates attention and energy around a particular set of issues that need response", it is "the web of relational patterns, often providing a history of lived episodes, from which new episodes and issues emerge" (Lederach, 2003: 31). What follows from this is the insight that deeper layers of one's whole being need to be addressed, rather than merely the tangible, measurable and manifest aspects that show in an episode.

Dietrich draws from the elicitive approach by further incorporating more pieces of the bigger picture. The more holistic, albeit not complete[4], interpretation of peaces culminating in a complex mapping tool which contains individual, collective, interior and exterior aspects of peacebuilding. Thus, a practical tool is presented for peace workers to help them navigate the rough terrain of social conflicts and relationships.

Elicitive conflict transformation in opposition to prescriptive approaches, aims at "catalyzing the existing energy of the conflict towards its creative transformation" (Echavarría-Alvarez and Koppensteiner, 2018: 5). In more general terms, Lederach (2003) sees conflict transformation as the capacity

> to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships. (14)

The fact that I combine feminism and degrowth with plural, transrational and elicitive peace approaches makes this work an example of *threshold theorizing* in line with Ana Louise Keating (2012). According to the author, thresholds mark "transitional, liminal opportunities where new beginnings and unexpected combinations can occur" (10). Threshold theories move "betwixt and between" (10) divergent spaces—worlds, texts, realities, peoples, theories, methods and/or worldviews. They provide additional insights

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[4]To support this logic, Dietrich makes reference to Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem (1931), which stipulates that a sufficiently powerful formal system has to be either incomplete or contradictory (Dietrich, 2012)

for community-building and transformation and allow scholars who make use of it to discover and invent startling interconnections.

Such theories are not entirely inside nor totally outside any singular theoretical perspective. They also grant a space to consider and even occupy ambivalent insider-outsider positions in relation to a number of more established theoretical views. In contrast with Walter Mignolo's concept of border thinking (2012), threshold theorizing does not start from a breaking point, but from the presupposition that "we are intimately, inextricably linked with all human and nonhuman existence, on multiple levels, in multiple ways". This view resonates very much with theoretical peace perspectives.

This thesis thus engages in threshold theorizing because it adapts parts of theories from different disciplines whose logic does not necessarily concord at all levels. An example of this is my use of the transrational peace approach at the service of reflections pertaining to feminist degrowth. While some aspects of the transrational approach seem to be at discord with feminist degrowth views, others seem to resonate and complement these well.

I.3.2 Objectives and Sub-questions per Chapter

Introduction

Explain the topic, thesis question and philosophical groundwork of this thesis.

- What are the ontological, epistemological and ethical principles that guide this thesis?
- What is the research methodology of this thesis?
- What is the theoretical framework of this thesis?
- How does philosophy for making peace(s) inform this thesis?
- What kind of feminisms can enhance degrowth?

Chapter 1—Sustainable Economic Degrowth

Outline the main argumentative structures of the degrowth agenda in relation to global interlocking crises.

- What are global crises and how are they interrelated?
- What is degrowth and what is its aim?
- In what context did degrowth emerge and how has it developed?
- How does degrowth address the problem of economic growth?
- What are degrowth's strengths and limitations from a peace(s) philosophy perspective?

Chapter 2—Feminist Degrowth

Discuss how feminisms challenge the economic growth paradigm and enhance degrowth theory.

- In what ways is the capitalist growth paradigm related to patriarchy?
- What are commonalities and differences among different growth-critical feminist perspectives?
- How can feminisms enhance degrowth theory?
- What contributions from feminist perspectives have been made to degrowth scholarship?

Chapter 3—Promoting Feminist Degrowth

Explore communicative strategies that degrowth can adopt to attract a broader audience from plural peace approaches and adjacent theoretical perspectives.

- How is framing relevant as a strategy to promote degrowth?
- What is the utility of the degrowth concept in comparison to alternative terminology?
- How is the Coronavirus pandemic framed from feminist, degrowth and peace perspectives?
- What plural peace perspectives could help to promote feminist degrowth?
- What concepts can lead to peace(s), feminisms and degrowth synergies?

Chapter 4—Discussion and Conclusion

Discuss the overall findings of this thesis and draw a general conclusion.

- What lessons can be drawn from responding to the objectives in each chapter?
- What are limitations of this research?
- What are possible future research lines?

I.4. Theoretical Framework

I.4.1 The Peace Perspective of this Thesis

This research is conducted in the frame of the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace in Castellón, which was awarded to the master's and doctoral program International Peace, Conflict and Development Studies. The underlying approach is the philosophy of the founder of this program, Vicent Martínez-Guzmán's philosophy for many *peaces* (Martínez-Guzmán, 2001). His philosophy represents an ethical and epistemological foundation to do peace research and peace work from and to whom I happily acknowledge and appreciate for his influence in my thinking and writing today.

The philosophy for making peace(s) is a theoretical framework with its own onto-epistemological groundwork, coined by its founder and built upon by students of this school of thought. The philosophy for making peace(s) is part of the larger body of peace studies research. This is in itself interdisciplinary, located within the social sciences and humanities, and includes areas such as peace education, communication for peace and the realm of politics. The philosophy for making peace(s) has been described at length in Martínez-Guzmán's own writings and secondary literature by other peace(s) philosophy authors (Martínez-Guzmán, 2001, Martínez-Guzmán, 2000, París Albert and Comins-Mingol, 2019, Reverter-Bañón, 2019, Forastelli, 2012, Nos-Aldás and Farné, 2020).

In this section I thus present a few ideas that have most significantly impacted this research and complement these with other interdisciplinary theoretical underpinnings. These include mainly philosophical reflections on epistemology, ontology, ethics and methodology.

One of the distinctive aspects of peace studies is its normative character. Within peace studies there is deliberately no claim for neutrality, but instead a commitment to values, in interaction with the different manners in which peaceful coexistence can occur (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000). In other words, rather than aiming for a disembodied, objective, universal and value neutral expansion of knowledge, we peace students and researchers study peace because we want there to be peace. This commitment to peace as a value has been part of what Martínez-Guzmán's Epistemological Shift, a call for twisting of the ways in which we claim that we can know, based on philosophical and scientific argumentation.

This shift is grounded in a performative attitude, meaning that we recognize that the things we say are actions, following Austin's speech act theory (1975), and that our academic writing can be seen as a dialog among scholars, in line with Jürgen Habermas' communicative action theory (1981). Hence, what we humans we communicate belongs to the things we do to each other. We can hold each other accountable for the things we communicate them because they entail responsibility. In this light, the commitments we make, the expectations we generate, and even the silences we hold, are part of our communication.

Other aspects of the epistemological shift include the embracing of intersubjectivity and interpellation, the importance of relations between subjects rather than with objects, between people and actively including a concern for gender perspective and nature.

The aspect of caring for nature is directly related to the recognition that we humans are part of nature, as the etymology of the word human, which comes from *humus* (Greek for earth), shows. Another related word is humility that stems from *humilis,* which means close to the earth (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000).

In the philosophy for making peace(s) at UJI (Martínez-Guzmán, 2001) feminism is considered an important aspect of peace studies in terms of both content and methodology. This is because it can be valued as a lens through which to scrutinize all other disciplines and help to transcend discursive and epistemic injustice, such as the illocutionary silencing and lack of recognition given to feminist thinking, as Martínez-Guzmán exposes, for instance, in his contribution to the book *Pax Crítica* (Pérez de Armiño and Zirion Landaluze, 2019). In connection to the foregoing call to see the link between humans and nature, ecofeminist theories also form part of peace philosophy as they recognize the link between the subjugation of women and nature in a patriarchal culture.

The integration of feminism as a transversal component into peace studies is coherent in that feminism can be defined as a movement to end sexism (hooks, 2000). Peace scholar Johan Galtung (1990), lists sexism as an example of cultural violence. He defines cultural violence as "those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence" (Galtung, 1990: 291). Galtung's expanded notion of violence shown in his violence triangle provides peace work with the task of transcending a negative peace definition as the absence of war, to include the quest of overcoming cultural violence.

Direct violence

visible

invisible

Structural violence   Cultural violence
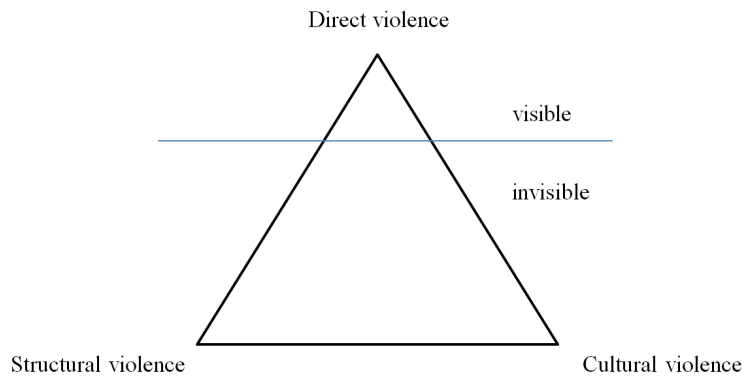
Figure 1 Johan Galtung's (1990) Violence Triangle. Source: own elaboration

In this spirit, when examining degrowth in the light of peace research, it certainly needs to undergo feminist scrutiny too. In other words, degrowth cannot be peaceful unless it is feminist too. The performative understanding of knowledge generation in connection with a commitment to values stems from the same critique as the feminist critique of so-called value neutral science (Harding, 1987).

Hence the feminist methodological stance that the researcher is part of what she researches proposed by feminist researchers Stanley and Wise (2002), resonates with Martínez-Guzmán's call for claiming perspective of a participant (rather than objective observer), and with Donna Haraway's call for the researcher to situate herself (1991b). This means laying bare one's own cultural and educational backgrounds out of the recognition that knowledge is necessarily embodied and limited.

From here, fruitful discussions can result to adjudicate what social reality is, but with less risk of falling into a traditionally foundationalist notion of reality as single, unseamed, out there and unproblematically available for experts and scientists to discover as the truth (Stanley and Wise, 2002). Philosophically this stance that does not attempt to find a grand unifying narrative can be considered post-structural or postmodern. A more detailed discussion regarding peace ontologies is left to Chapter 3 here I reflect upon the notions of the transrational peace philosophy, which bears postmodern elements, but also

moves beyond postmodernity in an attempt to integrate other ways of understanding peace.

Concerning knowledge production, a crucial addition is made by Adrienne Rich's *politics of location* (2003), an essay she calls for abandoning hegemonic Western feminism that universalizes all women's experiences. Like Donna Haraway (1991a), Rich grounds the accountability of feminist theory in the notion that knowledge production is situated. She hereby rejects generalizability and in particular the exclusionary normativity of what it means to be a woman, pointing at the multiple aspects of identity. Aligning with this epistemological standpoint as I do, implies sharing one's background as an author rather than disappearing as an objective, impersonal narrator. In other words, the awareness of one's situatedness reflected in the inclusion of autobiographical elements can therefore improve the communicative aspect of academic writing.

It is thus important to point out that normativity from a peace perspective lies in the acknowledgement of peace as a teleological and deontological goal but not in a limiting definition of the researcher or researched. The care not to generalize what it means to be of a certain gender and the accompanying rejection of essentialism are crucial for feminist methodology and lend themselves for post-structural analyses of power relations as well as for postcolonial approaches, i.e., explicitly addressing power from a standpoint that is explicitly non-Western, nonmale and/or nonhegemonic. As feminist international relations theorist Judith Ann Tickner asserts, "feminists start from an ontology of social relations in which individuals are embedded in, and constituted by, historically unequal political, economic, and social structures" (2003: 9). A feminist perspective thus considers these structures to be contingent on space and changing over time, based on a common notion of what the international system looks like and what behaviors different actors should have (Maruska, 2017). These notions are common

political imaginaries which are inherently gendered.

I align myself with an intersubjective ontology which can be derived from feminist theory as well as peace theory, understanding that the world we have created can be transformed, since it is made by humans. This is by no means a simple task. It includes reimagining the world as we would like it to be. Pathways for transformation also include suggesting, interpreting and comprehending the power relations which have led to the status quo in the gendered political realm (Gibson-Graham, 1997).

From a philosophy for peaces perspective, the analysis of power relations makes sense as a constructivist practice where deconstruction and laying bare power relations are not an end in themselves. Having these goals could mean reaching extraordinary levels of analysis related to the cultural and structural violence of patriarchy, or the latest and most sophisticated critique of capitalism (Terranova et al., 2019). Instead, what is interesting from a peace perspective are the political implication of the understanding of power relations. Methodologically, the unraveling of power relations marks the beginning of a journey from theory to practice: So what? What now? What can we do now that we recognize this?

According to Martínez-Guzmán's philosophy for making peaces there are three kinds of subversions in the epistemological shift: First, human actions can be very different, and we can always hold each other accountable for what we do. We peace workers are realists; and abstraction, universality and objectivity of many sciences lead to ethnocentric perspectives. Second, we propose that we are practical because we care for topics as real and urgent as the suffering caused by human beings, marginalization, exclusion, starvation, war and so on. This implies the recognition of a dialog between theory and practice as well as a possibility for transformation. Third, philosophy, peace studies and peace education are for 'people like us'. This means, peacebuilding is not for

saints or heroes, but for humans with imperfections who have the capacities of acting violently and of acting peacefully. In this sense, I acknowledge the necessity to reclaim human agency, seeing that social structures such as the economic system which is based on human agreements and not natural law, without disregarding the intricacies of cultural and structural violence that make social change too slow or even impossible.

The work of making peace(s) includes all imperfections potentials and capacities that we have as human beings. It means granting every member in society a voice and recognizing that conflicts are part of humanity, but the crux is to transform these conflicts by peaceful means. In sum, this is an integral proposal of not only the actions of social transformation but also it advocates one of the best of human expressions as it is based on love.

> […] love for knowledge in general but also love for the knowledges of making peaces. It will be a love that is not only phileō, like a mere afición or friendship but also agápē: dilligent and caritative love that presupposes justice and serves to break spirals of violence, introducing peaceful means ...(...) it is also erōs, not just rational but also sentimental love. (Martínez-Guzmán, 2005: 18)

What arises from this is the notion that although peace is pursued, there is no way to reach absolute peace, not in a perfect way, but very well in its imperfect multiple forms (Muñoz, 2006). The reason is that positive definitions of peace, beyond the absence of war, vary from culture to culture and even from person to person. Imposing one's peace definition on another would be an act of violence and hence not peaceful. It is out of this insight that respect for diversity becomes crucial for Martínez-Guzmán's philosophy. The notion of many peaces has also been taken up by other peace schools, echoed in particular by Wolfgang Dietrich in his trilogy of Many Peaces (Dietrich, 2013, Dietrich, 2012, Dietrich, 2018a, Dietrich and Sützl, 2006).

In light of this, both Martínez-Guzmán and Dietrich acknowledge what I find fundamental: that humans are not merely rational animals but besides reason also bear

feelings, emotions, affection and tenderness according to Martínez-Guzmán (2000), or sexuality, emotion and spirituality, according to Dietrich (2018a). The philosophical understanding of peace(s) of each of these authors is discussed further over the course of this thesis, particularly in Chapter 3.

The implications of this last thought are that building peace is a much more complex process than the mind can rationally understand, since it involves aspects of human interaction, which are not all grounded in rational thinking. This can be seen in John Paul Lederach's (2005) work with the title *The Moral Imagination: the Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Through his communication style this acclaimed peacebuilding professional and scholar opens door towards including alternative forms of knowing at the service of peace. Lederach himself writes:

> Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize and build the moral imagination. This kind of imagination is mobilized when four disciplines and capacities are held together and practiced by those who find their way to raise above violence. Stated simply, the moral imagination requires (1) the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships than includes our enemies; (2) the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; (3) the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and (4) the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence. (Lederach, 2005: 5)

The theoretical orientation of my work is built upon a foundation that theory and practice need to complement each other in a way that theoretical writing itself seeks to embody the principles it preaches. In this context, I consider, that like peacebuilding itself, this kind of research implies taking a risk that involves exploring the limits of what is considered scientifically grounded research.

When referring to the practical peace work that seeks to elicit the transformation of a conflict, while trusting that the opportunities to move beyond the conflict stage and into peace are contained within the conflicting parties themselves, is called *elicitive*. These opportunities can be explored through different kinds of peace work and must not

be provided by third parties.

The peace scholar and practitioner Wolfgang Dietrich has built upon Lederach's elicitive method with what he sees as a theoretical pendant, the transrational approach to peace. The bold thinking by Dietrich has contributed to my own reflections on peace in the broadest sense and although in many instances I am not in alignment with his views, mainly from a feminist and decolonial standpoint, I consider it crucial to dialog with it from a place of critical thinking, curiosity and love for peace work in theory and practice.

The doctoral program of the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace has three research lines: Philosophy and Peace and Conflict Resolution; Communication and Education for Peace; and Social Development, Sustainability and Quality of Life. I see elements from all three lines in my research.

Content-wise, I place my thesis in the development line because it is in the discourse on development that the topic of degrowth can be framed. The underlying intention of my thesis and part of the methodology has informed by communication for peace and peace education. Without effectively communicating what we do we run the risk that our work becomes another dusty book on the shelf only read by a handful of people. Hence, I hereby acknowledge my intention to make this thesis a communication for peace piece that can reach peace theorists, practitioners and other interested audiences, even if this process first needs to pass through the creation and ripening in an academic format.

I.4.2 The Feminist Perspective of this Thesis

In the following paragraphs I outline the features of what I have earlier called *the feminism of my choice* (2015, 2020). By this I refer to a kind of feminism with features so that make it able to resonate with and therefore enhance degrowth.

I.4.2.1 Gender Equality

In its most visible form, gender inequality put into numbers shows how women are at a disadvantage in relation to men. These differences can be especially seen in the economic sphere and where inequality restricts female access to money and power in the private and public spheres. There are a range of different ways in which inequalities manifest in the economic sphere. At one end of the spectrum, in the North for example, the focus is mainly on the gender pay gap, which refers to a certain percentage of salary that women on average earn less than men for the same work. It is striking that these differences still exist everywhere, despite the fact that feminism has been around for over a century and that gender equality has been institutionally endorsed (Danaj, 2016).

At the other extreme, gender inequality at the economic level is expressed as poverty. Following Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (Gangas, 2016), this does not merely mean a lack of income, but also lack of capabilities, based on gender biases in society, culture and policy. Poverty means a lack of choices and opportunities, which includes enjoying basic rights like freedom, respect and dignity as well as the capacity to lead a long, healthy and creative life.

The most visible manifestations of gender inequality are the ones which can be measured in numbers. The struggle against gender inequality is one of the most visible aspects of the continued necessity for feminism. It could thus be seen as a common denominator of many distinct feminist movements, including liberal feminism. However, reducing feminism to this aspect would be largely insufficient from my perspective, since this would mean trying to gain equality within a system that still relies on domination and exploitation, which are principles of patriarchal logic. Thus, I do endorse gender equality because humans should receive equal opportunities. Therefore, this is a valid first feature for feminism.

Before moving on to the next features, let me briefly clarify two points about this one: First, the fact that I mention the material aspect of gender inequality as a first feature does not mean I believe it is the most important aspect of feminism. Much rather I mention it at the outset because it is the common denominator among liberal and other kinds of feminisms that look for deeper, systemic change. By no means it is to claim that the problem of gender can be reduced to the fact that women, on average, have less access to money, resources and power than men.

Second, men and women as well as people who do not identify with either of the binary gender categories, are affected differently by the gender inequalities. In addition, there are several examples in which men, on average, are more disadvantaged than women. For instance, world-wide the numbers of victims of both homicide and suicide are by far championed by men (Synnott, 2016). In nearly every country women live longer and healthier lives than men (Austad, 2006)

I.4.2.2 Grasping things at the Root

This title points towards the quote attributed to Angela Davis' saying *radical simply means grasping things at the root* (Cross, 2011). Engaging in deep transformation is a crucial property of a feminism that dares to scrutinize culture and society systematically to uncover sexism as aspects of cultural violence, that is, places where patriarchy has remained hidden but active. As I have pointed out above, capitalism is one of those refuges of patriarchy, as both give each other strength.

Apart from liberal and neoliberal forms, most kinds of feminism go beyond the quest of reaching formal equality within existing institutions and structures. The reason is that feminists tend to consider that patriarchy is deeply embedded in society, and that society needs to deeply change. In peace jargon, this means that patriarchy is also expressed as structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990). The way in which

patriarchy together with capitalism has constructed what seems to be a normal and neutral seeming subject makes it clear that merely elevating women to the same standard as men in the existing system is not such a simple task since the system is built to sustain the privilege of a certain group.

Spanish feminist economist Amaia Pérez-Orozco describes that the so-called *sujeto mayoritario* (majority subject) is a minority that pretends and intends to be representative of the norm: the white, middle-class, male, heterosexual adult as the BBVAh[5] (2014). Yet, the BBVAh is a privileged subject for whom the social majorities are seen as a sum of minorities, such as women, black people, Indigenous people, farmers and workers (Pérez-Orozco, 2014). BBVAh falsely considers himself as independent, whereas he is actually reliant on the exploitation of those *other* subjects whose lives matter less.

This links to what feminist anthropologist Rita Laura Segato (2016) lays bare, which is although women constitute half of humanity they are still *minoritized* as a group. This is done in different ways: women seen smaller, and their issues are placed relegated to the realm of the intimate and private; moreover, problems of women are considered issues of a minority and consequently regarded as minor issues. Segato (2016)identifies this demotion as a colonial process, highlighting the interlocking aspects of the gender system transformation with the construction of coloniality-modernity that have invented the global village. The dynamics of minoritization affect society as a whole, rather than just representing *el problema de la mujer*, the problem of the woman (2).

Hence, Segato and Pérez-Orozco both denounce the fact that oppression is downplayed by making the majorities seem a minority and vice versa, highlighting the exception as normal and *othering* the rest (Brons, 2015). At this point I deem it important

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5This acronym refers to *blanco, burgués, varón, adulto, heterosexual* (white, bourgeois, male, adult, heterosexual). In Spanish language it is easy to remember since—without the 'h' at the end—it coincides with the acronym of a financial institution called BBVA.

to claim that being part of this group does not automatically mean being personally guilty of oppression of all the others. However, like any of the privileges separately, all of them combined necessitate a process of self-awareness of before being able to see that what one considers normal. This links to Grosfuguel's (2011) concept of *point zero*, which refers to the privileged position of Eurocentric thinking resulting from the adherence to a viewpoint that pretends to be an abstract universal. The denial of the cultural and structural inequalities resulting from this privileged epistemological position further entrenches these inequalities.

By recognizing this, the feminist struggle is reoriented towards the aim of transforming the system of oppression in itself. According to radical feminist positions, those who set themselves the goal of attaining equality within an unjust system never reach the root of the problem and hence not be able to really achieve equality. The three kinds of violence, direct, structural and cultural violence have different paces to change. Johan Galtung (1990) made use of an earthquake metaphor in which the shaking of the earth represents direct violence and lasts a few seconds, the movement of tectonic plates which is a process over decades, even centuries and the fault lines of tectonic plates which can also be altered over much longer periods of time. The point is that all are related and none of them is eternal or static, which gives reasons for hope.

Therefore, anyone who claims that feminism has achieved its goal is met with skepticism by more critical feminists. So-called premature burials (Hawkesworth, 2004) of the feminist movement can be seen as expressions of an enduring patriarchal dominance. Furthermore, as Paola Melchiori (2012) maintains, in those areas in which feminism seems to have grown outdated, fully incorporated or perfected there is a necessity for *watchdog feminism*, a critical stance to be able to detect the devious ways in which patriarchy can continue to dominate. Hereby I do not mean to argue that feminism

can never uproot patriarchy. Although patriarchy is old and powerful, it is also contingent and thus changeable.

Nevertheless, while they say that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, I contend that with patriarchy, which precedes capitalism, it is even harder to imagine its end. This is precisely because it is hard to pinpoint and reveal just how much it has permeated society and the collective consciousness.

In several sections of this work, I mention the concept of patriarchy, which I generally understand as institutionalized sexism and in line with bell hooks (2000) definition. However, patriarchy is not a homogenous form of domination and thus not to be understood in the singular. Just like different feminisms exist, there are also multiple expressions of patriarchy across history and cultures. Moreover, as hooks herself asserts, patriarchy functions in a system of multiple oppressions, which she explicitly calls *white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,* which I comment upon in the subsequent section.

The term patriarchy as an alone standing concept has been widely criticized for being portrayed as a trans-cultural phenomenon where "women were everywhere oppressed by men in more or less the same ways" (Acker, 1989: 235). A usage of this term without contextualization is regarded as problematic because it yields a monolithic, ahistorical and simplistic interpretation (Kandiyoti, 1988, Patil, 2013).

My use of the term is linked to the reference to specific sources from second wave white feminist and ecofeminist perspectives, which have contributed to the theoretical underpinnings of degrowth or have the potential of doing so.

I.4.2.3 Intersectionality
In the second wave of feminism, there was a point at which it was no longer acceptable to claim that women all shared one common experience and were united sisters. Conflicting ideas abounded on all kinds of issues. There were critiques from feminists that

simultaneously were identified by more categories of being marginalized, such as race, class and sexuality.

As these appraisals surfaced, it became evident that not all feminists felt represented by a movement that was supposed to include them. Thus, as different dimensions and experiences of feminism coincided, and collided, it became clear that the challenges and grievances that feminists experienced were not homogeneous or limited to womanhood.

Hence, it seems logical that feminism could no longer just be about a woman's movement. It further needed to consider intersections of feminism with other categories of marginalization or *othering*. Consequently, the insight which I would like to incorporate into my notion of feminism is that it concerns everybody, in the sense that its critical lens, also called *purple glasses,* allow feminism to hear and include the voices of marginalized and oppressed people of all kinds.

This is also the point at which the feminist struggle intersects with the idea of transforming the system of economic inequality. The difference between a rich and poor woman is a huge one. Of course, I do not mean that capitalism only oppresses women, but the fact that it does needs to be looked at in combination with the operations of patriarchy. In fact, the growth paradigm marginalizes and oppresses a majority and benefits a minority, usually white Western males, which makes it important for the feminist agenda. bell hooks (1984) has written a compelling statement to summarize this idea:

> Feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates the Western culture on various levels—sex, race, class to name a few—and a commitment to reorganizing society…so that self-development of people can take a precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desire. (hooks, 1984)

In order to scrutinize the combination of struggles that one can face, not only for being a woman in a patriarchal world, but also for many other things, the concept of intersectionality was launched and has been used ever since in many feminist analyses (Lutz et al., 2016). The idea of intersectionality conceptualizes the interactions between categories of gender, race and other aspects of identity in the lives of individuals, in social practices, institutional arrangements, as well as cultural ideologies. It also helps to analyze the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power relations.

The concept was originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and was proposed to address the fact that the experiences and efforts of women of color were left out by both, feminist and anti-racist discourses. Crenshaw argued that theorists should consider both gender and race, and to demonstrate how these categories interrelated forming the multiple dimensions of Black women's life experiences.

While the idea that different categories of oppression could overlap and interact with each other was already present, Crenshaw hit the nail on the head with her concept. It attracted feminist academics from different disciplines, including philosophy, social sciences, humanities, economy and law. Moreover theoretical viewpoints like phenomenology, structuralist sociology, psychoanalysis and deconstructionism, as well as political directions such as feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism, queer studies, disability studies engaged with it.

Today, women's studies programs that merely focus on gender would be unthinkable. Anthologies and other textbooks and in this subject area can no longer neglect diversity among women's experiences, although there are diverging opinions on the best manner to approach these issues. The impact of intersectional thinking becomes obvious in the field of knowledge creation when considering that women's studies professors ask their students to rethink their feminist research topics while being aware of

multiple differences among women. Feminist journals are likely to reject articles that have not given sufficient consideration to issues of race, class and heteronormativity, together with gender. Consequently, in gender studies, any academic who neglects these aspects risks their work being seen as politically irrelevant, theoretically misguided or merely fantastical (Gopaldas et al., 2009).

In this context, it once becomes crucial to pay attention to the following: When speaking of women's experiences there seems to be a presumption of the category of womanhood. However, as I elucidate later, womanhood is not a fixed entity. The same applies to the category of manhood, of course.

There is nothing clear or exact about what makes a woman a woman and a man a man. Since Judith Butler's work *Gender Trouble* (1990) not only gender but also biological sex needs to be seen as social constructs. In her words: "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all." (Butler, 1990: 189).

Hence, speaking about women is already an act of normalization of a category that for transgender people, gender fluid people, intersex people and many others, is not representative. Feminism does not only concern women but everyone: also men and people who do not identify within the binary construct of gender opposites are affected by patriarchy and can thus be feminists (hooks, 2000).

When referring to women's studies or women's movements it is ironic or slightly misleading in the same way that when one refers to mankind when one signifies humankind. Therefore, speaking about women's studies or women's movements if one actually refers to feminist studies or feminism is reductionist in a similar way in which

saying mankind when one actually refers to humankind. Nevertheless, I will continue to use the concept *woman* in strategic ways, since it is still a category that functions politically. This positioning derives from Gayatri Spivak's (2010) *strategic essentialism,* which heterogeneous groups adopt as a political tactic to bring forward a group identity as they seek to achieve certain goals, visibility and emancipation.

In light of this, considering the parallels between gender and racial discrimination is helpful to better understand oppressions and to seek paths for social emancipation by means of increasing the visibility of these oppressions. While the human race is in fact one, and race is constructed rather than biologically founded, this does not mean that racism has ceased to exist. In fact, since 2020 the visibility of racism has increased with the resurging of the Black Lives Matter movement due to the killing of a black man named George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis (Dave et al., 2020). This sparked protest and ignited debates around the prevalence of racism in the USA and world-wide.

Racism is a relevant category since it reflects the reality of existing racist ideology. Moreover, it is manifested in laws, real estate, voting rights, financial restrictions and so forth, which have been permeated by racism, making it spread to all facets of society in many forms.

As Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor spells out in her work from *#BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (2016), there has been a continuity in structural racism, which has shifted in its expression over time. Whereas overt racism through direct insults and actions that resemble Nazi regime discourses continue to exist, Taylor reminds the reader that more subtle, but persistent ideas based on theories like culture of poverty by Oscar Lewis (Lewis, 1966) still exert their influence in politics and society. This way attention is shifted away from structural problems and towards psychological, value-based aspects of Black people, and hereby once again turn towards blaming the victims for their

ongoing suffering. Meanwhile, post-racial and color-blind myths continue to role alongside white supremacy[6] and white fragility[7], making a transformation of the violence associated with racism very difficult.   Hence, the binary gender category of woman and the category of race are thus socially constructed but they are also real and require attention separately and as intersecting aspects of oppression and emancipation.

Referring to intersectionality, feminist scholar Ann Phoenix wrote "no concept is perfect and none can ever accomplish the understanding and explanation of all that needs to be understood and explained within the field of women's studies" (Davis, 2008: 70). However, it is precisely because intersectionality is so imperfect open-ended and ambiguous that it has been very productive for contemporary feminist research. Its absence of a clear-cut definition or concrete parameters has allowed it to be explored in nearly any context of inquiry (Lutz et al., 2016). The infinite regress embedded into the term makes it vague, but also opens opportunities for all kinds of constellations of intersecting lines of difference to be discovered. Every new intersection helps previously hidden exclusions to be discovered, which makes it a highly useful feminist tool.

The application of intersectionality as a tool implies *asking (an)other question*, to expose the linkages between complementary categories of oppression. The broader aim is to investigate the consequences of power relations, and to decide when another question is necessary or when it is time to halt. It also questions the underlying motives. Intersectionality creates countless opportunities for questioning one's own blind spots and changing these into analytic categories for a more critical analysis. Hence, intersectionality due to its vagueness and intrinsic open-endedness has begun a process of

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[6]the dominant idea that whiteness is superior, held also by People of Color (hooks, 2013)
[7]the disbelieving defensiveness of white people when their ideas on race and racism are questioned (DiAngelo, 2018)

discovery that not only is potentially everlasting, but it can also yield new and more wide-ranging critical insights.

What I consider the most interesting aspect of this concept is that it can be applied as a transformative tool, revealing that the care of feminism can be extended into other aspects of being human beyond gender. It allows for an exploration and fruitful debate and opens doors for reflection beyond known limits.

My usage of the concept of intersectionality reflects my intention to critically engage with overlapping categories of oppression, which represents a first small step in the direction of intersectional thinking. The following paragraphs seek to expose ways in which intersectionality has further developed and expanded as a field. Sumi Cho, Kimberlé and Leslie Crenshaw and McCall (2013) offer a an overall evaluation of the ways in which the concept intersectionality has been utilized since its inception in the late 1980s. They identify three different levels of engagement with intersectionality, among which they seek a potential fusion.

The first level includes applications of an intersectional framework or investigations of intersectional dynamics. This includes intersectional analysis across a wide range of research and teaching projects. In this category are activities that utilize or adapt intersectionality in a variety of context-specific investigations.

The second level includes discursive debates about the scope and content of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological paradigm. Without being limited to it, this approach includes reflections about how intersectionality has been developed, adopted, and adapted in the disciplines. It addresses what intersectionality includes, excludes or enables and whether intersectionality's contextual manifestations call either for further development or for its abandonment.

The third level deals with political interventions employing an intersectional lens. The latter concerns the trans-disciplinary aspect of intersectionality and with this, the acknowledgement of praxis as a key site of intersectional critique and intervention. These concerns reflect the normative and political dimensions of intersectionality and embody a motivation to go beyond mere comprehension of intersectional dynamics in order to transform them.

The authors also outline two tendencies, which they name centrifugal and centripetal processes, through which intersectionality is, or can potentially be, expressed across and within disciplines and across and within political spaces. Cho and colleagues explain that their principal objective hereby is to show the potential for achieving greater theoretical, methodological, substantive and political literacy without requiring greater unity across the diversifying fields that make up the study of intersectionality.

The centrifugal process, although essential for the development of intersectional projects within different fields, the ways that analytic practices rationalize certain relations are sometimes left opaque. Moreover, the utilization of intersectionality within other fields has at times led to the erasures to which intersectionality draws attention to.

The centripetal process on the other hand, has been a more radical one. Those aligned with this tendency are often situated at the margins of their disciplines and are rather unconvinced about the possibility of integrating mainstream methods and theories into their intersectional research. Here, often scholars who situate their work against the canon of knowledge production are themselves subject to the institutional dynamics they are questioning.

The three levels of engagement with intersectionality and the two contrasting tendencies outlined in this article show that intersectionality has gained a lot of depth and scope. Whereas it never intended to represent or be inserted into a "full-fledged grand

theory or standardized methodology" (789), intersectionality is much more than a tool to *ask another question*. The article claims that, as many authors have rightly put, since the beginning intersectionality has been a nodal point rather than a closed system. It has provided a space for open-ended investigations of the overlapping and conflicting interplay of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation and other inequalities. Such description seems much more apt than anyone framing it categorically, in terms of space, time or superficially preoccupied with difference.

Numerous clues are shared in this article as to what kind of engagement could move the field of intersectionality forward. An important clarification is that the concept of intersectionality is an "analytic sensibility" (795).This implies that those who engage with the concept ought to reflect upon issues of sameness and difference in relation to the power as an object of study and applied to their own situatedness. The authors assert that:

> the future of intersectionality studies will thus, we argue, be dependent on the rigor with which scholars harness the most effective tools of their trade to illuminate how intersecting axes of power and inequality operate to our collective and individual disadvantage and how these very tools, these ways of knowing, may also constitute structures of knowledge production that can themselves be the object of intersectional critique (795).

In sum, intersectionality is an analytic sensitivity that allows for an exploration and reflection of the ways in which difference and power relations are linked to each other across diverse contexts, beyond a superficial juggling with categories. The term itself does not provide fixed answers, although some pointers exist regarding the processes through which differences are constituted.

In this context, the feminist author and speaker bell hooks utilizes the complex phrase *imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy* in her written work and speeches (hooks, 2013). She claims that is useful precisely because it does not put the systems of oppression in a hierarchical order but instead offers us a way to think about the

interlocking systems that "work together to uphold and maintain cultures of domination" (4).

The complexity of this phrase signals the existence of a similarly complex structure of interwoven oppressions, where no simpler term can summarize all aspects, and where each needs to be acknowledged in relation to the rest. To me, it is a provocation to further reflection and the study of intersectionality, even though she hardly uses this term explicitly. Nevertheless, *imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy* can be seen as an engagement with this idea, whereby the intersection includes all levels of oppression at once.

While the theoretical analysis that hooks elaborates on is sophisticated, she accuses the difficulty of putting inclusive feminist theory into practice in everyday life. She declares:

> All the theories of border crossing, of finding a way to "get a bit of the other," did not fundamentally change the nature of dominator culture. Our theory was far more progressive and inclusive in its vision than our everyday life practice. In our everyday lives all of us confront barriers to communication—divisive hierarchies that make joining together difficult, if not impossible. Many of us found that it was easier to name the problem and to deconstruct it, and yet it was hard to create theories that would help us build community, help us border cross with the intention of truly remaining connected in a space of difference long enough to be transformed.(hooks, 2013: 2)

Intersectionality allows for an exploration and fruitful debate and opens doors for reflection beyond known limits. Intersectionality does not provide answers in terms of the way different intersecting categories such as race, class and gender interact. This task is left to open consideration for the feminist researcher. Departing from this intellectual tool of widening our scope of analysis, I have come to the last point that I deem relevant for a feminism that can resonate with degrowth.

I.4.2.4 Gender and Ecology

Following the intersectional pull to ask another question and include and transcend the gender category to consider other human *others* who are oppressed in some way or another, is not such a huge leap away from ecofeminism. To me, it becomes apparent that once feminism extends toward other oppressed humans it can also include a concern and active preoccupation with ecology. Ecology is a term I prefer to use over environment because the latter is anthropocentric, while the former denotes the consciousness of a greater whole, a system of life. It would in theory be sufficient to care for the human 'environment' as it is crucial in terms of representing the human habitat, the subsistence of which is a necessary condition for human survival. However, ecology also implies a respect for all the non-human species on the planet who have no voice to represent themselves. Why I tend to consider holistic terms to be more apt is a question I would like to address further below. In fact, I go deeper into specific viewpoints and a more comprehensive account of ecofeminist theory in Chapter 2.For now, it is sufficient to understand that nature deserves space in feminist thought because all of humanity could not live without nature and hence human domination of nature should also concern feminists.

To remind the reader of what the effects of ecological oppression may be there are currently many critical phenomena. It suffices to observe the increase of environmental catastrophes we are facing like the sixth mass extinction and the global COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, working towards a different treatment of the ecological systems we are embedded in is a matter of survival not just of equality. As I have indicated in previous chapters, the dominant growth paradigm leads to environmental havoc, which makes it an essential task to critically inspect and seek to transform this paradigm. This means that feminism need not only consider the personal as political, but

also the political as personal—the inverted version has been taken up as a theme by the degrowth conference in Leipzig in 2014 (Wichterich, 2014).

CHAPTER 1—Sustainable Economic Degrowth

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.—Margaret Mead

For at the end of the day, prosperity goes beyond material pleasures.—Tim Jackson (2009)

1.1. Degrowth in Context

This chapter is dedicated to the topic of degrowth and guided by the following questions: What is degrowth and how does it respond to global interlocking crises? In the elaboration of my arguments, I follow peace scholar John Paul Lederach's proposal (2005) to create demystified theories that provide explanations for common, yet complex problems. The goal is to reveal the causal factors of such a problem and highlight their potential connection to desired change.

The purpose of putting theory at the service of practical social problems can be observed in other thinkers like Paolo Freire. Freire is a Brazilian philosopher of education who in turn is influenced by Marxist theory, in particular by Antonio Gramsci (Diaz, 2020). Freire worked to help people free themselves from oppressive relations and imposed values both through his philosophy and his practice of critical pedagogy. He sought to legitimize the experiences and knowledge of his students so that they could become what he called *organic intellectuals,* people able to contribute to the solutions of their community's issues better than any expert who claims to know problems merely at an academic level.

In this chapter I intend to expose the heterogeneous nature of degrowth, which is an action-based science that transcends the breach between theory and practice while combining various fields and strategies. I distinguish three main theoretical strands: bioeconomics strand, social strand and the strand of the imaginary. These respond to four

kinds of global interlocking crises (the economic, ecological, social crisis and crisis of the social imaginary).

I first write on how degrowth can be seen in a broader context of similar movements and discourses that seek radical alternatives to the hegemonic system. Subsequently, I include some of the most relevant theoretical contributions that have fed these movements. Next, I introduce degrowth as a response to global interlocking crises at the economic, social and environmental levels. My contention is that degrowth has a convincing theoretical foundation as it addresses these crises at the root of the problem and that it is worth considering as a movement for systemic change towards more sustainable livelihoods on Earth. In the final section I elaborate on degrowth strengths and limitations.

1.1.1 Degrowth and Plural Alternatives

My personal experience with degrowth inspired me to engage in more in-depth research on this topic. As I got to know the movement better, I realized that I could easily identify with degrowth, due to a number of reasons, in which I elaborate on in the last section of this chapter, on degrowth strengths. These include that degrowth addresses the crises at the root of the problem and that supporters seek to contribute to change from within the system they are part of. In other words, from a peace perspective, degrowth is a promising movement to address the structural and cultural violence underlying an entrenched economic and social system.

However, it is important to note that degrowth is not the only alternative movement to a growth-based economy and only one of a myriad of grassroots responses to the interlocking crises mentioned in Chapter 1. In this section I introduce three manners of understanding degrowth within different broader contexts: the Pluriverse, the Social and Solidarity Economy and Great Transition discourses.

1.1.1.1 Pluriverse

The collaborative work, *Pluriverse: a Post-development Dictionary* published in 2019, compiles a number of *people's transformative initiatives*. These respond to global crises in a localized way and tend to be more radical by addressing the problem of development at its root. They differ from reformist solutions that can easily cover up, yet, another version of development, meaning the business as usual that upholds the current system. As explained in the book, Pluriverse is a Zapatista concept that expresses the existence of multiple realities within one.

In this book, which also addresses *Development and its Crises: Global Experiences* (3)*,* and *Universalizing the Earth: Reformist Solutions* (25), the bulk of the entries are transformative initiatives that "will question economic growth, productivism, the rhetoric of progress, instrumental rationality, markets, universality, anthropocentrism, and sexism" (xxxix). Their ethic has values based on a relational logic of interconnection—"a world where everything is connected to everything else" (xxix).

In this dictionary, the reader can find a two-page-long introduction to *Buen Vivir*, the Transition Movement, Conviviality, Environmental Justice, among over eighty entries. Hence, while degrowth has been considered an umbrella term for diverse political strategies that contribute to the heterogeneous social movement of degrowth (Demaria et al., 2013), it can be placed in a larger context among a myriad of related diverse critical perspectives. The vast diversity of the Pluriverse dictionary alternatives and their distinction from reformist solutions is striking, each of which merit further exploration but exceed the framework of this thesis.

However, what is remarkable from a peace studies perspective is that one of the entries in the Pluriverse is written on pacifism, authored by Marco Deriu (265). It traces a historical link between peace and development, whereby the latter was seen as a

precondition for the former. In light of this, in 1967, Pope Paul VI said in a famous slogan, *Development is the new name for Peace*. Deriu denounces this slogan. He alleges that there is an intimate connection between the current unfolding of capitalist development and violence at a global level, related to military extractivism, military use of technology and the large-scale financial support of military products and materials provided by banks.

Deriu posits that degrowth should be the substitute of development and thus the new name of peace because even if it is not a sufficient guarantee, in the developed countries it is a necessary condition. The author furthermore claims that for the pacifist movement, it is not sufficient to criticize military action without forming a powerful, organized opposition to the economic and political system which demands military operations to defend the basic economic interests of so-called developed countries.

The Pluriverse post-development dictionary entry on pacifism hence claims that development promotes war and violence, whereas peace necessitates degrowth. In an attempt to move beyond the negative definition of peace as the absence of war, the entry forwards the need to engage in mobilization and nonviolent struggle against injustices and for democracy, equity, environmental sustainability in relations among people, countries, genders and generations. However, how pacifism might contribute to this purpose remains untold. This hints untapped potential that a broader notion of pacifism and peace theory and practice still have to contribute to a Pluriverse of people's alternatives. In this context, the dimensions of inner individual peace and the collective notions of cultures of peace, could help to shed light upon these processes.

1.1.1.2 Social and Solidarity Economy

Degrowth can be broadly seen sharing ground for convergence with the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE). SSE seeks to challenge mainstream economics and

development discourse by proposing organizations to focus on cooperation, democratic community ownership, consensual decision making and their embeddedness in social and ecological contexts (Rossel et al., 2015).

SSE gained visibility in the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, an annual meeting where civil society organizations from Indigenous, peasant, working class and other groups gathered as a counter point to the World Economic Forum, to foster counter-hegemonic globalization (Coraggio, 2015).

According to Colombian anthropologist post-development scholar Arturo Escobar (2015) SSE is a natural partner for degrowth since it shifts capitalism away from the center of the economy, deconstructing it and seeking to spell out a plural economy. SSE is built upon diverse forms of popular economy among communities, including cooperative associational, mutualistic, autarkic, reciprocal, redistributive, non-capitalist and alternative capitalist forms.

It reconceptualizes productivity and efficiency in holistic manners and embodies a radical critique of growth from this perspective. This perspective is inspired by economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi's work on the Great Transformation (1944), where he proposes to re-embed the economy in society by recreating economic systems founded on communal dynamics and needs.

The two components of SSE, social economy and solidarity economy have been used interchangeably, resulting in an overlapping of the two terms (Zaimakis, 2018). Together used among others by International Labour Organization (2020) and the United Nations, which established an Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (2020).

The term *solidarity* is more closely connected to the lexical repertoire of activists and the political imperative of grassroots collectives (Zaimakis, 2018). The solidarity

economy movement emerged in the 1980s in Latin America. Peruvian sociologist and political theorist Aníbal Quijano, distinguished between *economía solidaria* (solidarity economy) a common project and consciousness of all its participants, as opposed to *economías populares* (popular economies), which lack a common consciousness but are based on reciprocity, communitarian social organization and democratic control of authority (Segato, 2014).

Jean Louis Laville (2014) explains how the popular economy is the organization of work relations and income distribution according to communal and familial ownership. In the nineteenth century in Latin America, the patrician class called this economy *barbaric,* since they found it archaic and primitive. The evolutionism of this epoch permitted colonial elites to impose an eradicate this kind of economy to favor the project of industrial modernization.

This kind of economy was rediscovered based on works about informal economies. From a liberal perspective these large-scale realities were initially termed *barefoot capitalism*, the functional flipside of a formal economy. The character of this type of types of economy was updated as Latin American scholars recognized the complexity of different co-functioning principles ranging from illegal economies, to secret solidarities, where subsistence workers identify with the volition to preserve life, in a network of familial relations (Laville, 2004).

From this shift emerges the solidarity economy in South America as a project that dignifies the popular activities sustained by democratic solidarity. The strategy of the solidarity economy can also be found in the notion of *buen vivir* (good living) which relies on the incitement of acts of egalitarian reciprocity within popular economy.

However, the solidarity economy is not only used in Latin America. As the German environmentalist and scholar Christine Bauhardt (2014) describes, "the solidarity

economy draws on various projects and initiatives that mainly focus on the everyday practices of alternative ways of living, producing, and consuming" (62). She highlights the practical orientation of this concept to explain a lack of theoretical analyses. Daily life expressions of solidarity economies include cooperative housing and urban gardening projects, barter clubs, self-governed businesses, ecovillages and transition town projects. Despite a lack of a clear definition, Bauhardt purports the generalized vision that the idea of a solidarity economy is essentially based on the conviction that the economy should serve human beings, rather than the other way around.

In their edited book *Social and Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet*, Jenna Allard and Carl Davidson (Allard and Davidson, 2008) quote Brazilian educator and researcher for solidarity economy, Marcos Arruda, who describes solidarity economy as recognizing that humans, beyond being consumers and producers, are "co-owners of material wealth, co-users of natural resources, and co-responsible for the conservation of Nature" (4). In light of the disenfranchisement of the many and the concentration of wealth among the few, Solidarity Economy strives for creating and sharing sufficient material wealth among all, to maintain sustainable conditions for the self-managed development of each and every member of societies, the people and the planet.

Allard and Davidson also refer to the definition of solidarity economy as provided by the organization Alliance 21:

> Solidarity Economy designates all production, distribution and consumption activities that contribute to the democratization of the economy based on citizen commitments, both at a local and global level. It is carried out in various forms in all continents. It covers different forms of organization that the population uses to create its own means of work to have access to qualitative goods and services in a dynamics of reciprocity and solidarity which links individual interests to the collective interest. In this sense solidarity economy is not a sector of the economy but an overall approach that includes initiatives in most sectors of the economy. (6)

The social economy concept has been more present in the realm of regulated economy with social principles, such as is common in the French realm, known as *économie sociale* (social economy). This concept was coined in France in the nineteenth century, as Charles Dunoyer published a treaty about it and taught a course in Leuven, and was integrated into French law at the turn of the twentieth century (Benkemoune, 2009).

In the Spanish context the *economía social* (social economy) has been defined by law since 2011 (5/2011) as a set of economic and corporate activities that are carried out by entities, which conform with the following principles as they pursue the general economic and/or social interest (Confederación Empresarial Española de la Economía Social, 2020: 1)

- the primacy of people and social causes over capital which is manifested in an autonomous and transparent management which is democratic and participative, leads to prioritizing decision making based on the social cause as well as persons and their contributions of labor and services to the entity rather than based on their social capital contributions
- the implementation of obtained results based on the contributed labor and service or activity that is carried out by associates or their members, and if applicable, for the social cause of the entity
- the promotion of internal and social solidarity which favors the commitment with local development, equality of opportunities among genders, social cohesion, the insertion of people at risk of being socially excluded, generating valuable (*de calidad*) stable labor, personal life, family life, work life and sustainability
- independence from other public authorities[8]

The Spanish Labor Union summarizes the prerequisites for an organization to be formally recognized as part of the social economy (Jiménez, 2011). They are private entities that are formally organized with their own legal status, with autonomy for decision making, liberty to adhere, a distribution of benefits that is not tied to the amount of capital contributed, that carry out economic activity and are democratically organized.

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[8] author's translation

1.1.2.3 Transition Discourses

Degrowth can also be placed in the context of a wider set of movements that envision a *great transition,* an idea that has been called different names by diverse thinkers. In the perspective of transition theorists, humanity is in a moment of large-scale profound change which is parallel to the agricultural revolution several thousands of years ago and the industrial revolution several hundreds of years ago (Escobar, 2015). The limits of the Earth are showing humanity that business as usual will lead to collapse. Hence, a transition is necessary.

The *Great Transition Initiative* (GTI) is a network of scholars and written contributions, which differentiates three worldviews or mindsets—evolutionary, catastrophic and transformational—alongside their corresponding global scenarios: conventional worlds, barbarization and the great transition. Only the third scenario promises durable solutions to the sustainability problem and it asks for fundamental shifts in values and new socio-economic and institutional arrangements.

Escobar (2015) lists initiatives that promote transition discourses, under different headings and with different foci. These include the Transition Town Initiative (UK), the Great Turning (Joanna Macy), the Great Work or transition to an Ecozoic era (Thomas Berry), the transition from an age of Enlightenment to one of Sustainment (Tony Fry), Enlivenment (Andreas Weber) and the shift from the Age of Separation (of individuals from community and of humans from the rest of the living world) to an Age of Reunion (Charles Eisenstein). In the Global South, post-development and alternatives to development are among transition discourses alongside the so-called crisis of the Western civilizational model, *buen vivir,* the rights of nature, communal logics and transitions to post-extractivism.

Escobar distinguishes between transition discourses that are endorsed by the Global North and those of the Global South. He denounces that these rarely engage with each other although a dialog among them would be mutually enriching.

I reckon that this has begun to change in the past few years with regards to degrowth, since degrowth literature from Global South perspectives is increasing (Escobar, 2015). What most transition discourses have in common according to Escobar is:

> the contention that we need to step out of existing institutional and epistemic boundaries if we truly want to envision the worlds and practices capable of bringing about the significant transformations seen as needed. Transition discourses take as their point of departure the notion that the contemporary ecological and social crises are inseparable from the model of social life that has become dominant over the past few centuries. There are many ways to refer to this model: industrialism, capitalism, modernity, (neo)liberalism, anthropocentrism, rationalism, patriarchalism, secularism, or even Judeo-Christian civilization. (452)

According to Escobar, degrowth is among the most prominent transition discourses in the Global North, besides global commoning and the commons, Transition initiatives (which include the Transition Town movement), debates around the Anthropocene, inter-religious dialogs and some UN processes, in particularly in the Stakeholders' Forum.

In sum, transition discourses propose a deep cultural, economic and political transformation at the institutional and practical level. They expose the damaging effects of hegemonic orders of social life including conceptions of the individual, the market, capitalism, consumption, separation from nature and so forth. They emphasize the interdependence of all beings, calling out the need for humans to reconnect with the nonhuman world. These discourses tend to advocate the re-localization of food and energy and proposing diverse economies with a strong communal basis. Hence, like the Pluriverse dictionary, transition discourses support a plural world rather than one universal solution.

1.1.2. Historical Roots of Degrowth Thinking

It has been argued that the theory of degrowth originates from mainly three different areas: post-development theory, feminist theory and ecological economics (Demaria et al., 2020) These three theoretical fields partially overlap. For instance, there is a feminist strand of ecological economics that has made significant contributions to degrowth theory (Perkins, 2010, Perkins, 2009, Perkins, 2007, Spencer et al., 2018). The theoretical field of post-development includes perspectives from the Global South and the Global North, which commonly share a critical stance toward development and reflect a diverse range of views depending on their positions in relation to the global dominant economic system (Escobar, 2015).

Moreover, there are several other disciplines that these three mentioned disciplines draw from, for instance, the second law of thermodynamics in the science of physics is crucial to the argumentation of ecological economics. Also, unsurprisingly, as degrowth touches upon economic criticism, it unavoidably refers to the earliest criticisms of capitalism, with the main referents being Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their seminal works—the *Communist Manifesto* first published in 1948 and Karl Marx's *Capital* from 1867 (Tucker, 1978). The subsequent works of Marxist scholars such as Terry Eagleton (2018) and David Harvey (Harvey, 2014), have continued to argue along the same lines and is still relevant as we face global interlocking crises in 2021.

1.1.2.1 Marxist Capitalist Critique

There are a few concepts from Marx's criticisms of capitalism which are suitable for degrowth scholarship. In the following paragraphs I highlight some of the aspects of the capitalist critique that stem from Marxist analysis.

The first is the notion of the primitive accumulation in relation to violence, which made the capitalist system possible in the first place (Harvey, 2014: 57) This refers to the

historical period between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, in which common lands were enclosed, farmers were expelled and the lands they used sold to become private property. Capitalists were able to exploit former commoners who were now so-called 'free' wage laborers, forced to be exploited to avoid being enslaved. Money was initially backed by gold and silver, precious raw materials that were stolen from the Americas.

Historian Silvia Federici (2004) makes a crucial addition to the account of the violence present in this primitive accumulation. She shows how a series of other processes that also contributed to the advent of capitalist history in relation to the oppression of women: from witch burning to the positioning of females into the domestic sphere and unpaid care work, in order to ensure the reproduction of the labor force. Following a lineage of feminist Marxist scholars, Federici highlights a series of concepts that she uses from Marxism but deviates and criticizes in other ways.

Another concept that stems from Marxist theory is alienation (Harvey, 2014). The verb *to* alienate has a number of different meanings in determined contexts. Legally it refers to the transference of a property right to someone else. As a social relation, it refers to the way in which affections, loyalties and trust can be transferred or stolen away from a person, an institution or a cause to another. The loss of trust in the law, banks and the political system can be increasingly damaging to the social fabric.

Psychologically, alienation can refer to a passive state of isolation and estrangement from valued connectivity. The experience of this alienation is a feeling of sorrow or grief at some indefinable loss that cannot be regained. In an active form, the psychological understanding of alienation can be manifested as anger and hostile behavior caused by a feeling of oppression, deprivation or dispossession, without a clear

or rational target, against the world as a whole. This may arise due to a lack of life chances or the discovery that the quest for freedom ended up in domination.

Harvey (2014) describes a typical way in which society contributes to alienation as follows:

> The worker legally alienates the use of his or her labor power for a stated period of time to the capitalist in return for a wage. During this time the capitalist demands the loyalty and attention of the worker and the worker is asked to trust that capitalism is the best system to generate wealth and well-being for all. yet the worker is estranged from his or her product as well as from other workers, from nature and all other aspects of social life during the time of the labor contract and usually beyond (given the exhausting nature of the work). (267-268)

The loss of a commodity's value or usage, the sensual relation to nature, the social value of labor and the democratic process of collective decision making gets lost between conflicting rationalities within power relations. Social wealth disappears as private profit, Producers of value are alienated from the value they produce. Class formation creates an ineradicable gulf between people. The whole is invisible due to fragmentation. While social equality and social justice become a bourgeois virtue, resentment mounts up as accumulation by dispossession rises, for instance, through housing displacements and foreclosures.

In light of this, a pertinent idea already present in Marxist theory, and perhaps less known than others, is the consciousness that human life is inextricably linked with all life on Earth and that seeing these as separate is part of the problem of alienation. The notion of the metabolic rift that Marx referred to in his writings is a precursor of an ecological critique linked to the Marxist theory on capitalism. The metabolic rift refers to an alteration in the relation between humans and the rest of nature, which came along with class society.

In 1844 Marx argued that humans live from nature, claiming that nature is our body, and we ought to maintain a continuing dialog with it if we are not to perish. For

Marx, to claim that humanity's physical and mental life is connected to nature means that nature is linked to itself because humans are part of nature (Foster, 1999).

The fact that Marx had such a clear vision of the interconnectedness of all things is surprising since Marx is not particularly known for his contributions to environmental thinking. In the context of degrowth research the ecological aspect of Marxist thought deserves more attention.

1.1.2.2 Karl Polanyi's Fictitious Commodities

The economic anthropologist Karl Polanyi is a writer who could be seen as a Marxist, who in certain aspects significantly deviates from Marx's ideas by proposing alternative notions. His seminal work *The Great Transformation* is a book written in the 1940s and has been an inspiration for many thinkers who linked social and ecological concerns. *The Great Transformation* refers to the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the market as a regulating organism in societal relations, prior to which people based their economies on reciprocity and redistribution across their personal and communal relations.

Polanyi argues that the advent of industrial capitalism represents a social revolution of its own, creating a new civilization with problems and a character of its own. He claims that before the market arose as an ordering principle for society, norms in the realms of politics, religion and society prevailed, which would exclude land, labor and money from commodification. Instead, these were embedded in society and subject to considerations at the moral, religious and community levels. Polanyi claims that "to allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment, indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolition of society" (Harvey, 2010: 265).

This theory makes Polanyi a critic of classical economic thought as he was among the first to denounce the implications of disembedding the economic from the political realm of society, altering humankind's economic relations and mentality.

1.1.2.3 Ivan Illich's Conviviality

Ivan Illich is often cited among pioneering degrowth thinkers, since he coined the idea of *conviviality*(1973), which stands in opposition to the command of industrial productivity. Conviviality can be considered a goal of a degrowth society and means something like autonomous and creative interaction among persons and of persons with their environment, counter to the conditioned response to the demands made by others and by a man-made environment. It can be seen as individual freedom expressed as personal interdependence and as an ethical value. The needs of society's members cannot be satisfied by industrial productivity if conviviality is not given.

In his book, *Tools for Conviviality* (1973), Illich criticizes the institutionalization of specialized knowledge and the elitist of dominant technocratic actors in modern society. His claim is that basic and fundamental human activities have been monopolized by 'elite professional groups', that deprive Indigenous people of their vernacular tools and the skills and know-how they depend on to survive. Illich critiques the dependence of this situation, bewailing the transformation of humans into obsolete objects together with the emergence of what he calls a modernized poverty.

A way in which his work is crucial to degrowth is that Illich condemns the harmful obsession of modern humans with growth, which impedes a proper perception of the impacts of the growth imperative on humans and the planet. Illich (1973) portrays growth as an addiction:

> Growth has become addictive. Like heroin addiction, the habit distorts basic value judgments. Addicts of any kind are willing to pay increasing amounts for declining satisfactions. They have become tolerant to escalating marginal

disutility. They are blind to deeper frustration because they are absorbed in playing for always mounting stakes. (98)

At the heart of Illich's proposal (1973) is a call to create and implement technologies which promote and sustain the creative faculties of autonomous individuals living in communities of authentic deliberation and debate. Such convivial tools, would foster a society where technology is truly at the service of humans. In his words, "Such a society in which modern technologies serve politically interrelated individuals rather than managers, I will call convivial."(12)

Tools, both convivial and unconvivial are understood in a broad sense, including institutions and ideas. They are free or cheap, creative and can be used by anybody with a minimum of special training. Hence, they are not easily controlled by third parties and people can make with them what they wish. Among them there is the alphabet.

Unconvivial tools include cars. Cars are machines that require highways, and highways seem to be public utilities, but they are in fact discriminatory devices because they crowd out others. Ultimately, the idea of conviviality refers to living together. In sum, Illich's call for conviviality can be expressed as a limitation of tools to be in the service of people rather than vice versa. Such a principle will also be adequate for living in respect with the environment (Boff, 2008).

1.2. Defining Degrowth

The degrowth concept originated from the French *décroissance* and is directly translated as reduction[9]. The concept degrowth was proposed by political ecologist André Gorz in 1972 and employed in the title of the French translation of ecological economist Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen's essays in1979 (Kothari et al., 2019). In his paper *The Entropy Law*

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[9]Serge Latouche's article *Degrowth* (2010) explains difficulty to translate *Décroissance* into other languages and points out that the plurality of meanings that arise from translation mirror the plurality of approaches needed for the degrowth movement in different places.

and the Economic Process (1971) Georgescu-Roegen revealed that standard economic models disregard crucial physical and biological phenomena that set clear limits to economic growth, while growth represents a driving force of the dominant economic system (Roegen, 1971). A year later, a now more prominent book was published, titled The Limits to Growth by the Club of Rome (Meadows et al., 1972).

Degrowth was introduced as an activist slogan in Lyon, France in 2001, (Demaria et al. 2013). Here, a concentration of active environmental social actors and associations developed projects to promote meals in the streets and food cooperatives, car-free cities and other initiatives (Demaria et al., 2011). After the degrowth slogan became public, it gained attention from different French national magazines and newspapers, which increased its visibility and prominence. For instance, in 2006 the newspaper *Le Monde* dedicated a section to degrowth. Moreover, various websites, associations and discussion forums on degrowth emerged at that time (Flipo, 2008).   From   2008   onwards,   the concept found its way into English speaking academic journals, such as the *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *Development and Change*, *Ecological Economics* and *Futures*. Degrowth appeared in several large newspapers across Europe, such as *Le Monde Diplomatique*, *El País, The Wall Street Journal* and *Financial Times*, while often quoted and analyzed by politicians (Demaria et al. 2013)

Several international conferences on degrowth contributed to increasing visibility, as part of a fruitful exchange among researchers and activists. Conferences have been held in the cities of Paris, Barcelona, Venice, Montreal, Leipzig, Budapest, Malmö, as well as in Mexico City and Brussels in 2018. And the latest ones organized in Vienna and Manchester for 2020[10]. In a relatively short time span, degrowth has been transformed from an activist slogan into a growing social movement.

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[10] The Coronavirus pandemic has forced these conferences to re-organize to be held online.

In degrowth's process of formation, a range of misconceptions and reductionist interpretations evolved around the concept (Bonaiuti and Verdi, 2012; Sekulova et al., 2013; Demaria et al., 2013) for instance taking it simply as a rejection of growth and its key indicator, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In light of this, several authors elaborated a more comprehensive and broad-based explanation of degrowth, the elaboration of which has served as a ground for speaking about degrowth in academic debate: Degrowth can be defined as "an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that will reduce societies' throughput of energy and raw materials" (Schneider et al., 2010: 511). It is a collective and deliberative process that aims for the reduction of the role of markets and commercial exchanges as fundamental organizing principles of human lives. The underlying aim is to raise human well-being and improve ecological conditions at both the local and global levels in the short- and long-term (Schneider et al., 2010).

Serge Latouche (2010) further elaborates on degrowth as he refers to the necessity to form a new social *imaginary* that allows people's minds to open to degrowth. According to Latouche, portraying the idea of degrowth as a caricatural inversion of growth—in the sense of advocating negative growth for degrowth—would be eminently counter-efficient. Merely focusing efforts on slowing down economic growth would put societies into distress. Its consequences would imply an upsurge of unemployment and the neglect of the social, cultural and environmental agendas that guarantee a basic quality of life.

Therefore, a growth-oriented society that lacks economic growth would be a nightmare. However, the paradigm of infinite economic growth is deeply embedded in the modern neo-liberal, capitalist mind. One could say it is colonized by growth. Due to the unsustainable and unhealthy situation of infinite growth on a finite planet, it is essential to

decolonize one's imaginary from growth to change the social structures that legitimize it.

The use of the term *imaginary* in degrowth literature stems from the work by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (Johnston, 2013) and is strongly linked with Cornelius Castoriadis' thinking (1975), outlined in his book *The Imaginary Institution of Society* first published in 1975. The expression used in this title refers to the idea that societies form a basic understanding of the world and humans' place in it.

The publication *Degrowth—A Vocabulary for a New Era* quotes Castoriadis describing the imaginary as the "psychological structure of people" and as "their attitude toward life" (D'Asila et al., 2014:118). According to Castoriadis (1975), every society institutes itself, among others, through language, values, the existence of an authority in society and how this is legitimized. Hereby, imaginary significations are central to these core institutions. They orient the activity and values of people living in a society. These significations cannot by any means be supported, refuted or justified rationally. Considering this, Castoriadis observes that capitalism sets the unlimited expansion of productive forces and the unlimited expansion of domination over nature and humans themselves as its central imaginary signification.

Latouche (2009a) underscores the environmentalist, Edward Abbey's (1977) contention that growth for the sake of growth is like a cancer cell. As exposed above, Serge Latouche already asserted during the beginnings of the degrowth movement in 2009 that overcoming this harmful ideology would require decolonizing our imaginaries. However, "is by no means certain that we have another thirty years to do so" (Latouche 2009:13). On the other hand, degrowth was termed as the economy of the future during the Second International Degrowth Conference in Barcelona, by Joan Martínez-Alier in 2010.

1.3. Engaging with Degrowth

In the previous paragraphs, I defined degrowth and identified it as a realistic, action-based science that aims to profoundly transform the economic and social systems we live in. This raises the question how degrowth aims to achieve such a transformation. The militant side of the degrowth movement has most recently been described and analyzed in the book Degrowth in Movements (Treu et al., 2020). The work compiles specific ways in which degrowth ideas are being applied in diverse practical alternative projects and social movements. Its editors explicitly distance themselves from portraying degrowth as the social movement which brings much-needed systemic transformations, but instead claim that it is "the next cycle of a larger counter-hegemonic block of social movements and political forces opposing both neoliberal globalism and authoritarian nationalism should integrate key critiques, perspectives and proposals from the degrowth discussion" (24). In this spirit, the following paragraphs will provide an introduction into the ways in which degrowth is engaged with. There are two complementary sides of degrowth, namely diagnosis and prognosis (Demaria et al. 2013).

Diagnosis is the aspect of degrowth that identifies problems and causes, assembling multiple sources across space and time, whilst prognosis deals with diverse strategies and actors evolving around degrowth (Demaria et al. 2013).The prognosis, which is usually marked by a strong utopian element, seeks for solutions and hypothesizes new social patterns. Apart from pursuing practical goals, this process opens spaces and reveals chances for action.

There are diverse strategies related to the prognosis. These include research, oppositional activism, building alternatives, such as building new institutions and reformism. The last point means working from within existing institutions to generate conditions for societal change, on all levels from micro to macro.

Degrowth as an interpretative framework considers that distinct social phenomena, like the social and environmental crises, are linked to economic growth. In this context, degrowth actors can be seen as signifying agents who produce contentious meanings that dissent from the ones upheld by the mainstream, popularized by mass media, a majority of politicians, economics professors, financial experts and industry CEOs (Demaria et al. 2013).

Pro-growth actors for instance, consider economic growth to be the best way for industry CEOs to tackle the current economic crisis and pay off debts. In contrast, degrowth actors deem the economic system founded on growth and fueled by debt to be the underlying problem. In the next section, I discuss some of the action strategies that degrowth actors engage in.

One way engaging with degrowth is through research. Degrowth is considered an "activist-led science" (Demaria et al., 2013: 191). In this context, activist knowledge builds on all kinds of experience-based concepts that spring from civil society, community groups, women's groups, trade unions, grassroots associations among others (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014).The insight obtained through grassroots experience and activism has led to the emergence of novel concepts in sustainability studies and other disciplines. Some of these include the ecological debt, climate debt, biopiracy, environmental justice, popular epidemiology and corporate accountability (Martínez Alier, 2005). Such concepts might be adopted, limited or entirely dismissed by academics. The opposite can also occur when academic concepts are employed by civil society activists.

Another way of engaging in degrowth is through oppositional activism. This entails campaigns, for instance, to resist and block the expansion of highways, airports, high-speed trains and other kinds of infrastructure. Opposition can take different shapes,

such as civil disobedience like a boycott or direct action, like singing protest songs.

A prominent example is what degrowth activist Enric Duran called a *political action* by legally obtaining nearly half a million Euros worth of small loans from banks without the intention of returning these (Demaria et al., 2011). Duran used the money to sponsor various anti-capitalist movements, which included printing a hundred thousand copies of magazines covering the energy crisis, criticisms for the debt-based economy as well as concrete alternatives for a sustainable economy of solidarity. In his explanation, he publicly declared what he had done and accused the unsustainable banking system, alleging that if it had the capacity to make money materialize out of nothing, he could make it turn into nothing. This received considerable media attention.

When it comes to social change one may argue that a range of the institutions functioning in growth-based societies ought to be preserved because they are perceived to provide valuable functions. Some of these include social security and public health institutions, public nurseries, schools and other parts of the welfare state. In this area, feminist writers warn about going back towards the notion of 'doing one's bit' at home as an uncritical application of this ideology which threatens to intensify women's burden in care responsibility as it is already unequal and unfair (Demaria et al., 2013, Pürckhauer and Beck, 2014). In fact, during the past Degrowth Vienna 2020 conference (Asara, 2020b, Asara, 2020a) it was emphasized that degrowth should also be reflected upon in terms of symbiotic transformations (Wright, 2019). This idea refers to non-reformist reforms (Gorz, 1967) that have the goal to substantially alter power relations by undermining the capitalist system and by intensifying institutionalized social empowerment.

Following the spirit of what author Chris Carlsson calls *nowtopia* (Schneider et al., 2010), there are a myriad of opportunities to develop alternatives outside present

institutions, which can run parallel to these. Such transformations, which have also been called interstitial transformations (Wright, 2019) consist of decentralized, local, small scale and participatory alternatives building novel forms of social empowerment within capitalist society's niches and margins. These include riding bicycles, reuse, vegetarianism and veganism, consumer cooperatives, co-housing, agro-ecology, eco-villages, solidarity economies, alternative banks and credit cooperatives as well as decentralized, renewable energy cooperatives.

Moreover, eco-villages and the Transition movement are important community-based experiences, that often intersect with degrowth. A series of actors involved in developing alternatives affirm that the change of individual values and behavior should be the main aim of degrowth. For as Donella Meadows (1999) has pointed out, the most effective, but also the hardest step in system transformation is the shift of paradigms that underpin the system (Büchs and Koch, 2019).

Such changes are expressed in individuals who decide to adopt lifestyles described as voluntary simplicity, downshifting, living better with less and slowing down life's pace. Moreover, individuals engaged in grassroots degrowth activism have engaged with the question conscious critical consumption can promote transformation both at the individual and the social levels. The underlying view is that the less time is spent on formal work and consumption, the more time is left for activities that are elemental to one's well-being, such as social relations, political involvement, physical exercise, contemplation and spirituality.

In sum, within degrowth the perception prevails that change needs to happen on all levels. For this, conditions need to be delineated, which could be useful in supporting the implementation of degrowth politics.

1.4. Crises and Degrowth Strands

In order to move towards a degrowth politics it is important to consider how it might be implemented and to understand how degrowth can operate. In this section I explain the degrowth theory with a three-fold division into the bioeconomics strand, the social strand and the strand of the imaginary. For a more profound understanding of degrowth, it is essential to consider the different theoretical sources it is derived from as well as the problems they address in relation to the current economic paradigm. The challenge hereby is to get a solid understanding of degrowth's multiple perspectives and complexities without losing sight of the big picture. This allows combining short- and mid-term perspectives with sketching an overall long-term vision and possible sustainable strategies for transformation although predicting these is more difficult due to uncertainties and complexities underlying the intertwined systems that degrowth would affect.

The theoretical strands I use to describe degrowth rest on the distinction of several global interlocking crises (Baykan, 2007, Brownhill et al., 2012, Wichterich, 2014, Klein, 2020, Barca, 2019, Alexander and Yacoumis, 2018), which shape the economic, ecological, social foundations as well as the collective imaginary[11]. In addition, I will comment on the relation between the named theoretical strands of degrowth and the global crises that they answer to.

1.4.1 The Bioeconomics Strand

The global financial breakdown of 2008 and its political and social consequences can be regarded as a crisis scenario and a starting point to critically examine the dominant capitalist growth paradigm. Anyone genuinely interested in preventing future harm, such

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[11]The terms crisis and crises appear in numerous academic articles related to degrowth, yet in the available literature there is no fixed consistent division into spheres of life (economic, social, political, etc.). I have thus chosen general and frequently appearing terms to explain the relation of crises to the different degrowth strands.

as the one caused by this crisis, would have to identify and address its root causes (Griethuysen, 2009). In other words, a critical perspective of macroeconomics can help to recognize flaws in the global economic system.

The first strand of degrowth is a criticism of the economic paradigm from a bioeconomics perspective, as proposed by Georgescu-Roegen (Bonaiuti and Verdi, 2012; Bonaiuti, 2012). Comprehending the technological and institutional deadlock into which the Western course of industrial-capitalist economic development has led global societies seems to be a prerequisite for any socio-economic reorientation towards a truly sustainable path.

In this context, it is important to question what sustainability actually means. In the United Nations call for sustainable development in 1987 it was defined in relation to development; promoting a development that meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Keeble, 1988). If one were to accept sustainability as an end, the question arises, what are the needs we are speaking about that need to be met; who defines what those needs are; what is it that we would like to sustain (Akbulut et al., 2019, Eisenstein, 2018). The questioning of the concept of sustainability has entered, but not transformed degrowth narratives; while growth is the main problem according to degrowth advocates the notion of sustainability continues to be employed, albeit critically.

To come back to growth, the economic growth witnessed since the end of the seventeenth century in Europe was unprecedented to previous forms of economic and social organization. Before that, increases in yields led to population growth rather than gross domestic product per capita (Roser, 2013).

Classical and contemporary economists calculated dynamics of economic growth from pre-industrial times to contemporary industrial capitalist times by theorizing to

explain the determinants of economic growth from a macro-historic perspective (Maddison, 2005). In general terms, economic growth can be seen as a fundamental trait of the modern capitalist economy sparked by the Industrial Revolution and the notion of controlling natural forces catalyzed by Enlightenment ideology such as the Cartesian mechanistic world view and Baconian science, both characteristics of Western modernity.

The idea of capitalism, that a share of the profit earned by enterprises should be reinvested to raise their overall capital became the basis on which to generate new products and more profit, represents the main principle of such an economy (Sweezy, 2016).

In the realm of classical economy, theorists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx pointed at the circular process of augmented profit, new investments and more profits, commonly denoted the Money-Commodities-Money cycle, as the fundamental logic of the modern capitalist economic system (Bonaiuti, 2012). Yet, the neoclassical understanding of economics has paid little attention to this logic, stressing the alleged self-regulatory character of markets. Instead of recognizing that accumulation is a process the neoclassical perspective considers it a general equilibrium. The rise of productivity is mainly ascribed to development of technology and therefore considered an extrinsic factor.

In contrast, from a systemic perspective, the exponential character of economic growth can be understood by means of two principles: first, as implied previously, there is a long-term positive and self-reinforcing feedback loop of economic growth linked to accumulation and innovation; second, new structures or institutions related to the multi-scale process of growth have emerged (Bonaiuti, 2012a). In this context, commodification of labor and of nature can be seen as examples of the second principle because due to these processes another economy and also another society have emerged.

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In the long run, the introduction of new markets into the economy and the exhaustion of the life cycle of products in established sectors necessarily leads to a decrease of profit. Nonetheless, in the capitalist economic system the creation of monopolistic powers is what has halted the decline of marginal returns.

However, the race of increased profit is not exempt from the principle of entropy. This idea is embedded in the second law of thermodynamics. It says that the physical universe is continuously in expansion due to an irreversible, permanent and qualitative degradation of order into chaos (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971). In the framework of the economy, entropy refers to the fact that the economic process diminishes natural resources and contaminates the environment, which is what makes up the present danger. Hence, entropy means that the Earth winds down naturally and that economic advance speeds up the process. This entails irreversible degradation of a certain proportion of energy spurred by continuous production. Moreover, there is a loss of available matter— that matter which cannot be reused or recycled (Bonaiuti, 2012).

The process of physical growth, on which property-based industrial expansion ultimately relies, affects the environment in many, interwoven ways: the over-exploitation of local natural resources that have led to a global biodiversity crisis, the increasing extraction of mineral resources, the decrease of ecosystem resilience and the disruption of the biosphere. The described human-induced occurrences affect natural processes in such a manner that we have entered a new geological era called the Anthropocene. For the first time in history, the evolution of the Earth system is shaped by the behavior of one species, namely humans (Griethuysen, 2009).

The bio-economic strand links problems arising in the economy to problems that arise in our environment—as the name already indicates. The main criticism that derives from this connection is that the economy ignores important ecological factors. In order to

address both sides of the bio-economic strand, the economic and the ecological one, I attend to the economic and ecological crises separately.

1.4.1.1 Economic Crisis

Frederick Soddy, an expert in radiochemistry who received a Nobel prize in chemistry in 1921, was also an early critic of economic growth. He claimed that the dynamics of the economic system was fraught with fallacies. He observed that the financial system axiomatically increases private or public debt and mistakenly takes the related expansion of credit for the creation of real wealth (Martinez-Alier and Schlupmann, 1990).

Yet, in the industrial system the increase of production and of consumption require an increasing exploitation of fossil fuels. The used energy is depleted and it cannot be recycled. Hence, the fallacy of economic accounting is that it confuses the dissipation of resources and the increase of entropy with wealth production. For a restricted period, the need to pay back debts at compound interest could be satisfied by pressuring the debtors. Other manners of paying off debt are by inflation—meaning degradation of the value of money—or by economic growth. However, as we have seen, economic growth is falsely measured as it is based on undervalued limited resources and on entirely unvalued pollution.

In the era of the UN Agenda 2030 program for Sustainable Development Goals we have seen a shift towards a concern for environmental sustainability, alongside economic growth (Kothari et al., 2019). This means economic growth is no longer the only goal, but development thinking continues in terms of calculations.

In this spirit, the hegemonic GDP numbers have been complemented with social indicators on nutrition, health, education and environment as well as serve to map a country's performance. The Human Development Index (HDI) is among these indicators. Data collected from these allow comparisons to be made. The way the authors of the

Pluriverse dictionary argue is that the HDI, like the GDP, is a deficit index and thus reminds most measured countries of what they are not (Omar, 2012). Indicators like this classify countries hierarchically and thereby make the assumption that there is only one correct path of social evolution, measured by means of quantitative comparison (Kothari et al., 2019).

Hence, despite the seeming changes in discourse and measurement, the field of economics taught in universities remains essentially the same: It continues to present the image of an economy as a merry-go-round between consumers and producers who meet in markets where goods and working time are traded for money. Here, wages and prices are agreed upon and quantities are exchanged. In economics the aggregate quantities summed up are reflected in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, while this kind of economics can be considered a lesson in chrematistics (Martinez-Alier, 2009), there are radically different discourses which do consider the transformation of finite resources into products, services and waste. The field of ecological economics, for instance, includes the mentioned issues.

In an article analyzing the origins of degrowth, Valerie Fournier (2008) explains that the economy has three levels. The top is represented by the financial level, which can grow due to the loans that are made to the state or the private sector. Sometimes these are even given without having a repayment security, an identified factor that contributed to the economic crisis of 2008. The financial system thus borrows from the future and assumes that infinite economic growth provides the opportunities to repay debts and interest (Kallis et al., 2009).

The second level is the so-called *real economy*, also known as the productive economy. At this level, wealth does not grow through financial leverage but through creating industrial value by means of innovation, the development of technology and the

improving efficiency of manufacturing processes. This kind of economic growth does allow for a certain amount of debt to be repaid. If a part cannot be paid back, debts are defaulted. In the context of the global crisis of 2008, debts were so elevated that even increases in the GDP would not suffice to pay them off. Therefore, the condition of the crisis was financially not tenable, besides, GDP itself not being ecologically sustainable. The latter point leads to the bottom layer of the economic building.

The third level could be called the *real-real economy,* from an ecological economist's viewpoint. It manifests as the flow of energy and materials. The increase of these is in part dependent on economic factors—such as market prices—and in part on physical limitations. At the global level, there are resource limits, but also noticeable sink limits, which are limits related to the capacity of the Earth to absorb waste (Farley and Malghan, 2016) mainly due to fossil fuel burning. From the forgoing analysis it should be clear that returning to debt-fueled growth after the crisis is financially risky. Apart from the fact that banks became reluctant to lend after the crisis, the growth that is debt-fueled is actually powered by fossil fuels, which cannot be renewed since they are products that stem from of thousands of years of natural processes.

To conclude, from a degrowth perspective, economic crises exemplified by the global 2008 crisis can be seen as a mismatch between the aim to buy, produce, build, employ and borrow on the one hand and the limits to perform all these activities on the other (Schneider et al., 2010)**.** An additional factor exacerbating this situation is the general endorsement of triggering economic growth as a solution, often by removing the very factors which limit production and consumption.

1.4.1.2 Economic Transformation

For degrowth advocates it is not enough to suggest alternative economic models to challenge neo-liberal economics of growth. The reason is that the proposed alternative

economies do not in themselves question the significance that is attributed to the economy. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a counterforce to economism, by scrutinizing it from a political viewpoint (Kallis et al., 2009). In other words, degrowth proposes re-politicizing the economy to unveil it as a self-referential system of meanings, an abstract idea that is sold as an objective and neutral reality with a range of given factors (D'Alisa et al., 2014).

After deconstructing the meaning and significance of the economy it can be seen as part of a historical process, which has been created through discursive practices. In this context, the feminist economic geographers Gibson-Graham (1997, 2010) have suggested re-conceptualizing economic relations and identities by moving away from the essence of capitalistic thinking. This implies considering economic activity in terms of the coexistence of different forms of transactions, labor and ways of producing and distributing surplus.

Gibson-Graham engaged in an innovative project where participants were asked to re-imagine their economic activities in ways different from the one's capitalism provides for (Fournier, 2008). Some results presented alternative forms of transactions outside of the commodity market. These included local trading schemes, gifts, and mutual exchange between households. Moreover, diverse labor forms were imagined, such as self-employment, volunteering and domestic work. Finally, participants proposed different forms of surplus distribution aside from profit and capital accumulation, involving principles of social and environmental ethics. The broader notion of the economy is a prerequisite to moving away from conventional forms of interaction based on the growth-paradigm.

Degrowth calls for reframing the understanding of the economy. The endeavor of shrinking economic growth is framed within the idea of living in a steady-state economy

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or zero-growth economy once the economy has degrown to *truly* sustainable levels. As Daniel W. O. Neill (2012) proposes, a steady-state economy is an economy that keeps stocks and flows of energy constant and at a sustainable scale. In Herman Daly's definition (1974), the term stocks refers to the total size of the economy and flows means the throughput needed to uphold the economy. Scale refers to the magnitude of the economy in relation to the environment.

O'Neill (2012) refers to three kinds of stocks that are relevant to the steady-state economy described by Daly: The first stock is the human population; the second one is built capital, which includes human population and buildings, transportation infrastructure, cars and durable goods; and the third one is comprised of domesticated animals or livestock. In terms of flows, there are three different kinds: The first kind is a flow of material inputs from the environment to the economy; the second one is the flow of material outputs from the economy back into the environment; and third flow is the energy used by the economy. Lastly, there are two distinct measures of scale relevant here: First, the ratio of material inputs to the capacity of ecosystem sources to renew materials, and second, the ratio of material outflows to the capacity of ecosystem sinks to absorb waste[12].

The idea of having a steady-state economy is popular among degrowth advocates but it is far older than degrowth. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was proposed by John Stuart Mill. As Mill stated, "the population and capital are the only great things which must remain constant in a world in balance" (Latouche 2010: 521).

The latter sentence means that contrary to what one might associate with a steady-state economy, all human activities, which refrain from unreasonable irreplaceable material consumption and from degrading the environment in an irreversible manner,

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[12]A sustainable scale is also known to be measured as the ratio between the ecological footprint and the biocapacity (Sustainable Scale Project, 2003).

could develop indefinitely. Activities that are considered most desirable and satisfactory are included among those which are exempt from shrinking: education, art, religion, basic research, sports and human relations could all then thrive. In Mill's perspective, capitalism in a more developed stage would reach a state where humans and nature are more respected. However, time has shown that humanity is beyond a point where a zero-growth economy is tenable (Neill 2011), which causes the need for sustainable degrowth (Latouche 2010). A degrowth of the economy in the Global North could provide the needed environmental space for a limited amount of economic growth in the Global South. Roughly speaking, the Global North would thus have to engage in an agenda of degrowth and the Global South would have to decelerate growth to move towards a more just steady-state economy.

1.4.1.3 Ecological Crisis

As the previous section has implied the growth of the energy and material flows, mainly within the social metabolism of industrialized economies, has been achieved at heavy social and environmental costs. This does not only count for future generations but also at the expense of the larger part of humanity alive now (Martinez-Alier, 2012). The friction between the economy and ecology manifests in different ways: the exploitation of the rest of pristine nature, the increasing demands for raw materials and sinks for waste in the inhabited parts of the planet. Raw materials stay cheap, and the cost of sinks is zero. Both points are related to unsustainable circumstances in terms of property rights as well as power and income distribution. The damage and strain that the economy inflicts upon on the environment are constantly rising while powered by increasing consumption and population growth.

This is the case despite the acclaimed celebration of improved eco-efficiency in some sectors or a transition towards the service sector in many other areas. The

worsening of the problem in spite of technological developments is because of the so-called rebound effect, which simply means that improvements in efficiency tend to rebound to higher consumption as relative prices fall (Kallis, 2011).

Moreover, one must keep in mind the different impacts that might result from a shift of energy source, for example, from coal to nuclear energy as well as other social costs associated with the implementation of environmental solutions (Martínez-Alier, 2002).

The ecological footprint of the global economy, meaning the area of land and water ecosystems that are required to produce all resources to assimilate the waste products, have exceeded the Earth's capacity to regenerate by seventy-five percent in 2019.Thismeans that humanity has used resources 75% faster than the Earth can renew them (Wackernagel et al., 2019). Additionally, there are great inequalities between the Global North and South as well as within each of these vast areas. In this sense, Boaventura de-Sousa-Santos (2012) has asserted that the Global South exists in the Global North and the other way around.

In terms of environmental impact, the difference between rich and poor people can be noticed in the amount of energy consumed. For example, some people use employ annually 300 Giga Joule (GJ) of energy, most of which stems from oil and gas, whereas other people live with less than 20 GJ. Despite the large gap between the Global South and Global North, the inclination is towards economic growth and greater consumption in both, so-called 'developing' and 'developed' countries (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014).

Note that I choose to use the terms of developing and developed as they are used by the authors that I draw my sources from. However, I keep them in single quotation marks because—as Demaria and his colleagues explain in the post-development dictionary, the Pluriverse—since 2015 the discourse on development has shifted away from the aim of catch-up development toward sustainable development for all countries.

In light of this, no country has yet demonstrated a successful model of sustainable development shown to be successfully 'sustainably developed' (Kothari et al., 2019: xiv). Alternative designations for areas according to their degree of development are overdeveloped world for the Global North and majority world for the Global South (Ruder and Sanniti, 2019). I use both Global South/Global North and majority world/overdeveloped world in different context since the former is more widespread and the latter pair makes underlying power structures more visible.

In some countries, not only the total amount of materials has increased, but also the relative amount of materials per unit of GDP has been growing, which implies even more pressure on the environment. In practical terms, if the global living standard were at the current levels of the USA, we humans would require roughly five more planet Earths (Bonaiuti, 2012). If the current entire world population adopted the lifestyle to the European standard, about sixteen tons of material flow per person/year and excluding water, this would require three more Earths.

Hence, there is a significant factor of environmental injustice, which plays to the advantage of overdeveloped populations as opposed to 'developing' countries. This is why the effects that human behavior has on the ecology should be considered in the context of social and political issues. In this spirit, I dedicate a further section to social inequalities below.

The environmental crisis is thus directly related to an increase of consumption which mostly serves the lifestyle of so-called developed countries who take more than their fair share.. However, whereas the extraction of resources is clearly unsustainable at the current scale, the underlying problem lies inside the basic functioning of the capitalist market economy, which considers nature as an accumulation of dead resources ready to be commodified and used for profit (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014).

Previously I explained that the growth-based economy is not sustainable due to the physical limits of the Earth. Nevertheless, the ecological component of the crisis deserves attention. The systematic exploitation of natural resources has passed through many stages and economic models throughout history while increasing in scale since the Industrial Revolution. In contemporary-neoliberal-capitalist societies the destruction-production twins have become a naturalized part of our economic system(Shiva, 1988). However, it is this activity that destroys human habitats as well as the habitats of millions of other species. Massively declining population sizes and range reductions amount to an enormous anthropogenic biodiversity erosion and a shrinkage of the ecosystem services crucial to civilization (Ceballos et al., 2017). The biological annihilation underscores the gravity of Earth's ongoing sixth mass extinction event for humanity. The production-consumption process is a cause of environmental degradation, global warming, pollution and environmental catastrophes, which are created largely by humans (Robbins, 2019, Shiva, 2015).

Throughout this work, I mention the term limits in relation to the Earth's capacity to withstand the effects of human activity, such as the waste production and material extraction. The idea of limits, derived from the Club of Rome's publication *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) should not be understood as fixed and rigid lines, but as important aspects of large and complex ecological systems. An alternative term used to describe them is planetary boundaries. In 2009, a group of scientists defined nine sets of planetary boundaries: stratospheric ozone depletion, loss of biosphere integrity, chemical pollution and the release of novel entities, climate change, ocean acidification, freshwater consumption and the global hydrological cycle, land system change or biogeochemical flows, flows of nitrogen and phosphorus to the biosphere and, last but not least, oceans and atmospheric aerosol loading (Rockström et al., 2009). Later, Kate Raworth based part

of her renown model of Doughnut Economics on this research, which I comment upon in the context of communicating degrowth for a broader audience, in Chapter 3.

Crossing a limit or boundary does not result in an immediate partial or complete shutdown but represents entering a high risk zone with the potential to reach tipping points, which can eventually lead to irreversible collapse (Hickel, 2020a). Hence, an overshoot boundary means that ecosystems begin to break down and the web of life begins to unravel. This is currently the case with climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation and biogeochemical flows.

1.4.1.4 Ecological Transformation

Degrowth is engaged with providing solutions that reduce the impact humans have on the environment. Attempting to list these would surpass the scope of this chapter. In order to provide a more structured overview I exemplify the main principles by which degrowth handles ecological issues.

The financial value of nature can be estimated from a more holistic perspective, as offered by spiritual ecology. Anthropologist Leslie Sponsel (2012), explains that the worth of a 50 year old tree once it has been logged only keeps a fraction of the value that it bears in terms of air pollution control, oxygen, soil erosion control, fertilizer, water and animal shelter. He estimates that in financial terms, the sum of all these in monetary terms amount to 200,000 US dollars. Whereas the financial computing of the value of a tree surely falls short of illustrating its worth beyond monetary terms, it is helpful to make these kinds of estimations within a common language to gain an idea of the true dimension of loss realized by deforestation.

It is thus crucial to start perceiving a value within ecosystems themselves, as opposed to merely regarding them as providers of resources or services. In this context,

degrowth stresses the antagonism that exists between ecosystems and the industrial production and consumption systems (Kallis et al., 2012).

The ecological value of degrowing can be calculated in terms of the money that a living tree is worth as opposed to a logged one (Sponsel, 2012). For instance, a fifty-year-old tree would in monetary terms be worth around two hundred thousand US dollars due its creation of oxygen and soil fertilizer; its role controlling air pollution and soil erosion; and providing water and shelter to animals. While it is useful to make such estimations, bear in mind that these fail to capture the value of a tree beyond its monetary worth. In other words, there is a need to see a value within ecosystems themselves, not merely as providers of resources or services.

Furthermore, degrowth stresses that there is a competition between ecosystems and the systems of industrial production as well as consumption (Kallis et al., 2012). Industrial expansion has not found a possibility to become decoupled from ecological destruction (Wichterich, 2012).

According to degrowth author Kallis (2018), we can still not produce renewable energy from renewable energy and reach Western levels of consumption for all. Thus, degrowth is presented as a theoretical framework that makes it possible to protect the environment by reducing human pressure on ecosystems.

Degrowth therefore exhibits a *res communis* (Latin for common things) approach (Kallis, 2011), which suggests that environmental goods belong to everyone and thus need to be commonly conserved and cared for. In light of this, degrowth seeks to avoid the appropriation of environmental goods solely by individuals (Eisenstein, 2011). In the

dominant *res nullius* (nobody's thing[13]) approach, environmental goods belong to nobody and consequently, resources can be destroyed and stolen freely.

One manner of preserving the value of nature is for instance by establishing a set of rights to preserve it (Gabriel and Bond, 2019). This has been done in the countries of Ecuador and Bolivia at the national level in 2008 and 2010, respectively (Thomson, 2011), and has been followed by a range of Earth jurisprudence including initiatives implemented locally as well as internationally over the following years (Sajeva, 2020). Approaches in this direction include the initiative of leaving resources underground or *leaving oil in the soil* (Rodríguez-Labajos et al., 2019). Other solutions include the notion of de-commodifying nature and working for environmental commons, which include: habitat conservation, forest stewardship, community land trusts, conservation trusts, state subsidies and protection of farmland (Vail, 2010).

1.4.2 The Social Strand

1.4.2.1 Social and Political Crises

The first strand dealt with shortcomings inside the economic system itself and the environmental harm it caused. The second degrowth strand addresses social and political aspects. In order to grasp what it encompasses, let us consider the underlying social and political crises. Within the context of neo-economic theory, the notion of development is revealed as a process in which different geographical regions play different roles in the same procedure. The hegemonic discourse (Lears, 2002) coming from economically more advanced societies claims that wealth and prosperity come with innovation and technological progress. However, the actual aim that underlies the capitalist logic is the introduction of developing countries as new markets (Bonaiuti, 2012a). This logic is the core driver of mainstream development initiatives since US President Harry Truman

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[13] author's translation. If not noted otherwise, translations of one or two words are my own.

coined the notion of being 'underdeveloped' (Rist, 2019). So-called 'underdeveloped' nations are encouraged to engage in business to foster their own financial growth. In broad terms, Bonaiuti argues (2012a) the issue of social sustainability has basically been addressed in terms of equity, meaning that greater inequality is deemed to cause conflict, social instability and loss of well-being. Consequentially, in hegemonic thinking poverty and exclusion are explained in terms of underdevelopment of some countries, meaning a delay in the process of growth and development, which is considered progressive and universal. To scrutinize this belief, it is important to consider whether and how growth and development have led to a more equitable distribution of wealth.

The answers provided by history and contemporary statistics are quite clear on this: The income differences between the richest and the poorest segments of global human population have increased and continue to do so. Inequality should be erased, in theory, by following the strategy of economic growth. At the base of this is the assumption that increasing goods and services sold to the international market generate increased national wealth. The so-called *trickledown effect* says that a growing economy within a country should lead to a drop of poverty and underlying grievance (Gomes, 2012). In theory, this trickledown effect helps to allocate wealth within a country, whereby those who are worst off in a society automatically benefit if wealth is generally enhanced. However, several studies in the past decades have exposed that the adage that *a rising tide raises all boats* does not stand up to thorough scrutiny (Muraca, 2012).

In addition, the trickle-down effect does not seem to hold any longer—not even in terms of mere income. Structural inequality has thus been considered a fundamental cause of conflict, social instability and loss of well-being (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009). Oxfam's recent report on economic inequality has shown that in 2019, the world's billionaires—2,153 people—had more wealth than 4.6 billion people combined (Coffey et

al., 2020). Moreover, getting the wealthiest one percent to pay just 0.5 percent extra in taxes on their assets over ten years would amount to the investment needed to create 117 million jobs in sectors such as elderly and childcare, education and health.

However, within a complex analysis it is important to understand not only self-reinforcing negative dynamics, but also processes of self-correcting nature (Bonaiuti, 2012a). On national levels this would imply taking into account processes of wage redistribution linked to the efficacy of trade-union struggles and—to a lesser extent—the extension of welfare-state services. In this context, the evident territorial dimension of inequality, as seen in the Global North and Global South divide, can be explained by the chronic weakness of foreign investments and missing international welfare institutes. The inherent exponential growth logic seems to lead to larger inequalities and thus to an increased gap between rich and poor, in the lack of institutionalized measures to redistribute wealth. It is only within countries with generous redistributive policies that low-end incomes have been significantly improved (Muraca, 2012). In other words, redistribution has only been effective in countries where there was a major political commitment to it (Kenworthy, 2011). An increased wealth in poor countries, where a GDP rise seems a condition for more well-being, is also found to be equally dependent on the presence of such measures.

In his book *The Environmentalism of the Poor* Joan Martínez-Alier(Martínez Alier, 2005) describes the inequality between wealthy and poor people in an interdisciplinary context that lies between ecological economics and political ecology. He claims that the continual increase of production and consumption involves a rise in the flows of matter and energy. These derive from the poorest nations and create social disparities and conflict inside the countries where resources are extracted. Local cultures and populations are significantly affected in this process, as the prices of resources often

depend on the outcomes of conflicts. Hence, resource prices play an important role in defining long-term economic scenarios.

In capitalism, a property-based economy, property owners benefit from exclusive privileges in contrast to non-proprietors. This promotes the existence of a capitalist elite and exacerbates social inequality (Griethuysen, 2009). As significant redistribution policies fail due to the resistance by most members of the elite, the sphere of socio-cultural development plunges into a recurring social crisis. Furthermore, environmental degradation is worsened by the existence of extreme poverty and wealth, which have been identified as causal factors of ecological damage (Boyce, 2007, Hamann et al., 2018).

In 2014, a study was published called 'Human and Nature Dynamics (HANDY): Modeling Inequality and Use of Resources in the Collapse or Sustainability of Societies' (Motesharrei et al., 2014). This NASA-funded study links both social crises and environmental damage to the establishment of societal elites. The authors show that unsustainable resource management and growing inequality in terms of wealth distribution represent potential causes for a possible collapse of modern civilization. They aim to make sense of historical data showing that the rise and fall of societies is in fact a recurrent cycle found in history and thereby deflecting critiques that might point to the improbability of such extreme scenarios.

This study reveals that even highly developed and complex civilizations are vulnerable to collapse and raise serious questions about the sustainability of contemporary modern civilization. Researching the human-nature dynamics of previous civilizational collapses the authors determine the most important interrelated factors that can explain civilizational decline. This may help to estimate the risk of collapse yet to come. Societies may collapse when two essential societal phenomena converge: Human pressures on the ecological carrying capacity and the economic stratification of society

into so-called *elites* and *masses*, represented by a small number of rich people and a large majority of poor people. Over the past 5000 years the collapse of civilizations included both mentioned social phenomena.

In contemporary modern civilization high levels of economic stratification are linked directly to an overconsumption of resources. Thereby, elites that mainly reside in industrialized countries are responsible for both. In more detail, wealth increase is not equally distributed all throughout society, but controlled by an elite. Hence, mass population produces wealth, but the poor can only access a small portion of it. The masses are merely able to subsist, or little more for a few.

Similar to degrowth, the study denounces the technological advances that should help to raise efficiency of resource use, tend to increase per capita resource consumption and raise the scale of resource extraction, a phenomenon which is also known as the Jevons paradox (Alcott et al., 2012). In absence of efficient policies, this cancels out positive effects of technological efficiency. After modeling a range of diverse scenarios, the study concludes that under conditions closely reflecting contemporary modern reality, a collapse of civilization is going to be difficult to avoid (Motesharrei et al., 2014).

In one scenario the continuous exploitation of resources eventually leads to diminishing masses at a quicker pace, followed by the decline of the elites, because of resource depletion. In such a scenario, both societal strata break down due to the exhaustion of resources. In a different scenario, the commoners decline because of a famine that elites stay unaffected by. Nonetheless, the elites finally decline as well because of a decline in workers and not so much due to the collapse of nature. In both described scenarios elite wealth monopolies are shielded from the most detrimental effects of the environmental collapse until much later than the masses (Motesharrei et al., 2014) which permits them to continue their business as usual in spite of imminent

catastrophes. This mechanism can explain major collapse: Elites let the collapse happen because they are oblivious to the devastating trajectory they have embarked on—the most salient historical examples of this are the Roman and Mayan civilizations.

To learn from these scenarios, the HANDY study warns that some members of society could be alarmed that the system is about to collapse and suggest essential structural changes. However, these will probably be faced with opposition by elites because their interest is to preserve their privileged position. While the authors of the study point at serious risks, they also underscore the fact that worst case-scenarios may help to prevent collapse and even open the possibility for a more stable civilization. The two main suggestions the authors make to avoid collapse are directly linked to the key problems identified earlier: The first would be a large-scale reduction of resource consumption. According to the report this may be achieved by means of population control and a shift to renewable resources. The second is a reasonable equitable allocation of resources among the people.

The HANDY study (Motesharrei et al., 2014)is particularly interesting in that it represents an ample piece of research which reaches similar conclusions in line with degrowth proposals, but does not come from the degrowth movement. Its findings include that business as usual cannot be sustained and that action for structural change is required immediately. This conclusion also includes that a fundamental paradigm shift is needed on all levels. For this, it is necessary to address governments, corporations and businesses as well as consumers.

From a development-critical perspective, based on the evidence of a primarily historical-social and anthropological nature, the main cause of poverty and exclusion must be searched for exactly at the point in which the solution to poverty would allegedly be found, namely in economic growth and development (Bonaiuti, 2012b). This paradox

becomes visible at the meta-level: As seen above, the process of growth and accumulation is self-promoting and therefore social inequality tends to increase. Therefore, the competitiveness of international markets makes areas that have not succeeded in keeping up with innovations and progress face a gap that is increasingly difficult to bridge.

Thus, in more 'developed' countries, economic growth has enabled a number of changes in the industrial, educational and financial systems that have reached a level of complexity far beyond what is reachable by the poorest economies. However, it becomes evident that what are deemed positive and negative results in the developmental process of growth should not be considered as worse or better positions in a convergent process of raising well-being, but as the consequence of related processes where different actors or territories reach different results, while they also start off with unequal conditions (Bonaiuti, 2012b). Hence, such processes promote both, the improvement of life standards in the Western middle-upper class and a perpetuation of exclusion and poverty in other areas. Degrowth thus attempts to present a range of different solutions that truly considers alternative perspectives.

1.4.2.2 Social and Political Transformation

Degrowth's diverse strategies all cover social and political dimensions since they aim to bring economics back into the hands of people and ecology back into people's responsibility and consciousness. A very concrete approach to degrowth is provided by the synthesis of a virtuous circle of eight R's that degrowth scholar Serge Latouche (2010) proposed to inform degrowth actions: revalue, re-conceptualize, restructure, relocate, redistribute, reduce, reuse and recycle.

These eight interlinked goals are supposed to offer activist and policy makers tools for a political program—in the strong sense, beyond elections (Latouche, 2010) and to foster serene, convivial and sustainable degrowth. In a different piece the author

suggested list can be expanded almost indefinitely and include other R's such as: radicalize, reconvert, redefine, reinvent democracy, re-dimension, remodel, rehabilitate, reduce ones pace, relax, reimburse, restore, reacquire, renounce and rethink among others (Latouche, 2009b: 46).

An additional R that merits attention due to its transformative understanding is regeneration. Whereas degrowth scholars are highly critical about hegemonic sustainable development discourses, the term sustainability in itself continues to have appeal within degrowth literature and is used in the context of sustainable economic degrowth.

However, several scholar-activists promote the idea of regeneration as an alternative to sustainability (Gomes, 2020). They denounce the approach of sustainability to do less harm as an inadequate solution for ecology. Regeneration refers to growth after loss or damage, or to bring new and more vigorous life to an area, revive, revitalize, renew, rejuvenate, resuscitate.

Supporters of regeneration claim that humans have degraded ecosystems to such a degree that it is now impossible for them to regenerate naturally. Thus, instead of minimizing one's impact in terms of degradation, the task is to repair, resuscitate and improve degraded environments. Hence, positive human intervention is required to modify the environment in positive ways, for instance, by planting autochthonous species, improving the condition of the soil by mulching or building dams to revive wetlands.

8 R's

1. revalue
2. re-conceptualize
3. restructure
4. relocate
5. redistribute
6. reduce
7. reuse
8. recycle

More R's

radicalize, reconvert, redefine, reinvent democracy, re-dimension, remodel, rehabilitate, reduce ones pace, relax, reimburse, restore, reacquire, renounce, rethink, regenerate, revive, revitalize, renew, rejuvenate, resuscitate

...

> *re-* is a prefix in Latin used to add the meaning *do again*, especially to verbs

Figure 2 Serge Latouche's (2009) 8 R's and More. Source: own elaboration

What can be drawn from the reclamation of the previously mentioned R's is that a radical change in the hierarchy of decision-making is needed (Van Griethuysen, 2010). This implies that an eco-social rationale is required where economic activities are subordinated to ecological and social values. Furthermore, the ethical dimension of a degrowth agenda of the degrowth perspective becomes apparent through the pursuit of consequential and deontological justice (Akbulut et al., 2019). This means, degrowth seeks justice both as an end and as a means. In this context, degrowth is seen as a deliberative democratic process in itself, as it yields features of direct democracy and self-organizational consensus procedures.

In degrowth, these decision-making processes are not only on the theoretical-normative levels, but also practiced in internal procedures, based on principles of collaboration, sharing, experimentation and an open source knowledge. Degrowth conferences are organized in the same spirit so that participants are not just consumers but engaged co-producers pro-active on different levels in the preparatory and follow-up phases. The most conventional tasks invite others for work sharing and thereby

surpassing the divisions between intellectual and manual work even if this is just done tentatively at a reduced scale (Brownhill et al., 2012).

Building upon theory presented by degrowth pioneers such as Ivan Illich, degrowth advocates see the need of having lay persons peer review science and policies (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014) The boundaries between science, society and governance ought to become re-politicized and socialized. An open source mode of scientific production should be promoted. The democratic-institutional framework Western societies live in today would have to shift. An optimistic vision of a degrowth society could look like this: It would be comprised of informal organizations that cooperate in a decentralized and smaller scale model. There would be more direct democracy that prioritizes ecological, equitable and autonomous kinds of organization among the people (Brownhill et al. 2012).

Another degrowth pioneer, Cornelius Castoriadis (1992), calls for a revolutionary project of direct democracy. Rather than supporting a violent take-over of governmental power, this involves spontaneous popular processes of autonomous self-institution. Such procedures allow collectives to decide to be critical towards existing institutions and to reclaim these from experts (Bonaiuti and Verdi 2012). The May movement of 1968 and the more recent *15M* movement of the *indignados* (literally: indignant) in Spain can be seen as examples of such a direct-democracy and claims to self-institution (Brownhill et al. 2012)**.**

In degrowth the aim is not just to produce and consume less, but to do so in a socially emancipatory and democratizing manner. In this context, some degrowth supporters consider an evolution of parliamentary democracy as possible and advocate a reform of existing institutions. Others see liberal democracies as deeply intertwined with the capitalist and economic growth logic and thus feel the need for a more radical

overhaul of the political-economic systems and a re-institution of direct, localized democracy and economy.

Autonomous and frugal convivial communities are established in the global North and in the Global South in different manners. In the South, shrinking the ecological footprint and even the GDP are neither necessary nor considered as beneficial. However, this does not imply that it is necessary in general for any society to pursue growth in the first place or that it is unnecessary to leave it. Degrowth advocates consider that the reduction of the ecological footprint and the GDP are certainly a necessity in the Global North.

However, if degrowth could be understood not just as a necessity certain advantages would become discernible. Degrowth might play a significant role in reversing the correlation between the creation of well-being and the GDP. The main goal would be to decouple the increase of subjective well-being (happiness) of individuals from a statistical increase in material production (Latouche 2010). In other words, this would imply less *well-having* to reach more *well-being* (Latouche 2010: 521).

For more than forty years, a little group of anti- or post-developmentalist researchers associated with Ivan Illich, Jacques Ellul and François Partant analyzed and condemned the failures and fallacies of the development agenda, particularly in relation to the enterprise of the North towards the South (Latouche 2010). The critics at first searched for alternatives in history taking the auto-organization of earlier native societies and economies into account.

Simultaneously, this group of pioneering researchers was also searching for alternative initiatives in the North—not an alternative for society as a whole. However, the rise of globalization as well as the environmental crises allowed for an attention shift to the implications of development on the economy and society of the North (Latouche

2010). Once reassessed from this angle, development was considered a serious concern as much for the North as for the South, and the danger from growth seen as planetary in scope.

As a response to this, rediscovering the notion of frugality allows people to rebuild a society of abundance on the basis of what Illich called modern subsistence. This idea refers to the lifestyle in a post-industrial economy where people manage to decrease their dependence on the market. They arrive at this point through political means, conserving an infrastructure in which technology and tools are used mainly to create practical values. These values are "unquantified and unquantifiable by the professional manufacturers of needs" (Latouche 2012:78). Such a shift towards degrowth is embedded in a wider project of abandoning the economy, resituating economic functions and decisions within the political and social spheres, thereby deepening and re-politicizing democracies. Controlling and scaling down the exponentially thriving technological system is an essential part of this process in order to reclaim popular control over collective destiny (Cattaneo et al., 2012).

In line with Castoriadis' explanation of the importance of social imaginaries for producing change, Cattaneo (2012) argues that the endeavor to define what kind of person is most suitable to endorse degrowth may not be so helpful since the strongest imaginaries tend to transcend commonly understood groupings such as class, race and gender.

In this context, Spanish degrowth scholar Jorge Riechmann (2015)posits that there is a kind of preferred personality that is reinforced in growth societies and that penalizes those who do not match. He refers to psychologist Paul Verhaege who speaks of the fact that neo-liberalism has brought out the worst part in us in terms of personality traits. These include rewarding the following: being eloquent, that is in terms of persuading the largest number of people possible by means of superficial interaction, putting one's own

capacities up high, being flexible and impulsive, always looking for new impulses and challenges. In practice this entails looking engaging in risky behavior without being made responsible for its consequences.

These are tendencies taken from a well-known checklist for psychopathic disorder. My point here is not that all humans in the global growth society are psychopaths, but to consider that traits seen as indicators of mental illness in our society might represent extremes of already existing societal inclinations. Inclinations that might be normalized and accepted across various hyper-growth ideologies as business as usual.

Whether or not the mentioned tendencies can be taken as personality traits of a growth-based society what these given reflections hint at is that the growth imaginary across modern consumerist societies is deeply rooted and internalizing the behavior that promotes this logic is certainly encouraged. What follows from this for degrowth is not so much the question what personalities should be rejected in a degrowth society (Cattaneo et al., 2012), but rather the question is what kind of values suit the common imaginary of a degrowth society.

Considering the above, it seems valuable to shift our attention towards strong common imaginaries. A common idea of citizenship in the degrowth movement would allow to put strategies for following paths of degrowth into practice. Reflecting upon these can help to create spaces for collective deliberation and dialog in the movement regarding the meaning and implications of such differences and how to handle them.

1.4.3 The Strand of the Imaginary

1.4.3.1 The Crisis of the Imaginary

This degrowth strand stands for the collective imaginary and refers to the representations of reality a society has in common. As opposed to physical systems, biological and social systems have a capacity to create representations of the universe they inhabit. Human

socio-cultural systems are particularly characterized by the fact that they can negotiate these representations, resulting in representations resulting in a common imaginary (Bonaiuti 2012). For any collaborative action a common imaginary is necessary. It is the result of a range of historical developments in which humans have negotiated their common imaginary within certain situations and circumstances.

Thus, modern and postmodern paradigms can be seen as the backdrop against which the contemporary common imaginary, permeated by the economic growth principle, was formed. In light of philosophical history, one of the root causes for the growth paradigm to flourish is related to the Western anthropocentric worldview (Bryant and Goodman, 2004). This notion of humanism is characterized by the idea that human beings are superior among all species and therefore enjoy natural rights over nature (Latouche 2009). This ultimately allows for treating nature as an agglomeration of resources that can be extracted for human exploitation.

The mentioned hegemonic Western view makes reference to the Cartesian mind set in which there is a division between mind and body, reason and matter as well as many other dichotomies. The Cartesian intellect is typically a part of the Western and modern canon, together with the influences from other great thinkers of the time: Baconian science and Newtonian physics as well as Copernicus, Kepler, Galilei and Darwin all played a crucial role in forming this canon and dismissing other aspects of being (Dietrich, 2016, Overton, 2013). Ideas from these scientists and philosophers, in part building upon each other, have formed the basis for the modern dominant worldview in which aesthetics, morality, values, sentiment, feelings, intentions and consciousness are marginalized.

Yet, European modernity is not homogeneous but rather was from the beginning "beset by internal antinomies and contradictions" (Eisenstadt, 2017: 7). Hence, what we

call modernity in the singular form must be seen as the result of certain power relations that affected this formation (Cordero Pedrosa, 2014).External to the dominant discourse, both in and outside of the Western tradition, there have been more holistic world views that did not become dominant. One of these is represented by the hermetic tradition by Paracelsus that refused to see mind and matter as divided and focused on their interconnectedness instead.

In such alternative worldviews knowledge and power did not stem from a mindset of domination, but from the idea of cohabiting with all the elements (Muntemba in Shiva 1988). The Cartesian mindset turns nature into objects and underscores its functional and mechanistic features while positioning humans as rational, objective observers who are separate from nature. This dichotomy is what has enabled the human subjugation of nature., and has produced a world-view in which nature is inert and passive, mechanistic and uniform, divisible and fragmented within itself. It is apart from, and inferior to man, and thus, dominated and exploited by him (Shiva, 1988).

The dominant modern mindset has played an important role in terms of defining the described human-nature relation. The postmodern paradigm co-emerged as a reaction of the modern and is simultaneously a deconstruction and a manifestation of dynamics of modernity (Bonaiuti, 2012).

In this context, the postmodern philosopher Jean-François Lyotard declared that we have reached the end of grand narratives and the beginning of postmodern society. Within such a new paradigm any opportunity of an overall shared meaning has vanished. Religious tradition or ideology provided a shared horizon of meaning and morality, yet it still allowed people to take up a perspective. They could identify with myths and heroes belonging to such ideologies.

However, since the 1970s the common meaning has disappeared or lost influence

on the social imaginary. The postmodern imaginary is consequently polymorphous and fragmented. Grand narratives are substituted by contextualized quotations and a range of different codes and forms replace the universalism that characterized the emancipatory project of modernity.

While a large part of the postmodern condition irrefutably yields the power of freedom and a diversity of expression it also hides the underlying motives for fragmentation and dependence. In this context, Mauro Bonaiuti (2012) proposes that the fragmentation of the imaginary is connected to the dissolving of the social ties that has marked the route from traditional societies to market-based societies. This means, the dissolution of traditional ties and of their symbolic mechanisms can be taken as the central ground for the development of modernity and its symbols.

Consequently, the fragmented nature of the contemporary social imaginary is linked to the proliferation of objects that represent consumer society. This characteristic is coupled with a media system that has the boundless capacity to colonize the common imaginary for which the annual budget is close to that of military spending. Nonetheless, according to Serge Latouche (2010) it would be a thoughtless mistake to conclude that postmodern society is missing a common imaginary altogether. To the contrary: The consumer imaginary is in itself the only shared imaginary of contemporary societies.

The goods that we consume become a source of meaning and identity due to the time that we spend with and for them—even if this identity is restricted and fragmentary. It is this critical analysis of the dominant imaginary that forms the third strand of degrowth. Consequently, *homo consumens* has a tremendous variety of choices at her disposition, however she is restricted to pre-given frames, as she cannot define beforehand the set of things from which to choose.

Several degrowth thinkers consider the notion of economic development and growth as a modern-day and secular version of religious dogmas, just in a different wrapping (Bergh, 2010; Fotopoulos, 2007; Wichterich, 2014). Growth is generally sought after for its own sake. This takes such predominant weight that putting the desirability of growth in doubt tends to lead to a marginalization from a political debate (Cattaneo et al. 2012). A very much common argument against degrowth is that it carries normative assumptions. However, we ought to recognize that sticking to growth *ad infinitum* as a desirable and sustainable path is also a strongly ideological and normative stance to have.

It is pertinent to acknowledge some of the gains made in the name of degrowth thinking in the arena of politics. Among these are the fact that in 2018 over two-hundred scientists almost hundred thousand citizens an open letter to EU institutions calling for an end of economic growth dependency (Akbulut et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, degrowth seems to lack influence as it swims against the tide of the sustainable development agenda, the current reincarnation of development discourse that equates development with growth, broadly acknowledged by governments, global institutions and civil society organizations.

Beyond searching for a cultural wide social explanation for the entrenchment of the growth imaginary it is necessary to consider the interests and power relations of those in power. Many social and ecological indicators show that growth-based development is the ingredient that has made societies come close to general collapse. However, abandoning the growth paradigm and searching for alternative directions must also be considered against the backdrop of corporate vested interests, meaning their expectations of continued financial gains and will to keep power and control over resources (Sekulova et al., 2013).

In light of this, the institutional tendency to establish the rule of form over content helps to understand the continued protection of a development discourse, which has remained despite living in a neoliberal era of deregulation. This seems to point to the capacity of institutions of acting as a void for silently obsolete ideas (Dietrich, 2016).

Moreover, the growth paradigm is not only manifest in societal imaginaries, but also found in individual behavior patterns. Together these ultimately shape broad scale social behavior. Mentioned aspects are encompassed in psychology and behavioral economics research (Bergh, 2010). This research shows that humans have a limited rationality, myopia, a great degree of self-interest, little altruism, a propensity to compare and to seek status and a sensitivity to fashion. When taking into consideration such behaviors together with energy rebound at a large scale they make up a system that is difficult to change and with a lock-in of undesirable human behaviors and technologies. This overall situation highlights the necessity for systemic solutions bound up with clever strategies that yield a high social and political acceptance.

1.4.3.2 Transformation of the Imaginary

Serge Latouche sees a need for a concept that cannot be reduced to logic of the market as is the case with sustainable development. Thus, he argues that degrowth takes in the role of a UFO in the microcosm of politicking, making sure to distinguish itself clearly from other 'lazy' ideas which seek to mend but do not really change things. However, for proper transformation a new mindset is needed with a focal point on what really counts. For example, the issue of unemployment should not be seen as the lack of jobs for the sake of jobs. Within a degrowth mindset this would be counter effective. Some scholars believe that rejecting growth entails giving up on some aspects of human nature in order to change to a different way of being (Latouche, 2010).Degrowth discourse resonates with the Easterlin paradox, which shows that per capita GDP does not correlate with

happiness beyond certain levels of basic satisfied needs (Easterlin et al., 2010). In this context, degrowth implies the abandonment of the growth-based index of GDP, while simultaneously it places ecological sustainability and social equity in the foreground with a focus on well-being. Qualitative differences that cannot be captured by the GDP could allow for socio-environmental improvements while the GDP diminishes. There is clear empirical evidence of the Easterlin paradox in Japan, where between 1958 and 1991 the income per capita grew by six hundred percent. At the same time, the number of people who claimed they were very happy remained essentially the same. Furthermore, the USA and Belgium show a strikingly negative correlation between income and well-being (Bonaiuti, 2012).

At the beginning stages of the project of economic development there was little pressure on ecosystems and people consumed more basic and private goods. During this initial period, the common assumption held was that growth in income is related to higher subjective well-being or happiness (Sekulova et al., 2013). Yet, beyond a certain threshold, the growth of the economy and the population pressure on ecosystems reduces their ability to sustain life and economic activities. Social ties begin to disappear as they are substituted by economic ones and positional competition becomes stronger. It is not surprising to realize that such developments in ecological, economic and social structures may create substantive, even irreversible changes in the ecological, economic and social flows. These affect the enjoyment of life, or *buen vivir* of a particular social organization (Sekulova et al., 2013)**.** There have been two essential causes that mainstream research on subjective well-being has largely left aside. The first one is that the enjoyment of life is dependent on a complex adaptation dynamic (hedonic treadmill) and not on the total quantities of goods consumed (Bonaiuti, 2012). The second is that enjoyment of life is the result of a complex interaction among the different dynamics of: representations,

preferences, values, alterations of the flows of goods and services as well as of economic, ecological and social nature.

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of indices that give more suitable accounts of well-being than the GDP. The most recognized ones for well-being are the HDI (Human Development Index), Herman Daly's Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) and the calculation of the so-called green GDP or PID, meaning the Produit Intérieur Doux, which stands for Soft Domestic Product of the Québécois.

The latter entails corrections by regarding defensive expenditures and others linked to the deterioration of quality of life such as air and water pollution, harmful acoustic effects, traffic accidents, alternating migration, urban crime, the loss of wetlands, the employment of non-renewable resources, and finally, a contemplation for unpaid domestic work. If we consider alternative indicators to the GDP, the 1970s in the USA are roughly the moment and place in history where the tendencies of the GDP and other indices start diverging (Sekulova et al., 2013). This indicates that as GDP growth continues to be pursued beyond a certain point it leaves behind other aspects human prosperity and well-being. In this context, it is not surprising that this correlates with the rise of global neoliberal politics.

Buddhist economics, an alternative approach to economics initiated by Ernst Friedrich Schumacher (1973) concurs with degrowth with regards to certain central assumptions. This kind of economics can provide more integrative descriptions of social reality in comparison to neoclassical economics. Buddhist economics, as the name indicates, relies on teachings from the Buddhist tradition which Ernst Schumacher and later other monks and secular researchers studied. To grasp their meaning, it is useful to highlight the following principles: First, humans are considered as interdependent with nature, giving nature a central position in this economic approach. Second, humans are

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dependent on each other and they can act in ethical ways. Third, the well-being of humans does not only or mainly depend on material consumption. Therefore. both Buddhist economics and degrowth seek to optimize rather than maximize consumption.

An important underlying assumption within Buddhism is that world peace cannot be reached without inner peace within people themselves. Sivaraksa (1992) thus advocates more self-sufficiency, independence and inter-dependence of communities and people rather than relying on outside experts and powerful businesses. From this angle, Buddhist economics shows parallels to Gandhian economics with a tendency to embrace small-scale economics and technology.

Considering these alternatives from a critical perspective, one can argue to be cautious of dogmatic localism, communalism, idealizing nature. A move towards life in smaller communities can be seen as a necessary condition for improvement. but people might stay greedy and full of hatred in spite of such a change (Hirschbrunn, 2014).

Furthermore, even within Buddhist economics the question whether structural change in this sense should mean abandoning capitalism is widely contested. For instance, the Thai Buddhist monk and writer Prayudh Payutto argues that by following the teachings of right livelihood—the eighth practice of the eightfold noble path—ethical forms of doing business and acquiring wealth are possible (Payutto and Evans, 1994). Growth critical voices such as Spanish degrowth scholar Jorge Riechmann condemn the inherent violence of economic imperialism and uphold that competition leads to putting one's own interests above those of others (Riechmann, 2015).

Buddhist economics is different from most justice-based degrowth approaches in that it considers that both rich and poor people as experiencing the nature of suffering— which is the first noble truth. In contrast to most degrowth perspectives, Buddhist economics holds that not only poor people, but also rich people suffer under their

respective circumstances. The reason is that suffering is not due to outside factors, but due to human attachment. In this light, rather than considering the rich only as perpetrators of violence and the poor as victims of this violence, all humans are met with compassion. This differentiation seems helpful if degrowth strives to be genuinely transformative and to reach the hearts of all kinds of people while dealing with one of its major challenges: Giving the concept of sufficiency a positive connotation (Hirschbrunn, 2014). Buddhism contends that poor people are just as capable in developing towards well-being as the rich, once they have enough to meet their basic needs.

1.4.4 Coronavirus Pandemic as Crisis

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the newest expression of crisis is the global pandemic caused by the virus COVID-19. Official data shows that to date this has already taken over 2.6 million lives globally, while in some areas that had managed to flatten the contagion curve the tendency is rising again (WHO 2020). It is uncertain how it might develop in the future.

All over the globe people at the heart of healthcare and social provisioning for essentials are struggling against the spread of the virus while caring for the ill people and keeping basic operations running. Indirect effects of the virus are massive impacts from the economic slowdown, and in part due to lockdown situations, such as unemployment and an estimated economic contraction of 5.2 percent of the global GDP in 2020 (World Bank 2020).

In light of this, degrowth advocates defending that *the pandemic slowdown is not our degrowth*, (Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance, 2020a). According to degrowth supporters this crisis has exposed the weaknesses of the growth-obsessed capitalist economy, which is rooted in the exploitation of people and nature, and yet is considered normal. Measures proposed include re-imagining a different future where life is put at the

center of economic activity. In this vision, the necessity of work time and activities are re-evaluated in the light of good life for all and society is democratized and organized around provisioning of essential goods and services. Political and economic systems are based on the principle of solidarity (Barlow et al., 2020).

The financial crises, increasing social inequality, the effects of climate change as well as the Corona pandemic are all related to human activity; in particular, the growth-oriented capitalist system. Like around seventy-five per cent of all infectious human diseases the Coronavirus is a zoonotic disease, of animal origin. Human infection by such diseases is directly related to loss of biodiversity caused by humans and an increased opportunity for pathogens to pass between animals and people as well as a weakening of a system which supports human life. Hence, although due to its media presence it might seem as if the Corona pandemic stands out from all other mentioned crises in terms of its strong and sudden impact on human life. It highlights the interconnectedness of human and non-human all aspects of life as well as the gravity of already existing crises.

1.5. Degrowth Strengths and Limitations

So far in this chapter I have introduced the action-led science of degrowth, which identifies the pursuit of infinite economic growth as the root cause of global interlocking crises (Baykan, 2007, Brownhill et al., 2012, Wichterich, 2014). I suggested to contemplate its theory in terms of three strands: the bioeconomics strand, the social strand and the strand of the imaginary, which also addresses the mentioned crises. In this chapter I present what I consider degrowth's strengths, limitations and opportunities.

1.5.1. Strengths of Degrowth

First, the fact that degrowth addresses several inter-related crises that we have been facing globally since roughly 2008, showing how they are related to the problem of growth gives

me a certain sense of clarity: There is a coherence in the argument that a limited planet cannot withstand an economy that pursues limitless growth—resource extraction, production, consumption and waste—and that this tendency must change to our economic activities on the planet to be sustainable (Meadows et al., 1972). I thus resonate with degrowth because it makes a logical, convincing statement about both the limitations of the Earth and the ways in which the human population has surpassed them by upholding the growth paradigm despite well-known threats this entails.

Second, beyond pointing at the bio-physical problem through its first strand degrowth takes an ethical standpoint. Rather than claiming in a neo-Malthusian or eco-fascist fashion that there are too many people on Earth and that fewer would lead to less damage, degrowth asserts that—as the common saying goes—*there is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed*. Hence, there is a problem of unjust distribution that must be addressed. This is done through the social strand.

In this context, degrowth has been said to promote deontological and consequential justice. Deontology was used to translate *Pflichtenlehre* (duty-teaching), with the Latin stem *deon*, that means duty (Louden, 1996). Degrowth proponents see the ethical need or duty to endorse an egalitarian redistribution of resource allocation. Consequential justice refers to the ways in which it does so, namely that a movement towards degrowth must be democratically led to ensure its just implementation.

Third, as the strand of the collective imaginary expresses, degrowth represents an invitation to imagine a world where minds are no longer colonized by growth (Latouche, 2010) and societies are no longer determined by a growth-addicted economy. This notion is in line with peace scholar Elise Boulding's idea of a positive future imagination (2003).

In her work, Boulding writes about applying Fred Polak's early insight that the human capacity to generate mental images of the totally other—that which has never been

experienced or recorded, which he sees as the key dynamic of history (Woodhouse and Santiago, 2012). At every level of consciousness, ranging from the individual to the macro-societal, we continually create images about what is not yet there—the future. This motivates our intentions and then move us purposefully forward.

In the case of degrowth, we can imagine an economy that works differently than the one we are used to. While an economy per se is necessary due to the material condition of the human existence on this planet, the etymology of economy is *oikonomia* in ancient Greek, and essentially means *managing the household* (Natali, 1995, Leshem, 2016).

In this sense, the question that can be posed is what kind of economy can we imagine that is peaceful and sustainable? As we speak of sustainability—what is it that we want to sustain (Akbulut et al., 2019)? The necessity to generate change in the collective imaginary is what distinguishes degrowth from traditional material struggles and so-called old social movements concerned with materialist concerns. Degrowth includes and goes beyond materialism. It advocates a kind of cultural revolution that aims at "a redefinition of the 'good life' towards forms of voluntary simplicity, the return to the 'essential', and the possibilities for non-material quests, e.g. having more time for relational, political, caring, artistic or intellectual pursuits" (Akbulut et al., 2019: 3).

Degrowth can be considered an example of a future imagination that has concrete effects in the here and now. It also can be considered a *nowtopia* in the sense of Chris Carlsson (D'Alisa et al., 2014)—a way to create pointers for action that are more in line with the global eco-social situation and the values of peaceful conviviality.

Fourth, degrowth proposes change from within. This motto resonated with me from the very beginning of my studies and forms one of the basic lessons at the peace studies program in Castellón. In this context, I recall learning quoting phrases in class

such as the one Sy Miller and Jill Jackson expressed in their song "Let There be Peace on Earth and Let it Begin with Me" (Quinn, 2014:164) or—more famously—Mahatma Gandhi's message to *be the change that you want to see in the world*. In his words it says:

> if we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him [...] We need not wait to see what others do. (Gandhi, 2013: 241)

Miller and Jackson's song as well as Gandhi's message convey that peace can and should begin with oneself. To me, change from within is certainly to be understood as an act of peace work that starts with the individual. Beyond this, I also understand *within* in the collective sense, resonating with the UNESCO Preamble which says "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed". (1993: 2). In other words, *within* can refer to the singular as opposed to the plural or to the interior as opposed to the exterior aspects of being. The combinations of these possibilities can be seen in the four quadrants proposed by Ken Wilber's integral theory (1997), which was used by Wolfgang Dietrich in his *Many Peaces Trilogy*, as a model to structure the peace families he identified (2012, 2018a, 2013).

A further way I understand change from within is from a geographic standpoint. The degrowth movement emerged in Europe, which has been seen as the cradle of 'modern civilization'[14] and capitalism, consisting of industrialized countries that are seen as winners of development and belong to the privileged—the North. In other words, people in Europe should benefit most from the growth paradigm because their region is among the most developed and economically prosperous. I use the word should here because as for instance Boaventura de-Sousa-Santos notes, the South (2012) can also

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[14] I write these terms in inverted commas since the words modern and civilization are both problematic. They obscure the situatedness and violence of the modern project, where Europe locates itself as the center of the world placing the rest at the periphery (Dussel 1995). Modern civilization is an auto-denomination by Euro-modern people whose discourse on modernity shows a sense of superiority and the categorical imperative to 'develop' the so-called uncivilized, primitives or barbarians. Throughout the thesis I attempt to specify what kind of modernity I refer to, to signal the situatedness of the European project of modernity, as well as the existence of multiple modernities (Casanova 2011).

exist in the North and vice versa. To me it seems ethical for people like myself, who come from a privileged place, to scrutinize the life which we have had the benefit to enjoy. A place that has been portrayed as superior in development and at the expense of many in the South, which is the majority world, where development represents what they are not (Omar, 2012).

Fifth, degrowth brings theory and practice together by incorporating an action-based science (Martínez-Alier et al., 2014). This means, that many of the concepts scientifically debated, such as degrowth in itself, first arise as activist ideas or slogans, stemming from their experience in real life degrowth initiatives (Demaria et al., 2013).

On the other hand, degrowth initiatives tend to come together with theorists for example through degrowth conferences and other platforms designated for dialog and among people who think and people who do (Beling et al., 2018). This comes close to peacebuilding professor John Paul Lederach's proposal (1995), which asserts that the gap between theory and practice in the field of peace needs to be bridged. People who are prone to engaging in theory building should become more involved in activism and those who are active should engage in theory building to mutually enrich each other's perspectives (Lederach, 1995).

Sixth, the degrowth sources are taken from several different disciplines. This allows multiple perspectives to come together (Demaria et al., 2013). It also makes up the diversity and heterogeneity of the movement, which is in turn helpful for common deliberation and a construction of alternatives, similar to the interdisciplinary character of peace studies.

Seventh, the idea of degrowth in itself is radical. In the truest sense of the Latin word *radix, radic-* it refers to *root* (Urban, 2014). Thus, degrowth acts as a *missile concept* (Demaria et al., 2013) or a "UFO in the microcosm of politicking" (Latouche,

2009a: 5) as it openly denounces the contradiction in current dominant discourses that continue to promote development as economic growth. This makes degrowth safe from being hijacked by profit-driven businesses, as has happened to so many other concepts related to sustainability (Robra and Heikkurinen, 2019). Degrowth's critical gaze also scrutinizes the global development agenda of sustainable development, which is in line with the notion of development-as-growth (Kothari et al., 2019). While I do not consider myself rebellious—not inclined towards going against the established system—I do see the need to ask deep questions and find answers that are coherent and logical, as described in the first strength I mention on degrowth. I personally find this stance of degrowth brave. Ideas might be valuable even if they are unconventional and embraced by few, which brings me to the limitations section.

1.5.2. Limitations of Degrowth

In this section I point out some of the limitations that I find in degrowth research - in the spirit of constructive criticism -and link these to opportunities for further research, deeper understanding and possible paths towards a practical implementation of a degrowth agenda. I take into consideration some key insights from my master's dissertation from 2015, briefly explaining them to revise, strengthen and build upon them.

The first limitation of degrowth is tightly linked to the first and last strengths mentioned in the previous section: Degrowth expresses a scientifically established truth related to the problem of infinite growth on a finite planet and hereby dares to question what is conventionally accepted—the principle of economic growth. This way, degrowth advocates a profound kind of social transformational process that deviates from the current globally accepted reformist discourses on sustainable development, which continue to rely on growth.

Consequently, the degrowth movement lacks support from the most influential actors in all areas of society including: government representatives, politicians, fiscal authorities and leaders in the economic sector. Moreover, state institutions rely on the logic of an economic growth paradigm as a necessity, which explains why none of these actors question it or seek alternative models.

It hence seems logical as Robert Ayres (2008) put it, that none of the relevant economic actors, be it government leaders or private sector executives, have an inducement that is compatible with a no growth policy. The same applies to middle-range actors such as medium and large-scale market economies, which obviously adhere to the market logic.

It is also logical that economically driven institutions support growth because they directly benefit from it. However, there exist organizations that put care, health and education at the center. These social services that are crucial to sustain life also seem to be caught in the growth logic, although they cover social necessities. Why do socially oriented institutions not defy the growth logic?

One reason for this might be the self-perpetuating nature of existing institutions: According to Wolfgang Dietrich (2013) institutions tend to be conservative because of their intrinsic interest to reproduce themselves, giving priority to (their own existence) form over content (what they offer). The capitalist logic that has permeated all institutions and entities related to the capitalist system is to *grow or die*.

Overall, although there might be organizations that focus on the social and ecological sides of the sustainability narrative, embracing development-as-social policy rather than development-as-growth, they are still within the growth logic, which is deeply embedded in the global development agenda due to its universalizing character. The current version of this agenda is being advocated by the Sustainable Development Goals

(Kothari et al., 2019). Since this UN-led agenda requires a commitment from the states, all public and private funds available are tied to its narrative, which stresses the necessity for continued growth as one of its goals.

The lack of appeal is not only present among the overall top level and middle range actors but also true for the broad public. Why this might be so becomes clearer by understanding the concept of hegemony as I expose below. However, in this context it is important to acknowledge the increased visibility of and support for degrowth in the political and social spheres: In September 2018 more than 200 hundred scientists signed an open letter to the main European institutions with the title *Europe, It's Time to End the Growth Dependency*, which was then endorsed by almost 100,000 citizens. Moreover, the degrowth network has over a hundred organizations with three thousand active members, who are by and large located in Europe, but also in North and South America, the Philippines, India, Tunisia as well as Turkey (Kothari et al., 2019). These numbers are significant and worth mentioning, but in terms of support, degrowth has dwarfed the environmental justice movement in the South, which is comparable in its aim and scope (Akbulut et al., 2019).

In order to gain a more analytical perspective on how and why the growth logic is so entrenched it helps to consider Gramsci's theories on hegemony and state formation. The notion of cultural hegemony asserts that the greatest power lies within the hidden and widely accepted sides of a discourse (Gramsci, 1971). According to this Marxist philosopher, discourse is the most important means by which humans are motivated to think and act in certain manners, while power is being kept among the few whose discourse dominates.

In a recent degrowth article by Giacomo D'Asila and Giorgios Kallis (2020) the authors argue that there is a research gap in the realm of theory on the state in connection

to degrowth and propose a Gramscian approach for this. They make reference to Tim Jackson's work (2009), who speaks for prosperity without growth, advocating resource caps, green bonds and limitation of working hours but sees that the neo-liberal state is an obstacle for implementation of these.

The D'Asila and Kallis(2020) adopt Gramsci's wider notion of the integral state, which in accordance with neo-Gramscian scholars can be conceived as:

> not a rational and independent subject with an indisputable purpose; rather, it expresses heterogeneous social forces and organizations that operate, more often than not, against each other, result of conflicting relations and ideological struggles. (2020: 5)

This understanding of the state shows both, its relational aspect and the way in which it is permeated by shifting power and conflict. In this model, the state can be seen as composed of political society—which is usually identified as the state—and additionally civil society. Political society includes the army, the police, the judiciary system, bureaucracy, national education as well as public health systems. Civil society is comprised of institutions such as private schools, the Church, associations of volunteers, NGOs, trade unions and families. Both parts of the integral state are subject to coercion and consent.

The two parts of the integral state are not separate but organically interwoven und mutually reinforcing, yet they take on different roles. Political society is the realm of coercion and legal enforcement, whereas civil society can be seen as the stage where different groups struggle for ideological consent.

By adopting this model, the authors debunk the idea—also prevalent in degrowth scholarship—that the state is the locus of violence and civil society and a place of horizontalism, harmony and freedom. In other words, those institutions that seem independent of the state are not. They are subject to power relations just like political

society. Hence, there is an entanglement of the ruler and the ruled (D'Alisa and Kallis, 2020: 6).

This in turn relates back to the notion of hegemony. Hegemony responds to demands of people that claim to represent 'common sense'. This term refers to "the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become 'common' in any given epoch" (Gramsci et al., 1971: 322).

This understanding of common sense resonates with what Johan Galtung's term cultural violence (1990) denotes. The growth paradigm is understood as common sense by both, civil and political society. Its normality is what makes the underlying violence of it opaque. In sum, degrowth shows a limitation in that it tries to work against a belief that is considered common sense by powerful actors. These cannot be only limited to the powerful, including political and economic elites and their vested interests (Crano, 1983). The Gramscian theory of the integral state shows how ruler and ruled are entangled through the hegemony and how civil society too can be seen as part of the state permeated with power relations since it is here where the struggles of ideologies take place and the notion of what is common sense arises (Green, 2002).

In consequence, degrowth can change the state by means reordering of common senses at the level of civil society. In Johan Galtung's perspective this would include a shift in culture. Once again, the opportunity that matches the limitation of an entrenched cultural violence marked by powerful actors is the realization that the underlying beliefs are what gives power to these actors. It is thus important to pay attention to places where discourse shifts and new understandings can emerge. While most leading figures have failed to propose or even consider degrowth, there is a notable exception. The highest spiritual leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis in his second encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Praised Be You) in 2015 expressed the following:

> We know how unsustainable is the behavior of those who constantly consume and destroy, while others are not yet able to live in a way worthy of their human dignity. That is why the time has come to accept degrowth[15] in some parts of the world, in order to provide resources for other places to experience healthy growth. (2015: §193)

Besides mentioning degrowth, the 2015 letter to all Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church contains ideas that are shared by the degrowth movement: A concern with ecology, justice, democracy, meaning of life references made to lessons learned from bioeconomics, such as the flow of energy and anti-utilitarian positions where he refuses to understand our human orientation as something determined by calculations in terms of narrow self-interest (Sachs, 2017).

Throughout the last paragraphs I have explained how I consider the growth discourse to be ingrained in the hegemonic discourse, which legitimizes policies and of the interwoven parts of the integral state, political and civil society. I have also claimed that the way to reach a degrowth state needs to pass through the task of transforming what is considered as normal or common sense. This includes exposing the cultural violence of the growth paradigm. However, by far not all who criticize growth consider degrowth to be the best alternative.

In this context, a second argument against degrowth is that the idea of growth is in itself vague, polymorphic and ambiguous, which makes its counter-movement, the notion of degrowth, ambiguous as well (Weiss and Cattaneo, 2017). Hence to allow for a productive dialog towards enhancing the sustainable degrowth idea, it is paramount to deconstruct the underlying meaning of growth in complex, coupled ecological economic and social systems. If not—as some scholars warn—sustainable degrowth will remain just a new antifetish, which means it becomes a fetish in itself (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010). Instead, it should propose specific measures.

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[15] degrowth is translated from the original word in the speech, *decrecimiento* in Spanish

Another degrowth advocate, Onofrio Romano (2012) questions the deeper sense of degrowth by asking whether it is able to contribute to rediscovering the meaning of democracy. In his analysis based on the two Greek concepts of *teukein* (technique) and *legein* (sense of life). Romano criticizes that degrowth lacks remains stuck in a neutralitarian regime that has marked the growth regime too, since it only pays attention to the conditions necessary for life's reproduction as opposed to being concerned with the sense of life. In his words:

> Waving the threat of catastrophe ("Degrowth or collapse", as Bonaiuti asserts, paraphrasing the old motto "socialism or barbarie"), degrowth evokes nothing but the necessity of setting up a world compatible with our species life, without saying nothing explicit about the sense of such a life, other than in a cursory manner and by relation (e.g. arguments of the type "once life becomes less wasteful of energy, it will be more beautiful to live", a hypothesis that waits to be substantiated). I argue therefore that degrowth too is a "technique". It is not concerned with the sense of life. (Romano, 2012: 585)

It is arguable whether degrowth's sense is to be concerned with offering a different meaning of life other than growth or it can remain an umbrella term that can be filled by multiple different meanings, i.e. a floating signifier. The aspect of being an empty shell can be argued to make sense, as a starting point.

It has also been criticized that degrowth actually nourishes the idea of growth, like any concept that is created in opposition to another (Drews and Antal, 2016). George Lakoff's work *Don't Think of a White Elephant* (Lakoff, 2004) illustrates this idea. He argues in line with psychological research that negating an object or idea may actually prompt thoughts about it, just like repeating a myth increases its familiarity (even though this is done to dispel it), which may ultimately reinforce it.

Examples of this are that degrowth advocates often assert that GDP reduction is not merely a goal but in fact it is rather considered a likely consequence of strategies they propose. Degrowth supporters are regularly pressured to state phrases such as *degrowth is not about declining GDP* or *their recession is not our degrowth*. From this perspective,

employing a slogan such as degrowth can be especially disadvantageous (Drews and Antal, 2016).

However, as Drews and Antal argue (2016) people who believe that conflict is necessary for social change may argue that attention ought to be focused on economic growth anyways. After all, it is not by accident that Marx, whose theory of social change focuses on conflict, titled his book *Capital*. On the other hand, those who think that in this case conflict leads to impasse instead of change may become frustrated.

To me, the anti-stance of degrowth is not conclusively wrong. I thus align with the notion that conflict is necessary for social change and is in line with Francisco Muñoz (2006),who states that conflict is a naturally arising tension between different viewpoints that may escalate to become violent conflict. It is not conflict, but violent conflict that we peace workers seek to avoid, stop and transform. Hence, to me it seems rather like a wedge under a door that is nearly shut and was hard to find in the first place—but that could lead to a different discourse. Degrowth is a place where we can begin discussing away from the long list of buzzwords, which have been co-opted by businesses, starting with the notion of sustainability. I thus deem degrowth a suitable counter-part to the growth paradigm and certainly a coherent, rational and logical way of arguing that infinite economic growth is obsolete. Yet, where can degrowth take us? As the authors Drews and Antal express (2016), a movement can challenge the status quo, but to succeed, it should resonate with the deepest perceptions of people. This statement above is what most puzzles me regarding the possibility of 'success' of the degrowth movement. Degrowth precisely challenges some of the deepest perceptions of people regarding development, prosperity, well-being and 'the good life'—which in the contemporary hegemonic discourse are all related to increased money making.

Hence, the power of degrowth to challenge the status quo at the same time seems

to be one of its main limitations. Three different groups of alternative wordings are suggested by the authors to overcome the problem of the degrowth concept, including the following: First, slogans that are unlikely to trigger the automatic negative effect, such as 'a-growth' or post-growth'. Second, concepts that point to different types of economy such as 'sustainable economy', 'new economy' and 'steady-state economy', where the growth frame is not repeated. Third, the use of broader slogans such as 'good life' or 'buen vivir', 'great transition' and 'stable prosperity'.

There are pros and cons to each of these kinds of wordings. The first grouping might be difficult to remember since they are dull, too cryptic or too long. The second and the third group have the tendency to be too similar to words previously co-opted by the growth paradigm. Hence, the alternative concepts do not solve the risk of being hijacked or remaining unheard altogether.

Although degrowth is provocative and needs to defend its stance by explaining it is not just about reversing the GDP, it has the capacity to enter political debate, even if this is through such a strategy. What becomes apparent however, is that degrowth alone seems to lack the power to convince broad sections of society. The aspect of wording is explored further in Chapter 3.

A fourth crucial point of critique is related to the fact that degrowth discourse is mainly shaped by authors from high-income countries (Weiss and Cattaneo, 2017). Although I pointed out earlier the focus on change from within in the geographic sense as a positive aspect, there are some pitfalls to this understanding. These have come forward in degrowth debates as a result of an increasing interest in the synergies among degrowth and environmental justice movements, which in many ways are seen as complementary but not without frictions (Akbulut et al., 2019). Within this increasingly globalized world

there is a need to acknowledge and pay attention to the effects of existing entanglements in North-South relations.

As I have stated earlier degrowth first emerged in the Global North, the overdeveloped world. The message given by degrowth pioneer Serge Latouche(2009a)is that degrowth in the North is envisioned in order to leave space for the South to engage in decelerating growth. However, when looking more closely at the narrative of degrowth there is an ambivalence in the way these ideas are presented. Serge Latouche wrote in an article in the newspaper Le Monde diplomatique:

> Degrowth must apply to the South as much as to the North if there is to be any chance to stop Southern societies from rushing up the blind alley of growth economics. Where there is still time, they should aim not for development but for disentanglement—removing the obstacles that prevent them from developing differently....Southern countries need to escape their economic and cultural dependence on the North and rediscover their own histories—interrupted by colonialism, development and globalization—to establish distinct indigenous cultural identities....Insisting on growth in the South, as though it were the only way out of the misery that growth created, can only lead to further westernization. (Latouche, 2004: 2-3)

It seems clear that Latouche aims to avoid westernization and to allow for a disentanglement so that the South can develop differently. He also argues in his book *Farewell to Growth* that growth is only a profitable business if the costs are carried by nature, future generations, the health of consumers, wage-earners' working conditions, and—especially—the countries of the South. (Latouche, 2009a). Moreover, the North has a huge ecological debt towards the South if the costs of establishing and maintaining a growth society have been carried by the South.

Despite the insistence of Latouche on the *disentanglement* of the South and ideas relating to *have them do it their way*, within this discourse there still a tendency of the North to impose its ideas on the South. This remark resonates with Dengler and Seebacher's caution about the risk that the Global North might be —once again—setting a global agenda, which would reproduce existing asymmetries (2019). The authors clarify

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and reify that it should be seen as a Northern complement to Southern movements, concepts and theories.

A more concrete risk is that a degrowth transition in the North could have negative short-term impacts, such as people losing their jobs in all kinds of export industries in the South (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019).

The final observation that is both a point in itself and one that emerges from the foregoing ones: The degrowth movement resonates with feminist perspectives in significant ways, yet feminist reasoning is not yet an integral part of degrowth activism and scholarship.

For instance, in 1988, feminist economist Marylin Waring criticized the GDP as an index for not accounting for unpaid work usually done by women (Waring and Steinem, 1988). Her book *If Women Counted* gave rise to a broad range of work on possibilities of valuing, preserving and rewarding the care work that sustains life. By referring to a similar disregard for the natural environment, Waring also gave a wake-up call to consider the crucial importance of the ecology (Bjørnholt and McKay, 2014).

Moreover, particularly the field of ecofeminism represents what some call the *second wave of degrowth*, in the 1990s. The first wave is represented by growth critiques within ecological economics and post-development literature arising in 1970s. In line with ecological economists and post-developmentalists, ecofeminists critiqued unsustainable and neo-colonial patterns of overproduction and overconsumption, and made proposals of, for instance, a sufficiency economy and the subsistence perspective as alternatives. Despite these crucial contributions a lack of feminist voices in degrowth discourse has been recorded (Wichterich, 2014). This issue gained visibility at the 4th Degrowth Conference in Leipzig in 2014.

Developments over the past five years have shown increased interaction and dialog between feminism and degrowth theories and practices. During the 5th Degrowth Conference in Budapest, the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) was founded, which was used to further dialog on the integration of feminist perspectives into degrowth discourse. This practice was continued during the 6th Degrowth Conference in Malmö and the 1st North-South Conference on Degrowth-Decrecimiento in Mexico City (Dengler et al., 2016).

As FaDA's website explains, during these meetings feminism(s) and degrowth were well present and, in part, discussions were held on the identity, content, logistics, common activities and on how to proceed in general. What stands out from these reflections shown is that, for the time being, an integrally feminist degrowth approach is a project in the making rather than a reality. In light of this, the concept 'alliance' may allow for a thorough consideration of contradictions and dissent of degrowth and feminisms which will inevitably arise at least with some strands of feminist scholarship (Dengler et al., 2016).

Moreover, it was stressed that not all feminisms align equally well with a degrowth paradigm (ibid). Ecofeminism was pointed out by feminist scholar Ariel Salleh as the feminist strand closest to degrowth while she pointed out the need to make its non-essentialist nature clear. Other feminism types likely to become fellow travelers for degrowth mentioned were materialist feminism, postcolonial feminism and the more radical parts of feminist economics.

1.6. Degrowth—Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have introduced degrowth as an activist led science that is an "equitable downscaling 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 et al., 2010: 511). I have provided a contemporary context by sketching its relationship with other umbrella terms such as the Pluriverse, Social and Solidarity Economy and Transition discourses. Moreover, I have made remarks on a few relevant theoretical building blocks that have been in part taken up by degrowth discourse. I point out the relevance of the Marxist concepts of primitive accumulation, alienation and the metabolic rift. I also commented on Polanyi's idea of fictitious commodities and Illich's notion of conviviality. Degrowth offers a multiplicity of practical responses, of which I have introduced research oppositional activism, reformism and building alternatives within the system.

Its theory can be explained in terms of three theoretical strands—the bioeconomics strand, social strand and collective imaginary strand—that respond to global interlocking crises in the economic, ecological, social and collective imaginary spheres. Degrowth sees the principle of limitless economic growth prevalent in the collective imaginary as the root problem of these crises. This growth paradigm is an integral part of the dominant development discourse, which emerged in the aftermath of the second World War and has remained as an essential aspect of the global contemporary sustainable development agenda. Hence, the fourth crisis which is latent but crucial is that the collective imaginary is colonized growth. In the following chapter I discuss degrowth by referring to its strengths and limitations.

Moreover, I have presented a series of observations about degrowth theory, beginning with its strengths: (1) It makes a logical convincing statement, linking the existence of diverse interrelated global crises to the economic growth paradigm. (2) Degrowth takes an ethical standpoint regarding the limits of growth, by seeking deontological and consequential justice, in other words: a degrowth of injustice and a just

kind of degrowth. (3) Degrowth calls for a change in the collective imaginary, which can benefit from fostering future imagination of a more peaceful world. (4) It seeks change from within: within the individual, within the collective culture and within the North. The North is particularly relevant since it is the cradle of modern Western notions of development and modernity and has set the global growth agenda. (5) Degrowth brings theory and practice together. (6) It is interdisciplinary. (7) It addresses the problem of growth from the root.

Subsequently I expose a number of limitations in degrowth, which are at times composed as multiple comparable points. I point these out in the spirit of constructive criticism. For the purpose of being constructive, where I see it fit, I already connect them with opportunities for change: (1) The fact degrowth dares to voice that the principle of limitless economic growth embedded in the dominant capitalist system is a serious problem clearly deviates from socially accepted discourse. It therefore lacks support at all levels: leadership, middle ranges and broad public. In this concept, I refer to the Gramscian concept of cultural hegemony. (2) The term degrowth has been argued to be ambiguous, an anti-fetish that turns into a fetish and an empty technique rather than a sense giving idea. However, in this sense one can even argue that (3) degrowth in a way gives strength to the idea it opposes. I deem this to be relative by claiming the necessity for (nonviolent) conflict in order for change to happen. (4) Degrowth can be critiqued from the perspectives of the South, once again making the North become the agenda setter. Moreover, a focus on change from within risks not considering adverse short-term consequences (for example of employment loss in large industrial sectors) in the South. (5) Feminism has not (yet) become a fully integrated part of degrowth reasoning. In light of this, FaDA can be seen as a significant advancement in the creation of an alliance between degrowth and feminism.

CHAPTER 2—Feminist Degrowth

You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time. Angela Davis

You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. Audre Lorde

So far, I have introduced degrowth as a social movement with potential for transformation that addresses inter-related problems we are facing globally in economic, ecological and social spheres. I have also hinted at the potential of considering feminism as a potential ally of the degrowth movement and as a lens to scrutinize degrowth as I had done in my master's dissertation. In light of this, I have acknowledged the emergence of the Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA), which is dedicated to making feminism and integral part of degrowth reasoning, and a number of publications of the topic. The main reason for undertaking this is that if degrowth pursues the peaceful transformation of society it ought to be just and—consequently— feminist too.

In this chapter I explore the idea of feminist degrowth. As exposed in the introduction of this thesis, it makes little sense to say that feminism *in general* is suitable for an alliance with degrowth since feminism is a heterogeneous and plural movement with internal contradictions. There exist feminist discourses, such as neoliberal feminisms and popular feminism (Rottenberg, 2017, Banet-Weiser et al., 2019, Banet-Weiser, 2018), that neatly fit in the dominant capitalist growth paradigm, as they advocate gender equality without questioning structural injustices. These tend to dominate precisely because of their ability to leave the status quo unquestioned, through a focus on individual choices.

In the previous chapters I have made the point that contemporary industrial capitalist systems and global development discourses rely on an unquestioned notion of

limitless economic growth, which is a root cause of global interlocking crises. Here I claim that feminisms that work within the growth logic inherent in capitalist systems are not suitable to enhance and promote degrowth. In the initial section of this chapter, I outline different ways in which capitalism is linked with patriarchy.

Based on these I ideas, I examine different kinds of growth-critical feminism, which consequently may be seen as theoretical sources of inspiration for degrowth theory. The guiding question hereby is: What can feminist perspectives contribute to degrowth? In my reflections, I build upon and move beyond the specific features I have pointed out as features of a feminism that resonates with degrowth.

In the third part of this chapter, I elaborate on scholarship that has specifically addressed degrowth from feminist perspectives. Based on a structure proposed by Christa Wichterich (2014) during the 4th international Degrowth Conference in Leipzig, I divide these into care, sharing and subsistence perspectives. Finally, I elaborate on a series of limitations and possibilities of my findings in relation to feminist degrowth.

2.1. Feminism, Capitalism and Patriarchy

The capitalist system, besides fostering social inequality and ecological degradation is patriarchal. In this subchapter, I do not intend to provide a complete or comprehensive list of arguments. Instead I name a number of common ways in which patriarchy and the economy are interwoven: First, capitalist societies are based on a historical divide between paid productive work and unpaid reproductive or care work, the latter being considered women's work. Second, care work is unlimited and invisible. Third, the capitalist system depends on the exploitation of care work. Fourth, the monetized care sector is underpaid and among the first to suffer in times of economic hardship. Fifth, in the paid work sector women have less access to money and powerful positions than men.

Sixth, many women who are part of the work carry a double burden since they remain responsible for unpaid reproductive work. Seventh, poverty is gendered: females have less than males.

As the list above shows, there are several ways in which the growth-based capitalist system treats men and women differently: Traditionally labor is split into man's productive work and woman's reproductive work, which is also called care work. The former is remunerated and the latter not (Léveillé, 1988). Whereas productive work normally entails visible outcomes and a divide into work and leisure times, household work is never ending and it is invisible too (Demaria et al., 2013). Care work mostly remains unpaid, which means that GDP does not include it (Waring and Steinem, 1988). Nevertheless, society relies on this 'free' work in order to be able to carry out productive work. In fact, the capitalist market is just a small part of all the reproductive work that sustains it. It can be seen as the tip of an iceberg, which a hidden economy lies underneath, and includes the kind of work necessary to reproduce and preserve life, making all other activities possible (Bianchi, 2012).

In the past few decades, the entry of females into the paid labor force has been significant, especially in the Western world. From the perspective of the growth-oriented capitalist system, it has been argued that women are the largest untapped source of the market (Barletta, 2003). While this could be considered the first step towards gender equality, there are two problems: First, there is a pay gap between men and women, which means that for equal work women earn less than men (Graf et al., 2018).

Secondly, there is a discrimination against women in terms of access to leadership positions in managerial and political sector (Chisholm-Burns et al., 2017).The term commonly employed to describe this difficulty of women in the work force is *glass ceiling*, which is a metaphor of the invisible barrier that many women face as they

progress through the ranks of their professions but at are at a certain point obstructed in their efforts to reach the upper levels.

Considering these two statements, there are different manifestations of the gender pay gap with differences between states, for example: the type of jobs held by women, the consequences of taking career breaks or shifts toward part-time work for childrearing and prioritizations of family life. Moreover, the paid care work sector is occupied in a large majority by female workers, whereby less than five percent of the hands-on care work force are male (Hayes, 2017). The areas of care work and social work that tend to be occupied by women are underpaid and are also the first branches which suffer from financial cutbacks. Furthermore there is well-documented proof of gender discrimination in the access to jobs, education, health and political representation, which show perseverance of gender inequalities when it comes to life choices and life chances (Blossfeld et al., 2015). In addition, women who are part of the paid labor force tend to take on a double burden of paid and unpaid work, since domestic labor is expected to be carried out by them (Pürckhauer and Beck, 2014, Martinez-Alier et al., 2014). Even if men are now 'helping in the household' this does not mean that there is equality (Adichie, 2018). This is illustrated by French artist Emma (Emma and Dimitrijevic, 2018) who has created a comic on the gendered phenomenon of mental load. This is the work of having to think of and plan certain aspects of life, which everybody must do to a certain extent. Yet, this burden of unpaid organizing, list-making and planning tend to fall more upon women to manage their lives, as well as the lives of family members.

Economic disparity between men and women is also clearly visible among the global poor (Bradshaw et al., 2017). In fact, women form disproportionately high percentages of the poor (Kabeer, 2011). This phenomenon is not only due to a lack of income, but it is also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender bias in

societies and governments. This includes poverty of choices and opportunities that lead to the possibility to enjoy basic rights such as freedom, respect, and dignity, and to live a long, healthy, and creative life (Conceição, 2019). Moreover, according to feminist economist Julie Nelson (2017) the discipline of economics is androcentric and patriarchal. Hence, the market economy projects a public world which has been traditionally male-defined. Over the course of the twentieth the numbers of women have joining the work force increased significantly, especially in the industrialized world. However, their participation emulates male experience and is disconnected from the fundamental necessities of life. Despite now having many more women in the paid labor force the model of the economy remains one of domination: Domination of free care work on the one hand and exploitation through feminized cheap labor and nature on the other hand. Due to its systematic exploitation of women, the capitalist economic system, and the discipline that explains its functioning, are patriarchal. Whereas feminist economists agree on the basis of these insights, there are different possible reactions to this injustice. The most overt and direct way of addressing inequality in capitalist societies is to try and overcome it by aiming to reach the same numbers in terms of equal wages for equal work, as well as implementing a quota in powerful positions to point out the right for women to have equal access to opportunities.

The described goal of reaching equality is endorsed by a liberal and neoliberal feminist thinkers and activists. It thus has a powerful media coverage and a dominant voice around feminism (Banet-Weiser et al., 2019). This is unsurprising because the growth logic is prevalent in political, social and economic spheres of life. However, as I have pointed out earlier, the liberal and neo-liberal feminist standpoints do not reach far enough because they are not truly transformative. Instead, they transpose the violence and problems that we have examined structurally at two levels—gender and class—to only

class. In this model, oppression persists, which in my understanding may be a necessary aspect of the gender struggle, but insufficient.

2.2. Growth-critical Feminisms

In spite of the fact that contemporary feminist discourses celebrate diversity and choice, some feminisms are more promoted than others, which remain silenced at the margin (Banet-Weiser et al., 2019).

It is because of this that at the outset of this thesis I defined what I call the feminism of my choice, with four characteristics: it promotes gender equality, it addresses deeply rooted patriarchal structures, it is intersectional and it includes a concern for nature, which makes it ecofeminist. I consider these features necessary for feminism to resonate with and to be able to complement and enhance degrowth.

Inspecting the wide range of feminisms more closely, it becomes apparent that a range of different feminisms have the potential to forge fruitful alliances with degrowth. First, I examine existing growth-critical feminist literature, meaning literature that resonates with degrowth but does not explicitly address it. Inspired by the possible "fellow travelers" of degrowth pointed out by the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (Dengler et al., 2016: 1) as well as by prior reflections stemming from peace studies, I include ideas from feminist economics, Marxist feminism, different lines of ecofeminism and decolonial feminisms. These seem to add valuable reflections to enhance the degrowth debate.

2.2.1 If Women Counted

This section on feminist economics shows that the patriarchal bias of the economic structures is anchored within economic theory. Feminism has exposed the male bias of the academic domain of economics for several decades. The feminist economics scholar

Julie Nelson (2017) showed that the discipline of economics exhibits a masculine-gendered, value-laden and partial approach, while is generally presented and understood as value-neutral and impartial.

The masculine perspective of economics is reflected in the subjects, models, methods and pedagogy that economics applies. The main assumed economics subject is a rational, autonomous, self-interested person who successfully makes optimizing choices and is subject to exogenously imposed limitations. The characteristics of this economic agent hence contrast with features traditionally related to femininity, such as subjectivity, connection, intuitive understanding, collaboration, qualitative analysis, specificity, emotion, nature, gentleness and weakness.

Hence, the economic man is portrayed like a mushroom that arises from the earth, "full of maturity, with fully developed preferences and fully active and self-contained" (Nelson, 1995: 135). Life's aspects of childhood, age, dependence and responsibility are ignored as the economic man model is responsible for no one but himself. Furthermore, the environment does not influence him; it is understood as passive material that can be shaped through the application of man's rationality. Similarly, the economic subject is not shaped by society. The only necessary type of communication is his interaction with the market and in relation to prices.

In the economics of male experience, as Mary Mellor (2006) names it, economic subject is an adult that is fully mobile, physically efficient, untied to any household responsibilities and free from the production process of the goods and services he consumes and disconnected from the ecosystem.

However, as Julie Nelson (2017) asserts, not all economists consider humans only as homo oeconomicus, although she claims that this described model is considered the most applicable and what is considered the 'objective' foundation for economic analysis.

This allegedly value-free, neutral model however is profoundly gendered. After all, humans are born from women's wombs, they need to be nurtured and cared for as dependent children and also depend on care throughout their lives, for instance as they age or fall ill.

Humans are socialized into families and communities, depending on continuous nourishment and a home to sustain their lives. The areas which in the perspective of economics are deemed unimportant, intellectually unexciting or just natural parts of life, are those that fall into the realm of so-called 'women's work'. This kind of care and reproductive work covers bodily needs, is entrenched in local ecosystems and cannot remain unattended, manifesting the basic reality of human existence (Mellor, 2006).

Feminist economics recognizes the fallacies of traditional economics, yet it does not propose a diametrically opposed view of the *femina oeconomica* (Nelson, 2017). The crux is that the male-biased *homo oeconomicus*, and its feminine counterpart are both similarly distorting and mythical representations.

Economic methods are abstract, formalized and quantitative. This allows economists to assert within the conception of modern science that their field is more sophisticated than for example 'softer' disciplines such as political science. The methods of economics are more valued than concrete, detailed and empirical ones due to their alleged purity of its proofs and their generality which ignores contextual reality.

Hence, the economic discipline completely ignores care, families and communities, without which its models would not hold. Economics also fails to consider the implications of the fact that individuals arrange themselves in collectives and corporations and also labor unions (Nelson, 2017). Similarly, the field of economic pedagogy manifests more of the same reductionism. This is so that key economic textbooks suitably commence their reflections at the higher education level, where the

worth of individual choice can be underscored and critical thinking in terms of care and dependence appear irrelevant.

As indicated earlier, one of the most prominent early growth criticisms was published by feminist economist Marilyn Waring, who can be considered a pioneer in her field. In the late 1980s, she published the work *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (Waring and Steinem, 1988). In it, she suggests indicators to measure quality of life considering the gendered dimension of the economy rather than just focusing on monetary exchanges as a measure of progress. After this, criticisms of growth as the main indicator have multiplied (Brownhill et al., 2012) and are coming from feminism among other fields.

A popular example of the critique of current economic measurement is given by the author Riane Eisler in her book *The Real Wealth of Nations: Claiming a 'Caring Economy'* (Eisler, 2008). In her work, the social scientist and feminist peace scholar denounces contemporary economic theory and practice suggesting a need to redirect the whole economy towards well-being and cohesion, human and social growth, a sustainable use of resources and improved society-nature-relations.

Eisler calls for ending the dominance over and exploitation of the *other*, the global South, cheap labor and nature (Wichterich, 2014). The insights Eisler presents built upon a large existing body of interdisciplinary scholarship. Yet, her work is remarkable in that she created a comprehensive and vivid synthesis of different works drawing from economics, sociology, history, political science and other fields.

It is important to bear in mind that not all feminist economists are critical of the growth economy. There are many contrary positions, where the quest of feminism is—from a liberal perspective—to create equality of opportunity, equal pay for equal work and possibilities for high-ranking positions in the private and public sectors. It is not

incidental that the mainstream media tends to portray these aspects of feminism much more since they suit the neoliberal-capitalist ambience.

Spanish feminist economist Amaia Pérez-Orozco (2014) cautions that the field of feminist economics about the pitfall that this subdiscipline can seem like the friendly side of feminism. This pitfall of feminist economics is also recognized among feminist degrowth advocates, which explains why FaDA aligns more with more radical forms of feminist economics (Dengler et al., 2016).

2.2.2 A Historical Feminist Revision of Marxism

Coming back to the basic foundations of feminist economics critique, it is pertinent to consider where the mentioned division into male productive and female reproductive labor and the valuation of the former over the latter originated. This leads to a historical perspective linking class-based and patriarchal critique. In her work, *Caliban and the Witch* historian, Silvia Federici (2004) builds upon the feminist strand that acknowledges Marx's contributions and simultaneously criticizes the shortcomings of its theory. She points out that a wide range of literature which has handled the transition to capitalist societies, and considers Marx's theory to be indispensable to understand history and contemporary societal relations. She also notes that Marx's analysis of primitive accumulation is incomplete in that it does not acknowledge the role of women's reproductive work.

Silvia Federici sees the primitive accumulation as the historical process that has been foundational for capitalist structures. However, her analysis deviates from Marx particularly in two ways: Whereas Marx examined primitive accumulation from the perspective of the masculine wage worker and the development of commodities, Federici focuses more on the shifts in the social positioning of women as well as the production of the labor force. She identifies a number of phenomena that Marx did not examine in his

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theory, but that seemed crucial to understand the rise of capitalism: First, the emergence of a new sexual division of labor that subsumes women's work and the reproductive function as the reproduction of the labor force. Second the construction of a new patriarchal order based on the exclusion of women from wage work and their subordination to men. Third, the mechanization of the proletariat body and her transformation, in the case of females into a machine of worker reproduction. In this context, Federici places the witch hunt in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the center of her analysis, contending that this phenomenon was as important for the rise of capitalism as colonization and the dispossessions of farmers lands.

Federici's analysis is thus also distinct from Marx in that she acknowledges the historical and contemporary prevalence of violence in association with capitalism. Whereas Marx spoke of the rise as written in the annals of humanity with letters of fire and blood (1867) he did consider this shift a necessary condition for the liberation of humanity; claiming that the rise of productivity would elevate humanity out of scarcity and need. He supposed that violence would diminish as capitalist relations mature, so that labor exploitation and work discipline would be achieved primarily through economic laws.

According to Federici, Marx was wrong in the sense that each capitalist phase in history, including the present, have been accompanied by the most violent aspects originated in primitive accumulation. These include continued expulsion of farmers from their lands, war and plunder at a global scale as well as the ongoing degradation of women, all of which are necessary for the maintenance of a capitalist system.

Federici asserts that if Marx had considered history from the angle of women, he would have never assumed that capitalism would pave the way for human liberation. Federici points to the works of Maria Mies, Carolyn Merchant, Leopoldina Fortunaty,

Joanne Kelly, Irene Silverblatt, Hillary Beckles, as feminists who have researched the history of patriarchy in relation to the rise of European modernity, witch hunt, pre-colonial Latin American women's lives and female slave trade.

2.2.3 Ecofeminism as an Umbrella Term

The connections between ecology and feminism have been researched by a number of feminists under many different headings, including ecofeminism but also a number of alternative headers such as ecofeminist political economy, ecological feminism, materialist ecological feminism, among others (Gaard, 2011). This section is to shed light upon the diversity, divides and the potential in alliances among these. To analyze the ecofeminist growth critique, I expose several theoretical lines of thought of ecofeminism so as to uncover the main commonalities and differences that exist.

Contrary to what it might seem, taken together as ecofeminism, ecology and feminism cover a broader agenda than feminism or ecology alone. As ecofeminist scholar Ariel Salleh states, ecofeminists are concerned about global sustainability as much as gender justice (Carlassare, 2000).

In an anthology on environmental philosophy, ecofeminist Karen Warren explains that there are many kinds of ecofeminism which relate to various different kinds of feminisms (Doak, 2016). However, there is something all ecofeminists agree on, which grants a minimal condition of what ecofeminism denotes: Ecofeminists consider there to be significant links between the domination of women and of nature. Here it is important to stress that the point in which ecofeminists concur is not that there is a link between women and nature in themselves but between the domination of women and the domination of nature (Kaur, 2012). This distinction is crucial for the debates that I show in the following sections.

Different kinds of ecofeminism diverge in terms of what they emphasize and in the way in which this double domination takes place as well as the nature of the connection between women and ecology. For instance, a clear distinction can be made between cultural ecofeminisms and materialist or socialist ecofeminisms; the two latter ones have quite similar positions (Tong, 2016). Before showing these distinctions and their underlying debates I outline some of the main contributions as well as strategies of ecofeminist scholarship.

Although it emerged a decade before the term ecofeminism was coined—one of the most outstanding early criticisms that combined ecological and feminist values was biologist Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring,* first published in 1962. In this work the author denounced the use of insecticides and other chemicals from an ecological perspective, making a stance for the greater vulnerability of women and children in the face of pollution (2002).

In her poetic prose, Carson made a radical critique of science, anticipating the criticism made by contemporary ecofeminism: The drive to dominate nature, which is seen purely as a resource, is directly related to the destruction of life on the planet (Bianchi, 2012). These emerging movements were feminist, pacifist, antinuclear, animal welfarist and environmentalist, and they had an increasing awareness that the ideology that justified domination and oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality or species is no different from the ideology that permits human domination of nature.

The term ecofeminism was first mentioned by the French author Françoise d'Eaubonne, in 1974, in her work *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death). In this book the author mentions that women share a special connection with nature and calls for women to engage in environmental activism. She refers to toxic masculinity as the underlying reason for environmental destruction.

In 1975, the feminist scholar Catholic theologian and ecofeminist pioneer Rosemary Ruether asserted that women need to recognize the relationships of domination that perpetuate the oppression and unite the purpose of the women's movement of the environment. She wrote:

> Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society. (Ruether, 1975: 204)

One of the main aspects advanced by ecofeminists is the distinctive patriarchal construction of nature: As ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant (1989) shows in her book *The Death of Nature*, it is the mechanistic world view and science that allowed men's dominion over women and nature. The prerequisite for this conceptual death of nature, is the view of nature as an accumulation of already dead material. From such a viewpoint it was possible to engage in the accelerated and indiscriminate exploitation of human and natural resources, in a legitimized form.

Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood concentrated her work (2015) on the nature of dualism in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, originally published in 1993. Every dualism according to the author is connected to the others. In combination these oppressions form a labyrinth that is held together by a logical structure of exclusion and denial. Dualism, in fact, is not merely a contingent dichotomy or a hierarchy, that can be overcome, but a deeply entrenched paradigm that makes equality and relationships out of the question.

In this sense, a dualism represents a relationship of separation and dominion that is characterized by a radical exclusion that perpetuates itself. The realms of religion, philosophy, science, cultural symbols, social models, sexual norms, education and

economics mirror this logic of dominion that poses men's existence at the forefront and relegates women's to the background, as they are considered not essential, and lacking a purpose of their own (Plumwood, 2015).

Plumwood (2015) argues that the dualist and gendered economic system is very unstable since it does not acknowledge its dependency. She professes that after a lot of destruction, mastery will stop working, since the master denies his dependence to those that sustain him. He misinterprets the conditions of his own existence and lacks sensitivity to grasp the limits and ultimate points of existence on Earth.

Whereas feminist interpretations of oppression in the first place evolve around women, the broader implications of this can lead to other areas where domination plays a role. This becomes apparent as the oppressed tend to be feminized and naturalized at the same time (Plumwood, 2015).

Ecofeminists have called for a shift in the symbolic order of death to a life embracing order (Bianchi, 2012). This implies abandoning the linear, fragmentary and abstract way of thinking that the politics of universalistic categories promote. Furthermore, this means moving towards a culture that is respectful of subjectivity and individuality, cherishing plurality and difference. These ideas do not only represent a scrutiny of patriarchy, but one that questions the Western tradition as a whole.

2.2.4 Ecofeminism Divides

In this section I elaborate on the conflicting interpretations and positions within ecofeminism, which have strongly marked the reception of it both, in and outside of feminist thought. I shall begin by exposing some of the main ideas of cultural ecofeminism.

2.2.4.1 Cultural Ecofeminism

Cultural ecofeminism is rooted in the feminist strand of radical feminism and denounces patriarchy's demeaning of the features related to the gender construct 'woman' (Carlassare, 2000). As a response to this devaluation, cultural ecofeminists—in line with radical cultural feminists—celebrate and revalue these qualities, which include: intuition, care, nurture, emotions and body. These have been historically associated with women in the same manner in which ecological destruction has been seen as the result of dominance—a trait associated with men.

The discourse of authors in cultural ecofeminism is mainly represented by Western writers, such as Starhawk, Ursula Le Guinn, Margaret Atwood and Jane Carson (Plumwood, 2015). Cultural ecofeminism claims that the women-nature connection is a liberating and empowering manifestation of women's capabilities to care for nature (Kaur, 2012).

These kinds of arguments are deeply connected to 'Mother Earth' imagery: The ability to bear children is profoundly linked to nature and the Earth, and the ability to bear children is a necessary feature of being a woman. Ecofeminist philosophies that celebrate this women-nature connection and include the belief that to be a woman means being closer to the Earth are essentialist philosophies since they rely on essentialized understandings of both woman and nature (Doak, 2016).

According to ecofeminist Gurpreet Kaur (2012) the women-nature links are deeply entrenched in social and psychological structures which impel a resurrection of pre-patriarchal religions and spiritual practices. Hence, cultural ecofeminism represents a perspective in which nature is worshipped as mother and Goddess.

There is also a close link between cultural ecofeminism and the Gaia hypothesis developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. The Gaia hypothesis sees the Earth is

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an organic whole—Gaia. It is considered as self-organizing and self-reproducing, organic, spatial and temporal and teleological system with the goal of maintaining itself. The development of techno-sphere undertaken by men is seen as a menace for the survival of Gaia (Kaur, 2012). The Gaia hypothesis has been related to the theory of Deep Ecology. Both have developed thoughts on the interdependencies of the human inorganic and non-human organic world.

Cultural ecofeminists see spirituality as a source of personal and social change, which makes it a source of inspiration and empowerment for many ecofeminists. Yet, the worship of Goddess spirituality has been met with critical eyes by many other ecofeminists. Kaur (2012) alleges that the Goddess worship is combined with the belief that women's epistemologies and moral reasoning are better suited to handling environmental problems. Moreover, as Carolyn Merchant (2017) asserts, the fact that cultural ecofeminists tend to celebrate ancient rituals that evolve around Goddess worship, the moon, animals and the female reproductive system is often derived from an anti-science and anti-technology stance, celebrating the relation between women and nature (Merchant, 1995).

In addition, the writing style of many cultural ecofeminists matches the anti-scientific stance and defies the standards of traditional academic and scientific discourses Elisabeth Carlassare (2000) writes:

> Mary Daly and Susan Griffin are two early cultural ecofeminists who use the radical feminist strategy of transforming language and discursive style in their texts as a first step toward transforming culture; for them, transforming written language is a feminist liberatory practice. [...]
>
> Both writers use the patriarchal characterizations that have marked woman and nature as "other," but employ them strategically to challenge patriarchal constructs, dominant discursive styles, and privileged ways of knowing. Mary Daly resists phallogocentric language by writing in what she calls a "gynocentric" style. Throughout Gyn/Ecology, Daly articulates her belief that patriarchy permeates language and myth, and that their radical transformation is required to bring about the empowerment of women and a new ecological consciousness. (95)

The adoption of a 'gynocentric' style can be seen as an act of resistance against the cultural violence of the dominant patriarchal ideology, since it draw attention towards the fact that language is not neutral. This tool be seen as a political strategy to point out and potentially transform power relations through language. However, it contributes to the binary view of gender and can be interpreted as a manifestation of essentialism, as explained in the following section.

2.2.4.2 Cultural Ecofeminism Critique

Among all the critiques made against cultural ecofeminists, essentialism constitutes a major point. An early criticism of essentialism can be seen in Simone de Beauvoir's seminal work *The Second Sex* (1949). Here, de Beauvoir denounces that women are defined as the *other* and are being made into the second sex. She questions why women should be more supporting of peace than men, who are after all the dominant sex waging war. In her perspective, peace should be of equal concern for both sexes, which is the reason she considers the equation of feminism and ecology irritating (Beauvoir in Kaur, 2012).This specific set of criticisms of cultural ecofeminism underlines that the woman-nature connection strengthens sex-role stereotyping.

In fact, ecofeminist Alice Echols (1983), initially proposed the concept of cultural feminism as a response to a growing trend towards essentialism because cultural feminism equates women's liberation with the development and preservation of a female counter culture. Yet, the kinship between cultural ecofeminism and essentialist ideas remained, so that within ecofeminism the risk of essentialist thinking was associated with cultural ecofeminism and strongly critiqued.

According to Karen Warren, cultural feminism makes "essentialist, universalist and ahistorical" propositions about women and nature (Warren in Kaur, 2012:190-191). Hence, despite the deep identification women can have with cultural ecofeminism as it

celebrates typical female characteristics, it fails to consider that men also have the capacity to develop care ethics towards nature. Moreover, when patriarchy and rape are considered as inherent parts of male biology and behavior, the chance to criticize and challenge the structures behind these issues disappear (Echols, 1983). In addition, essentialist definitions of 'woman' are problematic since they reinforce the oppressive obligation for women to live up to what seems to be an innate standard of 'womanhood' that they will be judged by. In this sense, cultural ecofeminism ignores the social and historical construction of women's identities and lives. It neglects the material aspect of a woman's role in the interaction of diversity regarding ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, age, ability, marital status, and geographic location.

Thus, the main problem of cultural ecofeminism is that it treats women as a homogenized and fixed categories, whereby its distinctive characteristics are romanticized. This revaluing of qualities traditionally associated with women has made some feminists question whether such a positioning is feminist at all.

Mainly because of the association with essentialism, ecofeminism has been and continues to be marginalized within feminist theory. Additionally, there is a tendency in readings from ecological and social science perspectives refer to (but not profoundly study) ecofeminism to stress the essentialist aspect in ecofeminism. For instance Martinez-Alier et al. (2014) argue that in the 'essentialist' ecofeminist women and men are regarded as different as a result of their biological natures and women are considered to be biologically closer to nature than men.

Therefore, essentialism has been used by many scholars in the ecofeminist literature to distance themselves from it, rather than to critically assess or embrace the idea: The fallacy of missing to deconstruct certain categories, and hence giving explanations by nature rather than social construction, is considered not academic. Hence,

essentialism is used as a pitfall to be avoided in most ecofeminist literature. Most ecofeminists have had to struggle to dissociate their theory from the accusation of being essentialist because of the straw-woman argument that argues against one part, while taking it for the whole (Gaard, 2011).

2.2.4.3 Socialist and Materialist Ecofeminisms

The ecofeminism that is in counter position to essentialism can be called materialist, and is studied by environmentalism (Agarwal, 1992), feminist political ecology (Rocheleau et al., 1996) socialist or materialist ecofeminism (Mellor, 2000, Merchant, 2017), ecofeminist political economy and feminist ecological economics (O'Hara, 2009, Perkins, 2007, Kuiper and Perkins, 2005, Waring and Steinem, 1988). All these different conceptions can be seen as ecofeminist that do not use the name in order to not be conflated with the primary association with ecofeminism.

In contrast with cultural and essentialist versions of ecofeminism these concepts related to ecofeminism stress the embodied, material, social or structural aspects of this discipline. In a nutshell, these explicitly non-essentialist ecofeminists seek to break the alleged connection between women and nature and instead focus on overcoming the joint oppression (Doak, 2016).

Among its most salient supporters are environmental historian Carolyn Merchant and ecofeminist Mary Mellor. Ecofeminist Ariel Salleh has also significantly contributed to its development. According to Carolyn Merchant (2017) the potential of social and socialist ecofeminisms lie in the capacity to provide a more thorough structural critique of domination and a wider vision of a liberating social justice.

Socialist and materialist ecofeminists contend that environmental problems are rooted in the capitalist-patriarchy where the notion arises that the Earth can be exploited in the name of human progress through technology (Merchant, 1990). This thought builds

upon the common belief that men are responsible for labor in the marketplace and women bear the responsibility of labor in the domestic sphere. They study in what manner patriarchal relations of reproduction expose the men's domination of women and how capitalist production relations expose the domination of nature by men.

Because the women's main domain of labor is the home, it is unpaid and inferior to men's labor in the marketplace. Nature and human nature are seen as historically and socially constructed. Consequently, connections and interactions between humans, nature, and the sexes rely on an understanding of power not only in the private, but also in the political sphere. This view illustrates that relations between women and nature are embedded in social, material and political realities (Kaur, 2012).

Mary Mellor uses the term *ecofeminist political economy* and explains it in a straight forward manner:

> Ecofeminist, as its name implies, brings together the insights of feminism and ecology (Mellor, 1997a; 2006; Salleh, 1997; King, 1993). Feminism is concerned with the way in which women in general have been subordinated to men in general. Ecologists are concerned that human activity is destroying the viability of ecosystems. Ecofeminist political economy argues that the two are linked. However, attaching the notion of political economy to ecofeminism makes an explicit statement about the approach taken (Mellor, 2006: 140)

She explains the tendency by some ecofeminists to essentialize womanhood and then distances herself from it:

> Ecofeminist political economy starts not from women's natures, but from women's position in society, particularly in relation to male-dominated economic systems (Mies, 1998; Mellor, 1997b; Salleh, 1994). What ecofeminist political economy explores is the gendering of economic systems. It sees a material link between the externalization and exploitation of women and the externalization and exploitation of nature (Perkins, 1997; Perkins and Kuiper, 2005). (Mellor, 2006: 140)

Hence the focus of ecofeminist political economy lies in the observation that patriarchal socio-economic systems have failed to incorporate the embodied and embedded nature of

human existence. In other words, the violence of the patriarchal system is reflected in capitalism in that makes women's work invisible, undervalued, overburdened and marginal.

An analysis of what has traditionally been labeled as 'women's work' can reveal the connection between unsustainable economic systems and mentioned embodied and embedded nature of human existence.

National and international economic systems thus have been erected on a false foundation. Ecofeminists such as Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies (2000) have thus portrayed the valued economy as the tip of the iceberg of a much larger sustaining whole. Below the water line lies an invisible economy which includes the realms of unpaid work, subsistence economies and natural resources (Bianchi, 2012). For instance, Hazel Henderson provided the metaphor of the market sector as the icing on a cake (Cameron and Gibson-Graham, 2003). Beneath the figurative icing, lies the actual cake comprised of the public sector, the non-market sector and the environment, or Mother Nature. The cake's filling is the informal cash economy, that in practice forms a very significant (but difficult to estimate) part of the world's money-based economies (Chen, 2012, Williams and Schneider, 2016). Hence, the valued economy fails to recognize the precariousness of its own transcendent position, its immanence in the sustaining systems that support it (Mellor, 2018).

In the 1980s, a number of studies examined the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. Patriarchy—rather than an idea or an interpretative category—can be seen as a system of power relations, where women and colonies are viewed as resources, ready to be exploited just like nature (Bianchi, 2012). This tendency of interpretation is critical for the work of the Bielefeld School, which includes Maria Mies, Claudia von Werlhof

and Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen. In its introduction Maria Mies' work *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (2014) states:

> The confusions in the feminist movement worldwide will continue unless we understand the "woman question" in the context of all social relations that constitute our reality today, that means in the context of a global division of labor under the dictates of capital accumulation. The subordination and exploitation of women, nature, and colonies are the precondition for the continuation of this model. (Mies in Bianchi, 2012: 12)

Building upon the feminist discussion around the tasks of production and reproduction, which developed over the 1980s Maria Mies (2014) underscores the significance of unpaid work relationships in the accumulation of capital. These include domestic work in industrialized countries as well as subsistence economies of the Global South. The author makes reference to writings by Mariarosa Dalla Costa *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (1975) and Selma James' *A Woman's Place*, who before her saw domestic work as a means of capitalist accumulation (Bianchi, 2012). She writes:

> The discovery, however, that housework under capitalism had also been excluded per definition from the analysis of the capitalism proper, and that this was the mechanism by which it became a "colony" and a source for unregulated exploitation, opened our eyes to the analysis of other such colonies of non-wage-labor exploitation, particularly the work of small peasants and women in Third World countries. (Mies in Bianchi, 2012: 12)

In the book *Women and Economics* written at the turn of the twentieth century, the author Charlotte Perkins Gilman (2018) called domestic work as immediate altruism, a kind of activity that satisfies instant needs without expecting any financial return. Bruna Bianchi's considerations (2012) resonate with this, as she declares that the maternal sentiment symbolizes the sustaining of life in all culture. She refers to several feminists before her who have pointed to the symbolic order of the mother in their critique of the unlimited growth paradigm.

In fact, a mother can be considered a worker in the Marxist sense although she is not white male and industrial wageworker. For her, work is both, a burden as well as a

source of enjoyment, self-fulfillment and happiness. Whereas children may take a lot of effort and give her a lot of trouble, this work is never totally alienated or dead. Her connection to her work is still more human than the indifferent posture the industrial worker or engineer has towards the fruits of his labor and the commodities he produces and consumes (Mies, 2014).

Many ecofeminists advocate socialist feminism as the only possible basis for ecofeminism, since, contrary to radical or Marxist feminism, it scrutinizes and seeks to overcome oppression along multiple axes, not merely the axes of gender or gender and class (see Mellor 1992a and 1992b; Merchant 1989, 269-70 and 1992, 195-200; Salleh 1995 (Carlassare, 2000).

In socialist ecofeminist analysis, capitalism and patriarchy are often taken together with a hyphen to denote their interrelation. From this perspective, gender biased and anti-ecological power structures in the capitalist-patriarchy are grounded upon the negation of dependency and interdependency, disguising the ways in which the market and economic man depend on unsustainable transfers from nature and from unpaid work (Ruder and Sanniti, 2019).

In this context, Ariel Salleh maintains that ecofeminist analyses rely on an *embodied materialism* that bases itself on the subordinate position and unpaid labor done by women in patriarchal capitalism. She claims that women's relation to nature, capital, and labor is differently constructed than men's, demonstrating how the volume of unpaid work women undertake globally is fundamental to the functioning of capitalism. In this manner, capitalism and patriarchy relations degrade the environment and oppress women. In to Salleh's words (1995),

> Continued capital accumulation and the expanding hegemony of transnational operations deepens nature's and women's subjection. This is not to say that

capitalism has been the only source of such oppression, nor to argue that capitalism does not also exploit men. (1995:22)

As Carolyn Merchant explained, the false dualism between humans and nature imbued with Baconian and Cartesian ideals is institutionalized in capitalist-patriarchy, that "mandated the death of nature" (Zimmerman and Callicott, 1998: 284). Hierarchical dualisms manifest both politically—by means of socio-economic infrastructure and also via identity politics—with intersectional effects on power and privilege (Ruder and Sanniti, 2019).

While the origins and persistence of capitalism and patriarchal social relations are separate, their social and historical dimensions are connected, and the power dimensions of related complex systems are emergent. In light of this, German sociologist and political scientist Claudia von Werlhof claims, "capitalism has old and far-reaching patriarchal roots; capitalism is, in fact, patriarchy's latest expression" (2007: 24).

Merchant asserts that environmental crises are socially constructed and represent the result of contradictions between production and ecology and between reproduction and production. Therefore, socialist ecofeminism is a social constructionist view that uses historical materialist methods, provides critiques of patriarchal capitalism and seeks to promote material and institutional change, rather than changes in spirituality, consciousness or culture, in order to allow for an ecological transformation of society. As Merchant (1990) puts this last point: "materialism, not spiritualism is the driving force of social change" (Carlassare, 2000: 93).

2.2.5 Potential Ecofeminist Alliances

As the foregoing sections have shown, there are significant divides within ecofeminism which have led most ecofeminists to claim other concepts related to but different from ecofeminism in order to escape the grip of a generalized essentialism verdict. This is

understandable since the whole realm of ecofeminism has been marginalized within feminism for being associated with essentialism (Gaard, 2011). Within academic ecofeminist circles this stigma remains attached to cultural ecofeminists who highlight feminine qualities that have been oppressed and demeaned by patriarchal culture.

However, from a peace studies perspective, the existence of tensions within ecofeminism becomes an interesting focal point, since the movement is meant to foster peaceful change towards equality among genders and away from the exploitation of nature.

In her article 'Socialist and Cultural Ecofeminism: Allies in Resistance', Elisabeth Carlassare argues in favor of fostering alliances among the discrepant ecofeminist positions, positing that together they can be more effective. She claims that "ecofeminism's epistemological and strategic diversity illustrate that it is possible to espouse liberatory politics without invoking a totalizing or unified epistemological or ideological position" (102).

While cultural ecofeminism has been strongly critiqued by materialist and socialist positions for essentializing the category of womanhood, likewise socialist ecofeminists can be criticized to the for the fact that their ideas rest on nineteenth and twentieth century political and social theories created by Marxist and neo-Marxist men in opposition to capitalism but within patriarchal structures. This makes them seem not feminist enough (Carlassare, 2000).

I align with the criticisms made of regarding womanhood as having an essence and that this essence can be seen in some way as morally and epistemologically superior to men. This goes against the first feature of feminism that I have established under the feminism of my choice described in the introduction (I.4.2), which speaks about gender equality and not superiority of any of the two genders.

Moreover, I have come to the conclusion that it is strategically inefficient for feminists to reclaim the characteristics traditionally associated with women by patriarchy, such as care, softness among others as feminine characteristics. In my MA dissertation I suggested to recuperate the feminine principle, or Yin principle as a tool of meaning-making to foster change towards both, more peaceful economies and the empowering of traditionally female traits in culture. I suggested this as a transdisciplinary shift from a transrational feminist peace perspective. I found that my results resonated with the idea that the so-called feminine principle should be recuperated and enhanced. Combining economist Bernard Lietaer's (2000) insights with the theoretical groundwork of the transrational peace approach allowed me to link the Jungian archetype of the Great Mother and the Yin principle from Taoist philosophy to degrowth as ways of thinking that could promote it. Both pointed towards abundance within a circular kind of economy, as opposed to scarcity, by fostering typically feminine traits throughout society. With a recuperated strong feminine principle, qualities that are traditionally associated with femininity would be revalued: intuition, care, nurture, emotions and body, among others (see Figure 3).

Yin	Yang
Cooperation	Competition
Circulating, Giving, Connecting	Hoarding, Accumulating, Concentrating
Caring, Quality of Life (not Quantity)	Goal Setting, Performance, Growth
Being	Having, Doing
Endurance, Sustainability	Peak Experience
Intuition, Empathy-Synthesis Paradox	Rational, Analytical
Physical-Emotional, non-linear	Logic, Mental, Linear
Ability to Hold Ambivalence	Pursuit of Certainty
Interpersonal Skills Dominate	Technology Dominates
Small is Beautiful, Conservation	Bigger is Better, Expansion
Interdependence	Independence
Egalitarian works best	Hierarchy works best
Mutual Trust	Central Authority
Self-Organizing 'Chaos', Faith in Future	Planning, Control of Future
Synchronicity	Cause and Effect
Whole explains Parts (Holism)	Parts explain Whole (Reductionism)

Figure 3 Qualities of Yin and Yang according to Bernard Lietaer. Source: Bock (2015)

Despite the peaceful intention behind recuperating the feminine principle, trying to advocate it would probably not fulfill the desired outcome. The reason is that it can be observed in media and culture, how traditionally 'feminine' qualities related to mothering, caring and reproductive tasks continue to be vindicated and tied to women (Brownmiller, 2013). Hence, the idea of fostering a feminine principle could easily be misused, since the capitalist neoliberal market logic can exploit feminism and the 'feminine' identity in favor of a consumer culture for a new market niche of identities, as theorizations on the current neoliberal and popular feminism reflect.

The neoliberal capitalist market logic has the capacity to abuse the connection of femininity and the Earth, celebrated by cultural ecofeminists, since this helps to continue upholding the mandate of women for childbearing and being a mother. Maintaining this traditional role of women as reproducers of the work force is certainly in the interest of a growth-oriented patriarchal system. This means that the recuperation of a feminine principle would likely promote the already existing association of such qualities with women rather than with humanity as a whole. This makes sense in from the perspective of the interests that perpetuate a patriarchal capitalist logic, where societies rely on an unpaid reproductive labor force to sustain the system of productivity and consumerism.

Thus, I believe that neither essentializing womanhood, nor the recuperation of a feminine principle, even if it is just as a new imaginary, would serve the purpose of enhancing and supporting a degrowth transition.

Nevertheless, I cannot fully agree with the diametrical opposition that material ecofeminists show towards cultural ecofeminism. There is a dualism created, an *other* within ecofeminist thought, and a sort of division into scientific and unscientific sides of ecofeminist thinking, whereby the latter is dismissed. Although epistemological diversity is valuable, it is crucial to strive for alliances within the ecofeminist spectrum. Thus, both

perspectives have something valuable to offer. Materialist ecofeminist positions are related to the structural violence which women must endure for being set at the lower part of a dualism together with nature.

Other kinds of oppression are also fitted into this dualistic scheme and can be considered equally important. The cultural aspect of the violence denounced from the side of cultural ecofeminists has its own motives and legitimacy if it is not taken into extreme. Nothing would be wrong with celebrating traditionally feminine qualities associated with caring if it were not for their relegation to the 'woman's sphere' or the alleged intention of cultural ecofeminists to revert the hierarchy so as to place the female above the male.

Using non-academic language can be a very effective strategy for people outside of academia to be reached by ecofeminist discourses. The critique of science is also in line with degrowth ideas and—whether science is considered a 'masculine' domain or not—it is absolutely necessary to be aware of the limitations and biases that accompany the requirement to be scientific. Finally, neo-pagan rituals, Goddess spirituality and other resurrections of ancient religious practices could be equally accepted as a ground for dialog around meaning-making. Alternative kinds spirituality can be a powerful catalyst for social change in a society where science acts like a dominant religion (Eisenstein, 2011).

Hence, due to the above mentioned reasons, in this thesis I no longer advocate the feminine principle because of the risk of it being misunderstood and misused. Instead I focus on the core values which I want to foster through this shift. While these are compiled by Yin characteristics, there is one aspect that I deem at least as important as the promotion of values traditionally associated with femininity: The dissolution of the binary system of opposites itself, since it is in these opposites of what Val Plumwood called the master model (2015) that the violence is perpetuated. In other words, the

boundaries between what is masculine and what is feminine need to be dissolved, or queered.

Since the dichotomies of male/female, nature/culture and science/non-science are so powerful, it seems worthwhile to aim for the dissolution of binaries themselves rather than elevating the demeaned side. The following section addresses queer ecofeminism and the role it can play in this regard.

2.2.6 Queering Ecofeminism

As Caitlin Doak writes in her thesis *Queering Nature: the Liberatory Effects of Queer Ecology* (2016), "to queer something is to ruin essentialist views of things and ruin dichotomies" (8). Hence, to queer gender is to ruin the gender binary, which can be done in many different ways.

Queer ecofeminism not just non-essentialist, as those ecofeminists who reject the conflation of women and nature. Non-essentialist ecofeminists seek to break the presumed connection among women and nature and focus on overcoming the joint oppression. However, queer ecofeminism is anti-essentialist and goes one step further as it queers the dualisms dominant in ecological thought (Doak, 2016).

One of its main theorists is Greta Gaard (1997) who includes the category of queerness into the master model that Val Plumwood (2015) coined. Gaard writes:

> From a queer ecofeminist perspective... we can examine the ways queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality. We can also examine how persons of color are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized. Finally, we can explore how nature is feminized, eroticized, even queered. (Gaard 119)

She considers the root to be that the many overlapping oppressive systems mutually reinforce each other. Yet, beyond merely adding the category to the master model mind she criticizes the remaining dualisms within it. She stresses that they ought to be dismantled.

I align with Gaard's anti-essentialist stance. A queering of dichotomies would need to work together with ecofeminist purpose of overcoming the joint oppression of women and nature. An effective queering would be helpful to allow all genders to associate with traditionally feminine (Yin) values precisely because they are no longer linked to the female. However, the doubt can appear whether the move to dissociate Yin elements from the female might be an act of patriarchal oppression or whether it is liberating for all gender identities. The following example illustrates the dilemma:

One could argue, from a social constructivist perspective that 'Mother Earth' imagery implies a reenactment of essentializing features that connect women and nature, which leads to further marginalization of ecofeminism within the realm of feminist ideas, and which can be exploited by those who desire a system that resembles the status quo, in which women continue to associate their roles with reproduction care, child-rearing, and so on.

The other side could argue that not being able to use the generic female for referring to the Earth is in itself oppressive since identifying the Earth as a mother is an ancient powerful metaphor that should be humbling and for everyone. Breaking it for the purpose of shifting a cultural imagery related to human would be in itself violent. Does considering the Earth our mother not help to treat her better? The answer from a social constructivist position could be no, because patriarchy is demeaning towards the feminine and the link between the feminine and the Earth is part of the problem. However, I also doubt that ceasing to use the Mother Earth metaphor would make a difference.

In sum, what I do believe is that both needs to happen: a recognition of structural and material relations that govern society in terms of joint factors of oppression on the one hand; and a deeper discussion on cultural and spiritual values that exist in relation to masculinity and femininity, without disapproving of cultural ecofeminist ideas for their

essentialist tendencies. While I believe that essentialism ought to be questioned mainly from a viewpoint of its epistemological violence through generalization, rejecting cultural feminist ideas altogether would be a way of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Whereas I have earlier seen a value in appreciating Goddess spirituality and symbolism as a form of associating peace and fertility, stressing the importance of these, it does not seem like a peaceful way of transforming entrenched imagery. I come back to the notion of spirituality in Chapter 3, where I discuss the transrational approach to peace and its usefulness for the promotion of feminist degrowth. In sum, I deem the power of ecofeminism to come from materialist (material circumstances) and cultural ecofeminist perspectives (focusing on culture, language, ideas, spirituality). In this context I wish to engage in further research on how these ideas can be combined and fruitful discussions emerge that help to forge alliances.

2.2.7 Decolonial Feminisms

There is a vast amount of scholarship in decolonial and postcolonial feminism that could contribute to a deeper critical engagement with degrowth from perspectives of the Global South. In its presentation text, the Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance proposed paying attention to diverse perspectives from across different academic and activist realms in relation to degrowth as a way of mutual enrichment and the integration of feminist degrowth scholarship. In light of this, FaDA mentions postcolonial feminism as a potentially suitable traveling partner for degrowth (Dengler et al., 2016).

Although there are differences between the concepts of postcolonial and decolonial theory, both share crucial commonalities. These are above all, as Walter Mignolo states: "colonialism, colonial legacies and above all for decolonial thinkers, coloniality" (Mignolo, 2011: xxvii). While postcolonial studies tend to focus on history, such as Western colonialisms and deconstruction, it has been argued that decolonial

studies are more concerned with the present and how current systems of knowledge production are structured as well as with the recovery of subaltern epistemologies (Lim, 2019).

Decoloniality can be seen as opportunity to go beyond the postcolonial analysis of racialized, capitalist and gendered structural injustices as it aims to foster decolonization in theory and practice (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019). It would however be a reproduction of colonial desire to pit the two against each other and expect them to compete for superiority. Hence, in the realms of postcolonial and decolonial thought intentionally disregard disciplinary territorialism since both are victims of such Western constructions of knowledge (Lim, 2019).

Here I focus on decoloniality due to the afore mentioned reasons and due to its contextual proximity to the context of Abya Yala (Latin America), where the term decolonial emerged in addition to several concrete contributions to degrowth that integrate colonial critique and also frame it in this way. Decolonial feminism can be seen as the study of the interwoven aspects of colonial continuities and sexism (Lugones, 2016).

At the level of activism and scholarly practice, the First South/North International Degrowth Encounter in Mexico City, which was linked to the 15th Meeting of the International Society for Ecological Economics in Puebla, Mexico in September 2018 can be seen as a turning point. The encounter assembled people across all kinds of intersectional categories, diverse nations and regions, multiple areas of experience and expertise, gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, religion, and languages (Nirmal and Rocheleau, 2019).

At the degrowth meeting significant cultural, political, and theoretical contributions were made by people from Indigenous territories and communities of

African, Asian and Middle Eastern origin. The prevalence of South/North encounters is a crucial component for the collective reflection around degrowth discourse, which still has the tendency to focus on the Global North and the voluntary change of people living and consuming here.

In their article on decolonizing degrowth, the authors Padini Nirmal and Diane Rocheleau posit that "degrowth and post-development have to be decolonial or nothing at all" (471). They point at the strengths of degrowth and its combination of ecology and economics whereas they critique its limited focus on economistic categories and measures, as well as its acceptance of the continuing dominance of economics and politics in the "capitalist-colonial one-world-world" (471). They claim that the future in a decolonial post-development world would promote the centrality of ecological and social relations free from legacies of environmental or cultural determinism.

In the previous chapter I voiced a colonial critique of degrowth which was elaborated by Corinna Dengler and Lisa Marie Seebacher (2019) in an article they wrote after a workshop on Sustainability, Ecology, and Care with feminist economists from across the globe. Two important criticisms arose in this workshop, namely:

> 1. In a global, capitalist system, degrowth in the Global North necessarily affects the Global South and might lead to adverse effects. The 1993 US Child Labor Boycott in Bangladesh was used by the critics to illustrate the case.
>
> 2. Degrowth reproduces longstanding (neo-)colonial asymmetries by (once again!) setting the agenda on what ought to be done to solve problems of global relevance in the Global North. (248)

The alleged task to decolonize the imaginary, as Serge Latouche (2009) framed it at the core of degrowth, however it has not yet become an integral part of degrowth reasoning and hence lacks the same as feminism.

Further aspects have been uncovered that make the necessity to decolonize degrowth apparent. In their article 'Ecological economics and degrowth: Proposing a

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future research agenda from the margins' Ksenija Hanaček, Brototi Roy, Sofia Avila and Giorgos Kallis (2020) carry out a qualitative and extended approach of the ecological economics of degrowth literature, as they analyze broader scholarships relevant to the study of degrowth vis-a-vis the Global South and gender relations. The authors argue that ecological economists can do much better than they are doing now in "shedding light on the structure and causes of unequal North-South relations, or the ways women continue to be exploited within the growth economy" (11).

Degrowth theorists should acknowledge the non-Western roots of many post-growth ideas as well as the importance of voices of academics and activists from the Global South. While these are far from studied thoroughly, current scholarly debates have increasingly focused on exploring potential alliances, tensions and contradictions between degrowth and other movements that question capitalism and modernity from the Global South. Among others, these include environmental justice, *buen vivir* and the notion of a Pluriverse and its alternative visions. *Buen Vivir*, for instance, can be seen as both an inspiration for degrowth and a source of radical decolonial thought in itself.

The authors of this article use a qualitative approach to scrutinize scholarly databases to gain a picture of the relative importance of Global South and feminist issues and their connection with degrowth, with each other and other salient topics. From here they draw a number of discussions linked to research topics that necessitate further research. These include several related to North-South relations: economic policies in the Global South, economic growth, development and North-South relations, decolonizing ecological economic concepts, metabolic studies and approaches to transitions. Within feminist thinking the following research topics arose, including: ecological requirements of care work, the role of women in ecological distribution conflicts and in opposition to growth projects as well as gender relations in grassroots economies.

The authors emphasize that the research agenda from the margins should necessarily place the voices of those writing from the margin at the center, such as scholars from non-privileged positions in dominant academia. It ought to integrate a plurality of genders, ethnicities, cultural and geographical backgrounds. In order to reflect upon the contributions that decolonial thought can make to degrowth, besides studying the outlines of possible research agendas, a brief introduction to decolonial thinking seems pertinent.

The main referent of decolonial feminism in Latin America is the Argentinean feminist scholar María Lugones. She coined the theory, as a response to intersectional (Black feminist) thought, building upon Aníbal Quijano's notion of the Decolonial Turn (Lugones, 2016). Lugones associates Quijano's concept of race, upon which the coloniality of power is based, with the idea of gender. She considers gender to be part of colonialism and both to be inseparably linked. The links of both become apparent as Lugones explains the ways in which Indigenous and black men and women were not considered human in colonial times and hence Indigenous women did not exist as such. The category of woman only applied for white, bourgeois females.

As for relations with the notion of intersectionality, Lugones draws from and accepts the insights from intersectionality. Yet she denounces that this theory maintains the categories of oppression and hence does not give any possibilities for liberation. She argues that a shift in language is necessary in order to escape the logic of domination. Hence Lugones proposes a fusion of identities that no longer differentiates between the imposed categories of oppression. This for her is an act of decolonization.

Lugones gives gender the same explicative power as Quijano gives to race. Hence, race and gender become inseparable categories to understand the oppressions of women. She proposes a rereading of the capitalist, colonialist modernity, stating:

> *La imposición colonial de género atraviesa cuestiones de ecología, economía, gobierno, relaciones con el mundo espiritual, y saberes, a la vez que prácticas cotidianas que o nos habitúan a cuidar el mundo o a destruirlo.* (Lugones, 2011: 106)

> The colonial imposition of gender runs through issues of ecology, economy, government, relations with the spiritual world, knowledges and everyday practices which condition us either to take care of the world or destroy it[16] (Lugones, 2011: 106)

The colonial system of gender has a visible side that constructs hegemonic notions of gender: Eurocentric, white, bourgeois intellectual women who advocate hegemonic feminism and an invisible side that hides the cruelty towards the other.

Decolonial feminism is related to intersectionality in that it recognizes the veracity and gravity of the multiple forms of oppression women face, especially in terms of gender and race. However, decolonial feminism goes a step further not only by identifying gender as part of colonial thinking but by proposing ways to resist this coloniality. She claims that when we see ourselves as fragmented beings, as "combined fragments of both white women and nonwhite men," we risk losing "a sense of ourselves and our own situation" (Velez, 2019: 394).

Moreover, Lugones proposes *doble desenmascaramiento* (a double unmasking), whereby the first one is to reveal the hegemony of white feminism and ornamental multiculturalism (Velez, 2019). This term refers to the superficiality of multicultural celebration which veils the true dark side of the colonial gender system. The second aspect of unmasking entails an impulse towards a logic of fusion. This entails overcoming an intersectional focus on oppressive categories and using an alternative range of categories as an act of resistance through coalition. One of the aspects that Lugones highlights is the fluid relation between doing and thinking in order to problematize, determine and explain situations that women experience within their communities and organizational logic. This entails a critical stance toward the coloniality of gender which

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[16] author's translation

allows diverse feminists to recognize each other with one common ground, from different marginal positions (Espinosa et al., 2013).

In line with the proposition to destroy categories through fusion Lugones suggests to revise, question, criticize and recognize contributions by hegemonic feminists. She also proposes to name all whom they stopped naming, which stayed outside since they could not look at it or tell it as their own experience; to shift towards a dialoguing situation with diverse intellectual and activist experiences and with a non-Eurocentric thinking. This should be a horizontal dialog which is situated, without the aim to universalize or claim absolute truths and without pretentious objectivity. It should be conducted in a way that shows the place of enunciation and opposes the classical scientific method in a pro-positive manner.

The foregoing descriptions of Lugones' notion of decolonial feminist thinking can be seen as an inspiration and invitation to think of feminist degrowth by including the notion of coloniality of gender. This is a crucial aspect which must not merely remain an addition to degrowth theory. Instead, applying the logic of fusion to degrowth would probably result in a panoply of questions, criticisms and counterproposals. Moreover, Lugones is but one of a large number of authors who have written from the perspective of decolonial feminisms. The field is characterized by a strong component of practical and activist-led insights, where academic language often remains secondary to concrete goals of decolonial feminist social change.

Hence, to add questions raised by existing degrowth and decolonial literature I suggest scrutinizing the foundations of degrowth thinking which tend to base themselves on Cartesian categorizations used in modern scientific research often without questioning their underlying construction and the consequences of their meaning.

Besides specifically decolonial positions, all kinds of perspectives that challenge colonial continuities should be taken into account. In particular, paying attention to Indigenous voices across the globe is crucial to continue a decolonial project. As Indigenous writer Lindsay Nixon puts it:

> Indigenous feminists know that mainstream feminism predominantly represents white settler feminists who, more often than not, choose to ignore the ongoing processes of colonialism from which they actually benefit…. Ecofeminism that appropriates Indigenous environmental knowledges often fails to fully represent what environmental justice means to Indigenous communities. What is often ignored within these analyses is how neocolonial state violence, compounded by exposure to environmental contaminants, is embodied in very specific ways for Indigenous women and Two-Spirit peoples…. Indigenous peoples have again and again described how solutions to the effects of environmental contamination need to extend far beyond the return of land…. If ecofeminists truly want to engage with Indigenous feminism to legitimize their own movements, they must first engage with their own positionality and privilege as settlers: a positionality on which the continuation of settler-colonialism and the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples are prefaced. Furthermore, Indigenous peoples don't need saviour feminists defining what strategies must be used to address environmental contamination within Indigenous communities…. What Indigenous feminists want from eco-feminists is simple: Sit down, be quiet, and listen. (Nixon in Perkins, 2019: 187)

Although this quote specifically refers to ecofeminist appropriation of Indigenous knowledges, I consider it pertinent at this point since in it the author unveils the relations that continue to dominate even within academia in a blunt open way, while proposing a way for change. By referring to the common feminist ground Nixon suggests to white settler feminists the perhaps challenging task to simply listen before using Indigenous feminisms to legitimize their own movements.

2.3 Feminist Degrowth Contributions

As I have pointed out earlier: if we were to apply the wave metaphor from feminism to growth paradigm and its critiques, the degrowth discourse would represent the third wave of the growth critique. The first wave of degrowth is exemplified by the Club of Rome's influential publication *The Limits to Growth* in 1972, which fed into concepts of steady

state and degrowth (Martínez-Alier et al., 2010).

The second wave emerged in the 1990s when ecological economists, post-developmentalists as well as ecofeminists critiqued unsustainable and neo-colonial patterns of overproduction and overconsumption. They proposed models of a sufficiency economy and a subsistence perspective (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000, Wichterich, 2014).

Given that economic growth is gendered, according to Bruna Bianchi (2012), the degrowth project must carry out in-depth analysis of the relations between patriarchy and capitalism. In this context, she asks the following question: Is there a possibility to reach a common ground on the basis of the critique of unlimited growth, the pull towards a non-monetized economy that respects nature and the perspectives offered by feminism, especially ecofeminism, of a moral economy grounded on the protection of life and on subsistence, free from dominion over women and over nature (Bianchi, 2012)? In previous sections of this chapter, I outlined how certain kinds of feminism can serve as a basis for feminist degrowth research in line with Bianchi's question. Here, I seek to trace specific ways in which feminisms have contributed to the degrowth debate so far.

One of the main feminist themes in degrowth is in line with feminist economist Devaki Jain who claimed "we don't want a larger slice of the poisoned cake" (Goodhart, 2018: 56) and also feminist, militant and environmentalist Bella Abzug's phrases that "we don't want to be mainstreamed into a polluted stream" (Moghadam and Valentine, 2005: 168).

These feminist phrases argue against market, technology and quick efficiency fixes for the economic and ecological crises. As Christa Wichterich argued at the 4th Degrowth Conference in Leipzig (2014) the banner of degrowth has the capacity to link three crucial feminist perspectives: First, care perspective, focused on the relevance of the

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sustenance and reproduction of social and natural life. Second, commons as a democratic strategy and a notion of property in countering the trends of economization and privatization. Third, good living based on a criticism of neoliberal globalization, overconsumption, production and imperialism, which are based on resource and care exploitation.

Based on Wichterich's distinction and the contributions from feminists at this degrowth conference there are three key themes highlighted. I have structured this section according to these different but overlapping categories. In short these can be termed care, commons and a culture of enough, which are strategic sites at which transformation may take place as they share principles of subsistence, provisioning protection, precaution, social reproduction, nursing, cooperation and reciprocity which counteract the growth and efficiency discourses of capitalist markets and the underlying goal of accumulating capital and material goods.

2.3.1 Care Work: Challenges and Opportunities

The theoretical claim for a caring economy endorsed by ecofeminist economists, is endorsed and reflected by activists as well. The underlying message is the same: caring is more important for human wellbeing than commodity production, hence safeguarding the caring capacities of our societies is as crucial as protecting the carrying capacity of our ecology.

In this spirit, degrowth activities mainly foster cooperation with local, regional and even national authorities, instead of heavily on governmental measures. However, they also demand national and reversals of supranational policies (Martinez-Alier et al., 2014). The political positioning of degrowth is that a caring state must not seek to (re-) construct a European welfare state, for this has generated welfare by means of the neo-colonial exploitation of human and natural resources in the Global South and through the

utilization of women's unpaid care work in a male-breadwinner model.

The state needs to break away from the neoliberal focus of maximizing competitiveness and must shift its focus to fair distribution by means of regulation and taxation of real markets[17] and financial markets as well as the preservation of nature and social reproduction. The benefit for feminists is to integrate the care perspective into new social movements and to link it to a resistance against the economization and the financialization of virtually everything.

For instance, the German network Care Revolution unites hundreds of small initiatives that revolve around provision, social reproduction and commoning at the edge or outside of the capitalist market economy: guerrilla gardening and food cooperatives, bee keeping and honey production, on roof tops in cities, user cooperatives, tools, technology and clothes exchange. The logo and symbols of this network is the toilet brush and the cake roll (instead of a hammer and sickle), and the main slogan says "care revolution against capital and the permanent crisis of reproduction" (Wichterich, 2014: 3).

Pürckhauer and Beck (2014) claim that care should be stipulated as a basic social right. In that manner, it could be seen as a societal necessity and responsibility, which would guarantee that care does not remain precarious. For a start there should be support for union struggles in feminized jobs to impede a further aggravation of the care situation and that would contribute to politicize concerns around issues that mostly affect women. Moreover, governmental policies should aim at incentivizing men to step into traditionally female roles, for example through an incentive for men as caregivers, as well as paid leave for childcare, the latter of which should be equally distributed amongst men and women.

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[17] See Section 1.4.1 for an explanation of the real economy.

Degrowth scholar Patricia Ellie Perkins (2010) asserts that one way to understand feminist ecological economics is that it mainly addresses the interface between paid and unpaid contributions to the accounted economy. The undervalued contributions are comprised of what has traditionally been women's work, counting all under- and unpaid work, non-monetized services, and material inputs from nature that are introduced into the economic sphere almost for free, if they become economically considerable.

As I have mentioned before in this chapter, feminist writers have shown that capitalism was founded on and continues to be reliant on the work of women that is unpaid and underpaid. Mary Mellor (2006) and Ariel Salleh (2009) and a number of other scholars have traced the material connections between women's work and what economists call ecosystem services. According to Ellie Perkins (2010), these kinds of underpayment and disparity established on the basis of social injustice and ecological degradation. They bring about economic winners and losers which are based on colonialism, patriarchy, under-development[18] and race and class discrimination within individual countries and at the global level.

Whenever these unpaid or so-called free services are computed—as done by Robert Costanza (1997), Hilkka Pietilä (1997), D'Alisa et al. (2009) they generally dwarf the monetized economy in value. Nevertheless, they are generally considered too unimportant to enter policy deliberations and often remain completely ignored.

In other words, women's work and nature are fundamental and irreplaceable aspects of the economy (Perkins, 2010). In fact, if misunderstood as a conversion of paid into unpaid work, degrowth would exacerbate the exploitation of underpaid workers, and that of nature. As economies become increasingly localized and service-oriented to create

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[18]I prefer employing the term poverty instead of under-development. Using the term under-development might suggest an uncritical understanding of this concept and its underlying power, as well as the detrimental effects of the US led development agenda (Escobar, 1994).

less material throughput, changes occur regarding the amount of work done and who does it. In this context, how much is traded, how much employment ceases to exist, whose economic needs are met or not, are crucial questions (Perkins, 2010).

In a growth paradigm reproductive activities are often portrayed at the margin of market exchange and labeled unproductive. Their contribution to reproduction, like education and nutrition, is left aside in the calculation of production costs and ignored as an economic value. Including these exclusions in production costs would decrease current growth rates. Hence, recognizing them as valuable for the economy is considered an essential shift. Transcending the separation of paid and unpaid labor becomes vital.

Degrowth scholars Pürckhauer and Beck (2014) concur with the idea that reproductive work should not be seen as a free gift and state that the manner in which these activities are valued and reconfigured is an essential aspect of constructing a just, social and ecological economy in the spirit of degrowth.

Since the 1980s a feminization of labor has been occurring, implying that a significant amount of women have entered the monetized sphere as reproductive workers (Richer, 2012). This tendency has been described as a site of both oppression and resistance (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010).

It has been argued that this monetization of 'women's work' developed in connection with a proposition over wages for housework in the 1970s, which demanded the valuation of reproductive activities (Pürckhauer and Beck, 2014). Thus, the tendency of giving an economic value to feminized work has been empowering for women, to a certain extent.

On the other hand, it has contributed to an amplification of the capitalistic logic whereby the working conditions of this kind of labor tend to be precarious and exploitative, this kind of work is devalued as 'simple labor' (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez, 2010).

As a result, conventionally 'feminine' work activities are poorly paid since they have low rates of monetary return for investments.

Thus, it can be argued that this process of feminization of labor has subsumed many women to market principles which have led to higher profits for capitalists, instead of actually revaluing reproductive labor. In addition, sadly, it has not led to more equality in terms of work distribution. Still, women represent an overwhelming majority of the reproductive labor force (Hayes, 2017). This also goes for reproductive activities that stay in the unpaid, private sphere.

Consequently, many females who have entered the work force face a double burden because they continue to be responsible for the unpaid reproductive work at home. This situation is exacerbated by a cutback of the welfare state that went in hand with neoliberal policies and has further reduced the compensation for reproductive labor, forcing many women to engage in additional paid labor besides their reproductive labor.

Concurrently, Beck and Pürckhauer (2014) observe, real wages have shrunk and a larger amount of paid hours is needed to maintain monetary income needed to pay for reproductive activities. In this context, the authors assert that the same inequalities and uneven distributions of work in gender can also be observed across race, ethnicity and classes. Pürckhauer and Beck conclude that the aim of economically revaluating reproductive activities advocated by some feminists has not led to the envisioned outcomes.

The cost of unpaid reproductive work has been computed and studied; however, this has not helped to overcome gender discrimination. To the contrary, the situation of care work has become an entrenched market logic within society. Hence, cheap and unpaid or undervalued reproductive work continues to exist and must be overcome. In light of this, it is essential for degrowth proponents to determine ways to deal with the

double challenge of valued and non-discriminatory visions of labor. Concrete examples about an improved way of configuring labor, reproduction and leisure could provide a way out and prevent a worsening of social circumstances.

In this spirit, feminist economics and degrowth scholars Corinna Dengler and Birte Strunk (2018) tackle the ways in which the growth paradigm reproduces gender inequalities and whether these can be reversed through degrowth proposals of work sharing. The authors build upon Maren Jochimsen and Ulrike Knobloch's ICE model (1997) which depicts the interrelations of the monetized economy, caring activities and environmental processes. Moreover, Dengler and Strunk acknowledge the roots of Karl Polanyi's work who saw the economy as embedded in society and Maria Mies notion of the economy as an iceberg with similar views.

As can be seen in Figure 4, Dengler and Strunk (2018) depict the three spheres in the form of a triangle with the top representing the formal paid economy divided from the base with a horizontal line representing the boundary between different aspects of the economy which they call productive/reproductive, valuable/valueless, focus/blind spots, counted/unaccounted for, inside/outside (163). The base of the triangle represented by the ecological processes and caring activities, which represent the second part of the word pairs.
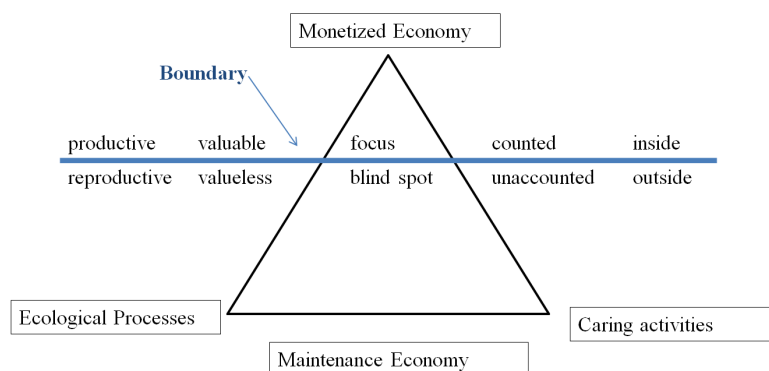

Figure 4 Adopted ICE model by Dengler and Strunk (2018: 16). Source: own elaboration

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The authors claim that the boundaries between productive and reproductive, valuable and unvalued need to be overcome to enable a more sustainable and gender just economy. However, Dengler and Strunk explain that moving the horizontal line downwards, that is, making more formerly unpaid work paid does not lead to a good solution in the spirit of degrowth. Whereas it would give value to previously ignored sections of the economy, the pattern of growing monetization and the equation of value with money would prevail, which would fail to address gender disparities in unpaid care work where the language of efficiency is not applicable. An example given in this context is the feminization of the work force in the 1970s, where a large portion of women entered the paid sector, but inequalities continued to be reproduced along a class-race-gender line. In a final section, the authors research degrowth proposals of shortening of work time to allow men and women to have more time for care work. They advocate for a shortening of the work day rather than the prominent *Friday off* suggestions (Kallis et al., 2013) recognizing that the alleviation of care work is a daily rather than a weekly concern.

The alternative suggested by the authors would not necessarily be less environmentally friendly, since females tend to use public transport more and work closer to home to make their paid work and domestic responsibilities compatible (Scholten et al., 2012). The authors deem a shift in values and narratives necessary for reduced work time to translate into a more gender-equal unpaid work division. The authors conclude that degrowth has the potential to reduce gender imbalances but by no means does so automatically. Hence degrowth ought to make insights from feminist thinking an inherent part of degrowth reasoning.

2.3.2 The Commons: Sharing the Burdens and Benefits

Commons are resources that belong to an entire community. They include many kinds of things such as oceans and watersheds and the atmosphere, but also the internet and

languages. They remain outside the realm of private property, and they are ubiquitous (Hess, 2008), forming a basic foundation for societies and often unstable economies which they maintain. Unpaid work and ecological systems can be seen as part of the commons (Gibson-Graham, 2006, Williams and Schneider, 2016, Fournier, 2013).

The historical roots of the commons can be traced back thousands of years before the emergence of private property (Ostrom et al., 1999). This included commonly managed natural resources, such as forests, coastal ecologies, fresh water, hunting grounds and fisheries.

In the mid-seventeenth century in England, a major shift in the relationship between people was institutionalized through the Enclosure Acts (Amster, 2015). This enclosure of vast lands was backed by the state and enforced by the military. The enclosure was expanded to the rest of Europe and its colonies and represented a fundamental condition for the establishment of capitalism and the exacerbation of patriarchal relations.

Yet, despite these massive changes and the rise of private property, ecological economist Patricia Ellie Perkins explains, "commons are still more prevalent and more important in assuring people's livelihoods globally than many may realize" (2019: 184) with roughly two billion people world-wide depending on them.

Perkins' perspective on the commons (2019) broadly entails people collaborating, in order to devise methods of production, service provision and exchange that can elevate value and well-being while they integrate notions of ecological care, justice and long-term planning as well as make the best use of the diverse communities' abilities. Such a system would include cooperatives, land trusts and non-market or beyond-market collective strategies of organizing production, distribution, consumption, as well as

material and waste management. The practice of monitoring open access by means of strong social institutions could thus prevent the so-called tragedy of the commons.

Perkins asserts that walking on this path demands a high level of civic consciousness, co-operation, the ability to listen and mediate diverging goals, conflict resolution, flexibility and good will across all segments of society, in particular with regards to social dynamics and diversity. Whereas a good outcome of this kind of management of the commons is not guaranteed, thorough research done by Nobel Economics Laureate Elinor Ostrom and others shows that the commons can operate successfully. According to Ostrom, commoning implies addressing all forms of justice: distributional, procedural, intergenerational, intersectional, interspecies, restorative.

According to Ellie Perkins (2019) it also necessitates an understanding of the deep colonial roots of growth itself, so as to actively unsettle the collaborative procedure of restoring wrongs done, building respect and humility, and imagining a resilient, sustainable future. Relationships between settler ecofeminists, Indigenous women activists, and global climate justice movements need settlers to commit to ongoing self-education, respect, and solidarity in their efforts towards decolonization.

Moreover, equity-oriented degrowth, climate justice, and commoning can be mutually reinforcing, and provide a politically viable path for an energy transition and a post-capitalist future. Perkins (2019) argues:

> The first step on this path is to dismantle colonialism, restore stolen land to its Indigenous caretakers in reconciliation, and (re)build the social respect, relationships and fundamental human values that can link all members of society together, without fear or xenophobia, for shared and responsible commons governance. (188)

An additional insight connected to distributive justice is the reevaluation of the image of the pie often utilized in a growth-based discourse. Inside the economic growth paradigm, as the pie of the monetized economy grows, there is no necessity for redistributing it

because everybody gets enough. The assumption is thus that under adequate political conditions, growth lets income and resources be distributed without too much conflict. Yet, from an ecofeminist degrowth standpoint the challenge is that the pie shrinks instead of growing. Consequently, in order for all people to get the resources they need, some have to give up some of theirs. Since peaceful and democratic modes of governance are preferred, it seems suitable to assign somewhat larger portions of a growing pie to formerly underprivileged groups to decrease inequality over time.

However, staying in the metaphor, Perkins argues that pies, especially growing ones, have fruit and crusts, and also require energy to bake. She therefore asks the fundamental question of what mechanisms can be employed to address historically conditioned material inequalities, both among and within countries and regions as well as globally. She states that within degrowth, progressive redistribution will need a new type of engine (Perkins, 2010).

When considering distribution, Beck and Pürckhauer (2014) argue that the public sphere should provide equal access to men and women to receiving support in the form of free, high quality childcare to compensate for reduced working hours. Yet, these are just initial steps in the mission of achieving a more just labor distribution. The authors note that such ideas usually have an affirmative character, entrench the division of the public and the private sector and fail to challenge the production patterns of the growth paradigm. They argue that—in the spirit of Nancy Fraser's combination of redistribution and recognition—(Fraser and Honneth, 2003) it is essential that redistributive policies offer pathways to transcend the market and monetary logic.

Beck and Pürckhauer call to think in what ways we can change labor as an activity that transcends gender discrimination with a production process that promotes care for communal resources. The challenge here would be to figure out how a newly

conceptualized labor market could be framed while bypassing the established market logic. In their perspective, degrowth could contribute valuable propositions to achieve this quest (Pürckhauer and Beck, 2014). They maintain that for degrowth perspectives to become established it is essential to place the organization of work into the foreground, regarding it as an unavoidable starting point. Aside from the question of how much is produced and how production can function, the manners in which we understand labor in terms of work division are highly relevant to the re-organization of societal relations. They assert that such thoughts are fundamental for any model of a non-discriminatory concept of labor, which aims to value gender justice and degrowth.

The feminists Brownhill, Turner, and Kaara (2012) assert that in order to be more than just a range of policies that could be co-opted by capitalists, degrowth needs to re-establish and reinvent the commons. This can be done through the de-alienation of labor, a procedure which necessarily entails the effort to overcome patriarchy and racism, which they point out as problems that continue to be ignored by degrowth proponents (Saed, 2012). Answering to these observations, there have recently been increased efforts by degrowth scholars to include feminist postcolonial perspectives into degrowth research, although this research agenda is still at its beginnings (Dengler and Seebacher, 2019).

Brownhill et al. (2012) underscore that degrowth values call for a re-conceptualization of the idea of capital. However, they criticize, that values do lack emphasis on the fact that the political endeavor of a forming a specific utopia for degrowth necessarily entails a re-conceptualization of the idea of the commons and, furthermore, a re-enactment of actual commoning.

Hence Brownhill and colleagues introduce a scheme for examining processes by which commoning might be reconceived and its ongoing reinvention exposed and assessed. The authors make reference to the Occupy Everywhere movement, including

the Arab Spring and a number of other social movements, which according to them present experience and important examples of commoning in contemporary cultures. These show a reinvigoration of the practice of democracy in horizontal social relations, as well as environmentally informed subsistence-oriented livelihood practices. This idea of the commons prompt ongoing local-to-planetary efforts to gain power that can reverse and untie corporate enclosures (Brownhill et al., 2012).

As Brownhill and her colleagues follow a gendered interpretation of Marx on alienation, they particularly condemn the total dehumanization of women. This dehumanization has a long historical trajectory, where women have been dispossessed and witch-hunted, losing their property, professions, and status in Europe between 1450 and 1750 (Federici, 2004). In the Global South, women also have a history of being colonized and enslaved. A remorseless objective of accumulation has decreased women to producers of labor power, who were as carriers of wombs that were controlled by their husbands, religious institutions, and the state.

Thus, women have been alienated from the fundamental means of production. They have been "housewifized" or obliged to rely on husbands and other authorities to gain access to ways of surviving (Brownhill et al., 2012: 98). Because of the gendered and ethnicized character of the class formations that take place in capitalism's processes of alienation and enclosure, those people who can be considered the most exploited of the world are actually the most advanced, in terms of their relations with the commons. Moreover, it is not accidental that those who still partially practice pre-colonial commoning social relations of cooperation, ecological stewardship and autonomous political organizing bear rich resources and face struggles from which to re-enact new commoning relations. De-alienation advocates the substitution of the capital relation with

the recovery of the species-being and the re-invention of gendered commons (Brownhill, 2007).

The authors expose their application of Marxist theory, underscoring that their understanding of Marx's four features of alienation is not to be considered reified interpretations of a holy text. Instead, they are explained and reconfirmed through practice by the already-existing movements to recover the earthly commons who are composed of the main actors in the process of de-alienation. The movements are locally grounded and extend globally, each with its own rich history. In East Africa, such movements extend through a very long, strong, creative and continuing history of self-organization for social reconstruction and transformation (Enarson and Chakrabarti, 2009).

De-alienation in practical terms means eliminating our exploited conditions by re-connecting with others, which means working collectively; re-establishing the species-being and in that the recognition of one's inter-relation with all animate and inanimate beings; returning the power over production processes to producers; and finally, winning dominion over the products of one's work. De-alienation begins and ends socially, needing the action and diversity of individuals. The means and ends of de-alienation are hence social. Social relations of commoning are reconfigured through unity and collectivity. This implies that atomized individualism is reversed. Collectivity therefore means extending of the notion of self, highlighting the idea that the life of the individual human being or the family is an intrinsic part of the planet-sized experience of humanity and all other animate and inanimate beings together.

Brownhill and colleagues name the Earth jurisprudence movement which succeeded in Bolivia, as an example of such a realization in which the Earth becomes part of an eco-socialist, ecofeminist notion of being.

2.3.3 A Culture of Enough: Towards a Subsistence Economy

The subsistence approach coined by the Bielefeld scholars Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Claudia von Werlhof and Maria Mies, showed the link between capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy in their work, as a basic logic underlying the economic growth paradigm. They argued that economic growth and the production of goods and money represent the fundament of welfare, which relies on the destruction of nature, of life and of exploitation of humanity (Mies and Bennholdt-Thomsen, 2000). The economic growth paradigm became the departure point and a guiding force for social action in every sphere of human activity, which contains the crux of what we must move away from.

The authors initially based their theory on the work of Rosa Luxemburg, who found that the structural exploitation of the non-capitalist exterior was a crucial precondition for the stabilization of capitalism. These spheres of the non-capitalist exterior were named by the Bielefeld feminists as the unpaid work done mainly by women, the natural environment and countries of the Global South, which are undervalued, overexploited and invisible representing colonies of the white man (von Werlhof, Mies und Bennholdt-Thomsen 1983).

The subsistence economy represents the alternative paradigm envisioned by the authors. Their book explains subsistence as empowerment, based on people's strength and cooperation. It analyses feminist politics arguing that the struggle for equality with men has failed to make an egalitarian society. They include case studies and exemplify how subsistence would shift the current economic paradigm.

For instance, the wage labor and market economy would have to subsidize social productivity and the production of life, rather than vice versa. Subsistence economy tools would be at the service of enhancing life, to nurture, share and care, in cooperation with nature and valuing people's knowledge. As a decentralized and regional economy it

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would preserve biodiversity, the diversity of products and resist the homogenization of cultures.

Moreover, the authors claim that needs and sufficiency would be understood differently: They would not be based on the accumulation of capital but on reciprocal relations among rural and urban areas, producers and consumers, cultures, countries and regions. Self-reliance for food security would go hand in hand with the practice of commoning to resist the injustices that stem from privatization and commercialization of nature. Money would be a means of circulation but not of accumulation.

In this context, sustainability philosopher Janis Birkeland (1993) conceived of ecofeminism as a form of awareness that the oppression and degradation of women, including the exploitation of their labor, of nature, and of peoples in the Global South are the preconditions for the successful enactment of the growth paradigm. The ceaseless corrosion of women's living conditions in the context of globalization, which creates new disparities, intensifies the old ones, consumes and kills life at an ever-increasing rate (Salleh, 2009) and brings about new challenges for ecofeminism.

As has been known before the degrowth movement, the processes of production and consumption make entire societies enter a loop of environmental destruction, in death and in war. In this context, socialist feminist and economist Ewa Charkiewicz writes, "The relationships between nature, work and capital are some of the areas of the social organization of human existence whereby violence, including the most severe form – the power to kill – is supported and continually reproduced " (2009: 67).

The desire to keep away from any such complicity has given great momentum to the condemnation of the limitless growth paradigm, motivated by the philosophy that has led the struggle of women in the Global South. In all nations, in fact, women

unquestionably play leading roles in movements to defend land and forests from devastation and privatization.

In this framework, a well-known historical example is the Chipko movement, better known as the tree-huggers, which is a movement conducted by women to defend the trees in the Himalayan forests in 1973 (Puleo, 2008). These women succeeded in the quest of protecting their forests when in 1980 the Prime Minister Indirah Gandhi forbid felling trees in these regions. As a result of this movement, women started cooperatives to guard local forests and among others, managed to replant degraded land. By saving seeds, planting trees and occupying uncultivated terrain, they act in the name of food sovereignty, creating new economies grounded in a non-competitive, communal ways of living. While renewing ecological processes, such economies stimulate creativity, foster solidarity and social cooperation.

There are innumerable practical enactments of ecofeminist principles, some of which stand out for the varied scope of their effects. Another salient example is given by the Kenyan activist and researcher Wangari Maathai, who set up a reforestation project in Kenya in 1977. Her main aim of was to promote a positive image of women and their independence (Weber, 1989, Michaelson, 1994, Shiva, 1988, Maathai, 2003)

In the years 1980 and 1981, two critical events gave international visibility to ecofeminism: In 1980, two-thousand women surrounded the Pentagon in Washington rising up against nuclear power (Bianchi, 2012). In 1981 a similar protest was organized at the Greenham Common missile base in England. One of the main issues expressed here was the possibility of a total destruction of the Earth by the force of destructive technology.

In an essay authored by the Finnish economist Hilkka Pietilä(1997) argues that activity connected to the task of creating and preserving life as the actual heart of the

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economics, and defines it as the only 'free economy' (Pietilä in Bianchi, 2012:14). The longer the distance from this center point, the more instability, the more uprooting, the stronger the individual unease, the social malaise and the environmental degradation (Pietilä, 1997).

This feminist version of simple living recognizes a path towards freedom in decreasing the kind of consumption that causes poverty and environmental destruction and increases brutal domination. This path endorses values that are disregarded by the market economy: cooperation, self-sufficiency, respect for all living beings, creativity, pleasure in work, a moral economy based upon ethical values that transcend the sexual division in the workplace and overcome the gender-based violence that accompanies it, in addition it is a part of the economic system (Bianchi, 2012).

In this context, democracy could be understood as action directed towards guaranteeing the basis of human life, an everyday reality that consists of caring for and protecting life, friendship, compassion and solidarity. Like this, democracy can be seen as a process, similar to the process of sowing and reaping; it becomes a path on which the road itself represents the goal, like a way of life that works through small-scale experiments.

This relates to the Gibson-Graham work of 'A Feminist project of belonging for the Anthropocene' (2011) where the authors claim:

> We identified three simple but powerful ingredients of a world-shaping political movement: 1) the decentralized attempts by women to change themselves, 2) the ubiquity of women, and 3) the global compass of a new discourse 'woman'. In a similar vein we posit parallel ingredients of a new world-shaping movement: 1) assemblages that are experimenting with new practices of living and being together, 2) the ubiquity of these assemblages, and 3) the potential global compass of a new discourse of 'belonging' linked to a more-than-human regional development imaginary. (5)

From this perspective, the aspect of experimenting is complemented by the understanding of the ubiquity of assemblages that live this way and by a discourse on the aspect that is being experimented with. Their two examples, self-transformation of women and an imaginary of more than human regional development do not explicitly name feminist degrowth but certainly can be related to it.

From the viewpoint of consumption critics, degrowth represents an extraordinary remedy for the insanity of overconsumption. An increasing share of Northern consumers are becoming aware of the illogic of certain consumption products, and do not need to be convinced by the benefits of a concrete degrowth agenda.

Hence, from a subsistence perspective a philosophy of *buen vivir* or living well, should replace the mantra of pursuing a higher standard of living that is obsessed with quantity and accumulation through the capitalist growth logic. Yet, a monolithic focus on hyper-consumerism must not predominate, since other significant aspects such as production, power relations and the need for change in all human relations both with each other and with nature ought to be considered (Brownhill et al., 2012).

2.4. Feminist Degrowth—Chapter Summary

In this chapter I discuss how feminisms challenge the economic growth paradigm and enhance degrowth theory. To do so, I have exposed a number of issues that make patriarchy and capitalism interlinked, so as to show the need for growth critical feminist streams in support of degrowth. Moreover, I have analyzed commonalities and differences among diverse growth-critical feminist perspectives. There is a vast amount of literature in feminism that can provide critical insights for degrowth. I have mainly focused on the fields of feminist economics and ecofeminisms, in plural. The existing divides in the latter are a fruitful ground for discussion.

My viewpoint with regards to these seek to integrate aspects of both, materialist and cultural interpretations of ecofeminism, without falling into the pitfall of essentialism. More than that, I endorse the queer ecofeminism, I not only question the existence of a female essence but also believe it is necessary to queer the dichotomies that make the opposites of male and female, culture and nature, reason and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity, straight and queer possible. Rather than being opposites these are two constructed ends of a spectrum where there is no absolute distinction between both.

In light of this, I hope and expect that my reflections on the potential of synergies between feminisms and degrowth, from a peace perspective, might contribute to furthering this discussion.

In the last part of this chapter, I have elaborated on existing feminist contributions to degrowth, which is a small but growing field. I have divided these contributions into care, sharing and subsistence economy. Currently, there are around forty members of the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance, an association which was established in 2016 in order to include feminist perspectives into degrowth in a transversal manner and to foster a dialog among these perspectives.

The debate within the overlapping fields of feminisms and degrowth is increasing in terms of a growing number of academic articles and spaces for discussion within conferences and internal collaborative writing projects. Hence, there are a number of colleagues that have shown interest in the same conjunction of topics other than myself, however, I am not aware of anyone approaching their feminist degrowth research from a peace studies perspective. In the following chapter I present a theoretical approach to peaces and link it to feminist degrowth.

CHAPTER 3—Promoting Feminist Degrowth

El virus es un pedagogo que nos está enseñando que la Madre Tierra no está satisfecha con el modelo de desarrollo que tenemos. Nosotros somos una parte muy pequeñita, ínfima, de la vida del planeta[19]. Boaventura de-Sousa-Santos (2020)

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing. Rollo May

3.1. Strategies for Promoting Degrowth

The latest degrowth conference, organized by the Degrowth Vienna association was held online in May 2020 during the global Coronavirus pandemic (Degrowth Vienna, 2021). The theme was *Time to think about strategy*, in the spirit of bringing degrowth grassroots activism and academia closer together (Asara, 2020a). It was chosen for the purpose of moving from an already consolidated discourse about why degrowth should happen towards dialog on the question of how.

The conference permitted activists and scholars to share sessions together in dialog. The conversations dealt with what have been called interstitial and also symbiotic transformations, terms borrowed from Erik Olin Wright (2019). Interstitial transformations refer to grassroots localized alternatives finding new ways of social empowerment in niches and margins of the capitalist society. These have hitherto been the main playing field for degrowth actors. Interstitial transformations are intrinsically worthy and crucial for a degrowth transformation because they provide opportunities to promote activists' radical imaginaries, and to build and embody alternative forms of life and futures. Furthermore, they suggest the possibility of different ontological politics (Escobar, 2020) and alternative value practices which allow the pre-configuration of a different society (Asara, 2020b).

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[19] The virus is a pedagogue who is showing us that Mother Earth is not satisfied with the development model that we have. We are a very small, minute part of life on the planet (author's translation).

What seemed to gain more prominence in this particular conference is the collective thought process on what Wright (2019) calls symbiotic transformations. This concept refers to so-called non-reformist reforms (Gorz, 1967) that aim to substantially change power relations by undermining the capitalist system and by deepening institutionalized social empowerment.

In light of this the conference covered the levels of national, international and local change. It addressed diverse issues including universal basic income, rethinking ownership in production, international trade agreements, the political initiative of a Green New Deal for Europe as well as localized examples such as the successful democratic implementation of a regulation imposing organic agriculture at the municipal level in a locality of South Tirol (Asara, 2020a) .

Hitherto this thesis has mainly addressed how degrowth can be enhanced through feminist perspectives, discussing and critically analyzing degrowth theoretically. What can this theoretical contribution do for tangible social change? Enhancing degrowth in theory is of little use if the movement is unknown or unattractive to its potential followers.

This chapter addresses how degrowth can be promoted, drawing insights from peace philosophy and other inter- and trans-disciplines. As I reflect upon how degrowth can be promoted from that from a peace studies perspective I bear in mind that any degrowth worth promoting needs to be feminist too. Hence, like the theme of the Degrowth Vienna 2020 conference, this chapter grapples with strategy. In particular, it addresses the aspect of attracting a broader audience at the grassroots level. At the base of this decision is an underlying assumption: If degrowth becomes common sense then it is more likely for degrowth to bring about profound change, including interstitial and symbiotic transformations.

High numbers of conference participants—over 4000 participants in 100 sessions, including conference panels, workshops and plenary sessions—and the broad range of issues that the latest degrowth conference dealt with reflects how degrowth has expanded into new realms and gained more attention. This indicates that degrowth has gained significant prominence since its beginnings.

However, I generally concord with Chris Conrad's open letter published in the degrowth website blog section who claims that "We are running out of time" (Conrad, 2020: 1). In a statement below, he writes:

> If the central thesis of degrowth is correct—that economic growth unavoidably drives ecological destruction and GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions, and green growth is a fairytale—then we have a little more than nine years to end the gospel of growth. Degrowth (and ecological economics) clearly and exhaustively show that material use and emissions are tightly coupled to GDP. In other words, we cannot stop the ecological crisis—in a just way—without degrowth becoming mainstream. [...] Growthism is so entrenched that we about whether degrowth is even the right word to use when communicating to the public. (Conrad, 2020: 1)

Based on his insights gained at the Post-Growth Institute and in the organization of environmental movements this young scholar activist proposes a number of strategies for change and to encourage a deeper engagement with social movement theory, communicating beyond the ivory tower of academia and, besides winning the battle of ideas, help build a mass social movement to force politics to abandon the growth imperative. Recognizing the power of the recent climate mobilizations organized for instance in Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future, Conrad proposes "when the climate movement realizes it must confront the question of growth, we will be there as a partner movement to help them make the right choice" (Conrad, 2020: 1).

I broadly concur with Conrad's proposed solutions, and particularly with two ideas: The notion of making degrowth more publicly accessible, particularly through framing. Before going into this I shall show how I got to these ideas myself: One way to

move further with the degrowth movement is by enhancing its popularity and making degrowth related ideas more common sense in the Gramscian understanding (1971). Another hypothesis then is that for degrowth to become more of a common sense it needs to highlight that it resonates commonly held views of a range of different people. According to sociologist Harald Welzer (2013) the crux for the success of social movements is to be able to convince a small percentage of a large range of different strata from society rather than to the entire population of a specific section of society.

In a comparable manner, peace scholar and practitioner John Paul Lederach (2005) claims that the crux of making a movement successful is not to gain a critical mass of people but to make sure to reach a *critical yeast.* By using dough as a metaphor, Lederach refers to the crucial component for a successful movement as the yeast, which can make a dough grow. It also has the capacity to tie the other ingredients that make the mass, together, alongside a series of other features akin to yeast. Lederach notes that the crucial point lies not in increasing the numbers of people following a movement but in the question: "Who within a given setting would have the capacity to make things grow toward the desired end?" (Lederach, 2005: 181). The focus is hence on the quality and not the numbers of people getting together, as they form unique connections among a variety of sectors and locations.

In this context, I believe that it needs to be researched what kinds of actors are necessary to bring together to reach desired ends related to degrowth. However, in order to understand what kinds of different actors are needed for such a transition, first and foremost, it is necessary for degrowth to expand its outreach.

Hence following these ideas, promoting a degrowth transition entails gaining support from a range of different societal actors. How can this be achieved? It would be pertinent to gain a deeper understanding of the potential effects that could be realized by

harnessing the power of different combinations of actors as critical yeast. Yet to learn about the right combinations of people that can form such critical yeast, a range of diverse potential supporters need to get interested in the movement in the first place. Thus, I contend that diversifying degrowth communication helps to attract diverse supporters.

By diversifying communication, I mean complementing rather than supplanting existing communication about degrowth. Besides continuing to use degrowth as a missile concept I engage in finding existing alternative ways to speak about degrowth. This could be done by establishing a series of defining phrases that are easier to embrace for a broader public than the missile concept and considering additional frames that might emerge from feminist and peace theoretical insights as well as engaging in debate with other existing movements.

The reason I embrace maintaining degrowth as a missile concept (Demaria et al., 2013) alongside other options is that unlike other terms, degrowth cannot be hijacked by profit-driven discourse and hence represents the anchor or the axis around which any alternative degrowth framings turn. The reasons I seek alternative senses is that the degrowth word, like a door without a handle or with too short of a leverage, stands in the way of engaging new supporters that are not already aligned with degrowth (Raworth, 2015). Raworth states:

> If you are trying to persuade someone that their growth-centric worldview is more than a little out of date, then it takes careful argument. But whenever the word 'degrowth' pops up, I find the rest of the conversation is spent clearing up misunderstandings about what it does or doesn't mean. This is not an effective advocacy strategy for change. If we are serious about overturning the dominance of growth-centric economic thought, the word 'degrowth' just ain't up to the task. (1)

One reason supporting degrowth can be daunting is that the missile concept directly challenges very profound beliefs held by the hegemonic growth paradigm and thus by a large majority of people engaged in one or several ways in the cycles of extraction,

production and consumption. *Growth is good, so degrowth is bad* is among them. How could the degrowth movement attract different supporters?

In my view the answer to this question depends very much on language. Logician and philosopher of language Gottlob Frege first distinguished between sense and denotation of expressions (Zalta, 1995). According to his thinking, the expressions *4* and *8/2* have the same denotation but express different senses, that is, different ways of understanding the same number. Similarly, the descriptions *the morning star* and *the evening star* refer to the same planet, namely Venus, but they manifest different senses because they express different ways of conceiving of Venus. A more technical way of differentiating these is by calling the sense the signifier and the denotation the signified (Culler, 1986). In both examples the denotation or signified is the same but the sense or signifier changes. When applied to degrowth, I contend that degrowth as the signified can become part of a collective understanding by means of diverse range of signifiers.

There has been a lot of debate on whether or not degrowth is an adequate expression and there are positions on all sides. From the side of language famous criticisms have come from Noam Chomsky and Kate Raworth who both refer to Lakoff's theory on framing (2014). Chomsky said that degrowth would make people think they had to prepare for times of hardship when what it should convey it is about improving our lives. In his words, "when you say degrowth it frightens people. It's like saying you're going to have to be poorer tomorrow than you are today, and it doesn't mean that. You can be richer tomorrow than you are today" (Levy et al., 2014: 1).

Kate Raworth proposed the concept of doughnut economics (2017) that depicts how basic human needs satisfaction and living on a planet with limits are combined. The basic idea is that the sweet spot of humanity lies in the doughnut, which represents the safe and just space for humanity, where social foundations are met, and planetary

boundaries respected. The hole of the doughnut represents the deprivation of twelve basic human needs: water, food, health, education, income and work, peace and justice, political voice, social equity, gender equality, housing, networks and energy. Outside of the ring there is environmental overshoot divided into nine ecological ceilings: climate change, ocean acidification, chemical pollution, nitrogen and phosphorus loading, freshwater withdrawals, land conversion, biodiversity loss, air pollution and ozone layer depletion. Raworth's book *Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist* became a bestseller. Raworth endorses degrowth but has critiqued the degrowth term in an article 'Why degrowth has outgrown its own name' in a debate on the Oxfam blog Poverty and Power with degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis (Raworth, 2015).

Regarding this discussion about wording, there are strengths and weaknesses of both arguments and I believe that there is fructiferous ground where they can coexist. I suggest embracing the idea of 'Yes, and...'. This concept as taken from improvisational theatre can be used to consolidate both (Halpern et al., 1994). According to this principal, improvisers avoid overriding previously built realities, but rather acknowledge and add to these. This does not mean that the characters the improviser are playing cannot disagree as a part of their character's choices. In the words of improvisational theatre teacher and peace worker Kevin Brenneman (2014) "'yes' is a social agreement between the improvisers and not the characters they are playing. The agreement takes place between the improvisers and not necessarily the characters they play" (85).

Translated into peace work and dialog this means acknowledging and validating what someone has said goes beyond just hearing what they have said. The former includes active listening and using the ideas, opinions and needs of the people in a system (Brenneman, 2014).

Applied to the debate on degrowth wording one could say that tensions are allowed and bring the story forward. This means that degrowth can continue to be reified as an adequate term and at the same time other signifiers can and should be explored to support degrowth ideas, as long as they concord with degrowth as a denotation.

Feminist economist Amaia Pérez-Orozco (2014) reflects on this matter in her work *Subversion Feminista de la Economía* (Feminist Subversion of the Economy). She mentions that from feminist perspectives there have been critiques made of the hegemony of Marxism within heterodoxy, denouncing that they left out crucial elements that ecological economics and feminist economics include. Likewise, the feminist proposal is not complete or finished either, since it has not sufficiently engaged in the insertion of the economy in a wider ecological sphere and similarly, the ecological movement has failed to give sufficient relevance to non-remunerated labor. By considering a feminist degrowth this thesis sheds light upon many of the interdisciplinary spaces where these sorts of questions do gain sufficient attention. However, according to Pérez-Orozco we cannot aspire for a universal discourse that contains everything. The aim to integrate should be happening from the perspective of dialog rather than a meta-narrative that understands it all. Hence, a pitfall in this sense is for one perspective claims to hold complete truth or more importance than other perspectives or it is unable to reassess its own discourse from the perspective of what the rest could contribute (Pérez-Orozco, 2014).

3.1.1 Goals and Outline of this Chapter

In consideration of the distinction between signifier and signified and applying the 'Yes, and...' approach to the idea of promoting degrowth translates into a diversified strategy: On the one hand maintain degrowth as a name and continue to expand research and activism efforts under the degrowth banner. This part stands for the 'yes' I give to the degrowth concept. On the other hand I believe additional two intertwined practices would

help to build upon this. a) Seeking new frames that support degrowth and which could resonate with the experiences of a broader public and b) discussing the relevance of other existing movements (such as different feminisms) to explore common grounds and forge alliances. These two intertwined aspects of the addition I see necessary for degrowth are complementary and mutually enriching. We shall see that the degrowth movement itself has come up with alternative framing suggestions as expressed within the Degrowth Vienna 2020 conference as well as outside, as a public response to the COVID-19 crisis. To deepen the reflections on these novel framing options, it is helpful to return to the theoretical tools available to me which also represent the starting point of the entire thesis: Philosophy for making peace(s). This will lead over to b), the relevance of alliances.

Pérez-Orozco cautioned the risk of seeking a universal discourse and I agree that it is not necessary and probably not useful for degrowth to become an all-encompassing movement, but it is useful for it to open itself up to dialog with related perspectives.

To address this issue, I make use of framing. Framing is a concept from language and communication theory referring to how ideas are presented and their effect on the ways in which people think about these ideas. Framing is a crucial second level aspect of agenda setting in which media have an impact on their consumers' perception of events (Weaver, 2007). Understanding framing is crucial for both analyzing and creating frames that evolve around degrowth. I deal with frames that some theorists have come up with and that might help promote degrowth. Moreover, I provide some empirical context and discuss the particularity of the COVID-19 emergency and its relation to the degrowth debate. Here I specifically take into consideration different responses to these crises and, in line with the frames idea, I reveal a feminist degrowth frame that links to the pandemic as well as peace(s) philosophy insights that can support and complement these.

This chapter addresses the objective to explore communicative strategies that degrowth can adopt to attract a broader audience from plural peace approaches and adjacent theoretical perspectives. Subsequent issues addressed include the relevance of framing as a strategy to promote degrowth, including the utility of degrowth concept in comparison to alternative terminology. The reflections on framing are then put into the context of the Coronavirus pandemic where feminist, degrowth and peace perspectives are put into dialog. The remainder of the chapter addresses how plural peace perspectives and adjacent theories can help to promote degrowth as well as create synergies with each other. This includes a discussion about alliances that can help for degrowth to engage with related theoretical fields to inspire each other and cross-pollinate. Among these we find the questioning of rationalism, the notions of spiritual activism, magical thinking, the notion of the Pluriverse and the concept of relational ontologies. These are expressed through alternatives to development narratives and from vernacular and intersectional perspectives.

3.2. On Framing and Degrowth

3.2.1 Framing Theory and Communication for Peace

A key underlying idea of the frames concept is that communication is based on language which is the same conceptual system used in thinking (Lakoff and Johnson, 2008). The linguist George Lakoff is one of the main academics engaged with the notion of frames as well as the power of metaphors in our language (Mesa and Cano, 2020, Lakoff and Johnson, 2008). Frames are mental structures that shape the ways in which we see the world, allow us to understand reality and that can through discourse shape the way in which we perceive reality (Lakoff, 2006). Frames structure our ideas and concepts, the way we reason and the ways in which we perceive and act. Most of the time we use frames unconsciously (Darnton and Kirk, 2011).

Yet, frames are used consciously in the news or media, as the same information can be conveyed by evoking different kinds of images, thereby influencing the audience's perception of these. Hence, framing has been called second-level agenda setting. First-level agenda setting refers to the determination of *what* to think about, whereas second level agenda setting or framing deals with *how* to think about certain aspects (Goffman, 1974). According to framing theory, the way in which something (the frame) is presented to the audience influences their choices about how to handle that information.

They do so by offering specific meanings, definitions and interpretations to events (Shah et al., 2002). They center people's attention on specific interpretations and neglect other ways of understanding, thereby influencing the perceptions and opinions of events (Chong and Druckman, 2007). They ". . . call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions" (Entman, 1993: 55) and shape the way the public perceives a situation and even how it acts (Benziman, 2020). Hence framing is a highly relevant theoretical contribution to how societies think and also can provide insight on the ways in which public communicators shape what individuals and societies think.

From a sociological perspective, frames give a sense to facts through discourse and provide a certain kind of rationality and coherence to these (Lakoff, 2010). They also grant a sense of purpose to social practices, whereby discourses become legitimizing arguments. Frames can thus define expectations, assign roles and functions as well as prescribe certain behaviors, determining incentives and sanctions beforehand.

To show the broad relevance of framing from a peace perspective, we can observe a common mantra applied in corporate communication that says *todo comunica* (everything communicates) (Nos-Aldás, 2019). Just like communication for commercial purposes emphasizes the necessity for an overall coherence of communication policies

and campaigns, so too communication for peace (CfP) should be affected by the transversal character of communication.

Communication for peace is for people committed to transforming structures and discourses that perpetuate existing injustices at the local and global levels. It is a communication that focuses on conviviality and strengthening collective criteria, accepting the challenge of representing difference and encompassing disagreement with the complexity and dialogism that these necessitate. CfP is produced by people who are conscious of the capacities and socio-cultural consequences of each of their communicative emissions (Nos-Aldás and Farné, 2020).

Beyond commercial communication purposes, communication for peace should focus on transmitting values, to contribute to re-elaborating social imaginary and transforming structures of injustice. It must be grounded in and promote nonviolence (Nos-Aldás, 2013).

Frames can be considered a tool for such purposes. According to Lakoff (2010) changing the frames means promoting social change. It means changing what it understood as common sense. Hence, to recall the previously mentioned theory by Gramsci on cultural hegemony, previously mentioned, the construction of frames can be considered a method by which the notion of common sense can be questioned or changed (Mesa and Cano, 2020). This is not to say that framing has unlimited influence over citizens. Certain aspects such as credibility of a frame (Druckman, 2001) as well as the critical stance mediated by education are factors to be taken into account (Tarlau, 2014).

The path to do so is by seeking cultural resonance, that is, to interpellate (enter into dialog with) majorities and their habits, beliefs, tastes and desires in order to find a connection among values and valid norms within the cultural repertoire (Benford and

Snow, 2000, Nos-Aldás et al., 2020). The purpose is for the proposals to resonate with the audience, making them resonate with their identities as much as possible.

In sum, since frames are activated by language and, from a communication for peace perspective, new frames require new language. Also, thinking differently requires speaking differently, since language triggers frames (Calatayud et al., 2020).

An especially pertinent example of framing in public communication is provided by George Lakoff as he deals with the framing of environmental issues in a research article. Back in the year 2010 Lakoff referred to the term hypo cognition as a lack of ideas on a certain topic, regarding the environment. He argued that the reason for this is the interconnectivity of the environment with other areas such as economics, energy, food, health, trade and security. This phenomenon of a lack of ideas translates into leaders, policymakers, and journalists facing a shortage of frames that can capture the reality of the situation.

Lakoff (2010) analyses why the problem exists, based first of all on the definition of environment. He captures the fact that the term environment as a concept is defined as space separated from and around humans. This is a profound fallacy because we humans cannot be separate from nature. Nonetheless, according to Lakoff 'our' conceptual system does not allow us to wipe that idea out of our brains. At this point I put 'our' in inverted commas because, as has been analyzed in earlier chapters, this derives from the Cartesian (modern) mindset and mechanistic worldview controlled by science, which is a creation of Western modernity.

Lakoff (2010) continues by questioning the concept of environmental action, which places the focus of change on the power of the individual. The author hence questions: "What can we, as individuals, do? Use less energy? Replace our light bulbs? Drive less, walk more, ride bikes? Recycle? Eat organic? Eat local? Green our homes?

Buy green? All of this is fine and necessary, but the most important thing is missing: political action!" (77). Lakoff argues that governmental action enormously outweighs individual action. His usage of the word political is crucial here as it highlights the collective aspect of politics, which according to Martínez-Guzmán (2019) refers to (collectively) taking decisions that affect everybody. Yet, in 2010, the environment had no well thought out political framing.

Lakoff states that the economic and ecological meltdown shared the same cause, namely that of an unregulated free market, with the idea that greed is positive, and the natural world can be seen as a resource for short-term private enrichment.

He states "Global causes are systemic, not local. Global risk is systemic, not local. The localization of causation and risk is what has brought about our twin disasters. We have to think in global, systems terms and we don't do so naturally. Here hypo cognition is tragic" (77).

Lakoff finishes his work with a number of hints for better communicating the concept of the environment as he urges communicators to frame issues in terms of moral values. Values ought to be distinguished from policies. In this light, Lakoff advises to "always go on offense, never defense" (79). He cautions never to accept frames, even by negating them, because this helps reinforce them. Instead, the author suggests providing a structured understanding of the issue spoken about while avoiding giving the public "laundry lists". Instead, stories can exemplify your values and provoke emotions. It is important not just to provide give numbers and material facts. They need framing so that their overall significance can be grasped. There is a need for general themes or narratives that integrate the points that a communicator on environmental matters needs to consider.

He adds that context is relevant in that "being aware of what's going on"(80) and stresses to address everyday concerns. He furthermore warns from the use of technical

jargon; use words people can understand. He includes that the messenger matters and that visuals matter in general.

Some of the frames he does see are the distinction between oil-based food and sun-based food. Another would be globalizing localism. It is obvious that in the past decade there has been a lot of movement concerning the emergence of environmental frames. The Swedish concept of *Flygskam* is one, which translates into flight shaming. Another popular one is environmental justice; food sovereignty and others have become known as frames related to environmental matters.

3.2.2 Considering Degrowth Frame Alternatives

There has been a myriad of proposals on how to frame degrowth so as to resonate more with commonly held ideas. Some are more and others less prone to identify with degrowth but under other names. Very close to degrowth we can find the terms of post-growth and a-growth, for instance.

The effects of labeling were addressed in an article by Drews and Reese (2018). The authors find while the controversial term degrowth does elicit more negative affective and emotional reactions in comparison to *post-growth* and *prosperity without growth*. However, the authors claim that there is no evidence this difference affects attitudes. There were only small differences in attitudes toward prioritizing sustainability overgrowth, and voting intentions between the different labels. The study is relevant because it shows the influence that labeling certainly does matter since it can have a significant effect on emotions. The fact that the effect on attitudes is not proven to be significant should be taken seriously but also complemented by other studies.

According to communication designer Vegard Bayer at the Degrowth Vienna 2020 conference, he stated that we need simple clear messages repeated often, by various

trusted sources. In his presentation he proposed the following three terms: well-being economy, independence from growth and stable prosperity.

All three frames proposed by Bayer seem clear and resonate with commonly held values thereby bridging the gap between concept of degrowth and popular held beliefs about growth being good. Bayer argues that independence from growth works because although growth has a positive connotation in public perception, independence trumps growth.

However, from a feminist viewpoint independence from growth is somewhat tricky: I believe it can be used because independence has been deemed a goal and also a primary assumption of economics where individual persons take rational decisions depending on their needs and wants. On the contrary, ecofeminism tries to establish the common sense that we are radically dependent on each other and upon nature. Does the utilization of the glorification of independence contradict the simultaneous need to propagate the notion of human-human and human-nature interdependence?

I believe not, since independence from growth is like stopping addiction to consumerism, productivism and extractivism. A good remedy for this is the power of community. The growth has been compared to a drug that we are addicted to as a society. Similar to the experiment of lab rats who got addicted and died of heroine usage given the choice to eat food or eat the drug (Alexander, 2015). This experiment was repeated with rats that lived in community, enjoying freedom of movement, sexual partners, play, etc. In this version of the experiment rats would not choose the drug. Even previously addicted rats would opt for food and get cured from their addiction. This is a powerful example of how addiction can be cured through community. Hence, both the terms interdependece and independence must be seen in context respectively.

Jason Hickel in a compelling article argued why degrowth is actually *radical abundance*, countering the idea that degrowth might lead to scarcity (Hickel, 2019). Hickel gives the example of exorbitantly high housing prices in London as a manifestation of the artificial pressure put onto the system and people living in London, to work unnecessary long working hours to end unnecessary money merely to access decent shelter. "The consequence of this imperative is that everyone is forced to contribute unnecessarily to expanding the juggernaut of production, the output of which must in turn find an outlet in the form of ever-increasing consumption" (Hickel, 2019: 1). However, if housing prices were cut in half people would be able to spend time doing things they love, taking care of their health and seeing friends and family.

Hickel explains enclosure as the ultimate problem: In England people who used to be commonners, with a right to live on land and access to the resources they needed for survival. Enclosure was the phase in which elitist groups forced them to compete with each other for leases of the land which depended on their productivity— or else face starvation. In the industrial sector the same principles of competition applied. Similarly, in the colonies where people were forced off their lands or made to pay taxes in European currency that could only be acquired in exchange for labor.

The birth of capitalism was based on the creation of scarcity. Rivers, forests and lands remained, just that they were locked up and access to them restricted. Today's consequence of the locking up of forests and common land are felt as the constant threat of unemployment. This implies the need to be more productive than our competition. However, the paradox is that the more production rises the less labor is needed. Hence, Hickel explains that scarcity recruits for the ideology of growth. The imperative of human well-being is also submitted to the logic of growth: Without jobs people cannot survive.

Although it has been predicted for years that productivity will rise so much that people no longer need to work hard, yet this has not happened. The alleged abundance created by capitalism is stuff, and this stuff goes along with an immense scarcity.

A lot of the 'necessary stuff' that highly industrialized countries produce is driven by an artificial scarcity of time. The compulsion to work leaves so little time that people must pay firms to do things they would otherwise do themselves: cook meals, clean their homes, watch their children, care for their elderly parents. Furthermore, the stress of overworking produces needs for all kinds of substitutes for pleasure and well-being such as anti-depressants, sleep aids, alcohol. Also, dieticians, gym memberships, therapy, marital counseling, expensive holidays and other goods and services that people would otherwise be less likely to feel they need. To pay for these products people need to work more to increase their income which drives a vicious circle of unnecessary production and consumption.

The Lauderdale Paradox is the name of pattern of inverse correlation between private riches and public wealth, by which private growth of wealth necessarily leads to a decrease of public wealth (Foster and Clark, 2009). The only path to resolve this paradox is to reverse it. Public wealth would have to be produced in abundance even if doing so would happen at the expense of private riches. This inversion would free people and nature from the pressures of artificial scarcity.

Hickel concludes that degrowth has been smeared to represent a new version of austerity but that the opposite is true. Whereas austerity calls for scarcity in the name of growth, degrowth calls for abundance to make growth unnecessary. Hence abundance is the solution to the ecological crisis. In order to prevent climate breakdown we ought to articulate a demand for radical abundance (Hickel, 2019).

The framing of radical abundance is logical, but the term radical does not help to attract new audiences. Although radical just means grasping things at the root, there is a negative connotation to the term radicalism, associated with extremism. I suggest that the term radical could be substituted by the word smart, so as to create the concept *smart abundance*. However, standing alone this might sound like somewhat like a finance investor's slogan. We would have to say it together with degrowth: Degrowth is smart abundance.

An additional frame that has emerged in Spanish speaking feminist environments is *poner (la sostenibilidad de) la vida en el centro*, to put (the sustainability of) life in the center[20]. This slogan can be found in feminist economist's by work Amaia Pérez-Orozco (2014), *Subversiones Feministas de la Economía* (Feminist Subversions of the Economy[21]). It refers to a crucial double question she poses: First, what do we understand as a life that is worth living? The answer to this question seeks counter-proposals to hegemonic conceptions of well-being. It is followed by the question. Second, how can the conditions that make this life possible be given? (73).

According to the author, a deeper look into how life is sustained shows that salary is central. The assumption that money is needed to survive must be called into question, since the connection between our well-being and the position on the market is mediated by non-remunerated labor. It is also not individual because economic life is managed in households. It affects different people differently, not just depending on their class. Moreover, this relation between money and sustainability of life is not inevitable but an aspect of capitalism and hence it is inherently contingent, changeable.

One of the first authors to make use of this concept in Spain is Cristina Carrasco. She argued in 2001 that centering explicitly on the way in which each society resolves its

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[20] author's translation
[21] author's translation

problems regarding the sustenance of human life sheds a new light upon social organization. It allows to pinpoint all those aspects which tend to remain implicit and tend to remain unnamed. This new perspective allows one to see important interests in a society and to regain a vision of all processes related to labor, to name who takes on responsibilities of caring for life, to study gender and power relations (Carrasco, 2001: 44).

The slogan *poner la vida en el centro* was one of the women's day demonstration calls on March 8th in 2019. The activist, ecofeminist and anthropologist Yayo Herrero explained that putting life at the center means constructing politics, cultures, economies and communities that prioritize guaranteeing a decent life, which is worth living conjointly. It means guaranteeing the construction of communities where nobody has to fear for their future or suffer from thinking what will happen tomorrow (Utrilla, 2019). A central task that will allow this priority to take root is to acknowledge that humans are ecodependent and interdependent.

The authors Cristina Carrasco and Enric Telló argue that if we ever re-write the first article of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it should sound like this:

> *Todos los seres humanos nacen del seno de una madre y llegan a ser libres e iguales en dignidad y derechos gracias a una inmensa dedicación de cuidados, atenciones y amor de unas generaciones por otras que debe ser compartida entre hombres y mujeres como una tarea civilizadora fundamental de nuestra especie, gracias a la cual todas las personas pueden llegar a estar dotadas de razón y conciencia, y en virtud de la cual deben comportarse fraternalmente las unas con las otras a lo largo de sus vidas adultas.* (Carrasco and Tello, 2013: 17)

> All humans are born in from the womb of a mother and get to be free and equal in dignity and rights thanks to an immense dedication of care, attention and love given from some generations to others which shall be shared between men and women as a fundamental civilizing task of our species, thanks to which all persons can be endowed with reason and consciousness and in virtue of which they shall act fraternally with each other throughout their adult life.[22]

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[22] author's translation

This reframing of the first article of the declaration of human rights is a way of putting life in the center that indirectly critiques the limitations of a reason-obsessed modern society.

3.3. Framing Degrowth in Coronavirus Times

The following subchapter addresses the framing of the Coronavirus pandemic and considers its links to feminist degrowth. I have chosen to address this topic because it is ubiquitous in public communication and has significantly impacted and shaken all areas of human life world over. It cannot be silenced since it is a crisis with no precedents. At the same time, it can be seen as part of the crises that I have described in the first chapter and I elaborate on further here.

Crises are interesting to look at from a degrowth perspective because they can be seen as symptoms of a deeper lying dynamic that is unhealthy. Moreover, crises can be seen as opportunities. Here it is crucial to be careful about how to phrase this. There are many people that consider crises to be necessary for humans to destroy the malfunctioning systems we have set up and start anew. This is not the case from a degrowth perspective. Degrowth advocates tend to support degrowth by design, not by disaster. However, during the last degrowth conference in Vienna it was mentioned that we ought to pay attention to the potential that lies underneath the emergence of certain crises. This is a potential for change without precedents.

It has been argued that a paradigm shift requires deep crisis as one of the necessary elements for a political project (such as degrowth) to have a chance to succeed (Buch-Hansen 2018). In this viewpoint, other elements required for a paradigm shift are a broad coalition of social forces putting great political effort into making the project hegemonic and active or, at least, passive consent in the population.

3.3.1 Coronavirus and its Relation to other Crises

COVID-19 sparked a global pandemic in March 2020. In the following section I analyze how degrowth has been framed during the pandemic and how it has been framed by degrowth movement supporters, (including feminist degrowth advocates mainly represented through FaDA), so as to learn from a current example of media communication. I argue that the Coronavirus although unprecedented in its magnitude, public health, social and economic implications, can be seen as another expression of the multiple interlocking crises mentioned in Chapter 1. Due to its strong impact on human life and the economy the pandemic more accurately shows many of the problems that feminist and degrowth perspectives have been denouncing for years. However, belligerent framings of the pandemic given by many governments show how old, patriarchal imaginaries continue to exert power over public discourse. Moreover, misinterpretations of degrowth abound, where the concept is easily put into the box of a dramatic shrinkage of the economy. Simultaneously, degrowth related manifestos have provided a series of statements expressing alternative frames that call for steps toward a degrowth transition without using degrowth as a signifier.

I consider the degrowth and COVID-19 framings as examples in a current ground of experimentation. In times of crisis, uncertainty abounds and common senses can tumble and new ones can emerge (Buch-Hansen, 2018). The frames that emerge from this real-life example are seen in the light of the plural peaces philosophy, which, supported by insights from decolonial feminist theories provide sources of inspiration for diversifying degrowth communication.

The relation of the speed with which events add to the story of the pandemic in relation to the speed of my writing is proportional to that of describing an ongoing football match. At the point of writing this 140 million people have been registered

infected by the virus and 3 million deaths have been recorded as the result (World Health Organization, 2021).

This global crisis was called out as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020. It was caused by a newly discovered Coronavirus, first detected in the city of Wuhan in China, of still unknown origins and with yet identified as a zoonotic disease, meaning one of animal origin.

Viruses are incomplete organisms that jump from one carrier organism to another. The Coronavirus is contagious through droplets that humans exert while speaking. The contagiousness of the COVID-19 virus is hard to know because of a number of factors: It is difficult to account for numbers of infected persons and hence its contagiousness is hard to estimate.

For many humans, the COVID-19 disease leads to mild to moderate respiratory illness which allows them to recover without requiring special treatment. Yet, according to the WHO, older people and patients of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are more prone to develop serious illness (World Health Organization, 2021).

Measures to reduce the spreading of the virus are carried out at the individual level; for example, isolating and quarantining of infected people and physical distancing (commonly called social distancing). Other recommended preventive measures include using a face mask, frequently washing one's hands and not touching one's face. As of April 2021 there is no effective treatment (Keni et al., 2020).

At a large scale, the necessity to flatten the curve, meaning reducing the exponential growth rate of contagions have led to massive lockdowns all over the world. During the first wave of the virus governments, more or less,, enforced the closing of all but essential businesses and ruled people to stay at home which included closing state

borders and reducing mobility to a minimum at the interior. This has had unprecedented shock effects on economies and livelihoods. At the same time huge sums of rescue funds have been loosened to protect public health.

To prevent the shock of subsequent outbreaks many states have intended to keep businesses running with additional safety measures concerning reduced maximum capacity, limited opening hours, curfews as well as various virus testing and tracking methods. From a public health perspective strategy currently being pursued is to foster immunization by means of vaccination of a large majority of citizens. Vaccines for the virus is being developed and tested.

The health crisis related to the pandemic is a global phenomenon. However, saying that 'the virus does not discriminate', as has been done by celebrities forced to stay at home leads to a false picture of equality (Owoseje, 2020). This is a dangerous myth. It sidelines the increased vulnerability of those people who are most socially and economically deprived (Patel et al., 2020).

Domínguez and colleagues (2020) argue that social determinants of health (SDH) must be considered as highly relevant for this situation, where physical and mental health care alone are insufficient. SDH can be identified as "conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play [that] affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes" (Tai et al., 2021: 706). In other words, the structural violence underlying social inequalities and poverty can be seen as an important cause of poor health conditions that health inequities often begin at birth and persist in adulthood (Hostinar and Miller, 2019).

In the same line, Patel and colleagues (2020) have gathered and systematized information on the impact of low socio-economic demographics and their exposure and risk of contracting COVID-19. A range of factors come together: First, an increased likelihood of living in overcrowded accommodations with restricted access to personal

outdoor space reduces compliance with social distancing. Second, employment opportunities that do not allow to work from home. The possibility to work remotely from home due to shelter-in-place mandates is reserved only for socio-economically and politically privileged groups, while members of marginalized communities cannot follow these guidelines which increases their risk of exposure to COVID-19: for instance, agricultural workers reaping crops in the fields, people preparing and delivering food, homeless or marginally housed people, people who provide medication and personal care, and others who work for companies that provide essential services such as grocery store employees. (Domínguez et al., 2020)

Third, unstable work conditions and incomes, are often worsened by the economic impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath which impacts people with a low socio-economic status more. Fourth the later use of healthcare facilities at a more advanced stages of illness, results in poorer health outcomes. Fifth, barriers to choosing one's health care access with ease and having confidence that you will be treated with respect, which can often be impeded due to language barriers and the relations between patients and healthcare professionals. Here, discrimination present across the wider society may also influence healthcare professionals' practice and their patients' expectations. This includes the anticipation of being dismissed, ridiculed or humiliated, which may deter groups from making use of health care services. Sixth, the socio-economic status of a person is also correlated with a lowered immune system to respond to any challenges such as the virus. In addition, hypertension and diabetes are linked both to poverty and to increased risk of getting COVID-19.

Despite this evidence, the responses to the COVID-19 crisis have not sufficiently taken into account this large range of factors related to social inequality. Patel et al. (2020) show that in spring 2020, the UK put its 66 million citizens in lockdown and

tailored particular policies to target people with multiple co-morbidities since they were identified as the most vulnerable.

In the USA, Domínguez and colleagues (2020) highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed preexisting norms, patterns and power structures that benefit some groups of people over others. Hence, even though COVID-19 has affected privileged and marginalized communities globally, a host of investigations have shown the greater impact of the virus on communities of color, who are likelier to get infected and show higher mortality rates (Evans, 2020; California Department of Public Health, 2020; Johnson & Buford, 2020; New York State Department of Health, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020).

This leads to the linkage of social and environmental impacts. Environmental injustice has been further shown to impact populations differently. A recent analysis revealed a link between COVID-19 deaths and other diseases associated with long-term exposure to fine particulate matter, showing once more that communities of color are disproportionately impacted by air pollutants (Wu et al., 2020). Moreover, a study conducted in Italy show that particulate matter can also transport the virus, which means that the virus may be strengthened by high levels of air pollution (Piazzalunga-Expert, 2020).

While virus and bacterial illnesses have existed for millennia the majority of viruses affecting humans today come from zoonoses (Schaltegger, 2020). COVID-19 has been declared a zoonotic disease, meaning a virus of animal origin, likely to be a bat, although its exact origins and exact source transmission routes remain uncertain (Malaiyan et al., 2021). What is certain however is that the risks of a direct infection from zoonotic viruses occurs most often when people handle live primates, bats, and other

wildlife, or their meat, and indirectly through farm animals such as chickens and pigs. The risk of doing so have never been as high as they are today (Dobson et al., 2020).

Hence, the relation between the COVID-19 disease and human impact on ecological systems can be summarized in different ways: We fetch viruses, we go to viruses and we create viral epidemics (Schaltegger, 2020).

We fetch viruses by mixing animals of different ecosystems, as is done in markets for wildlife trade. We go to viruses by invading virgin lands and engaging in industrial practices such as irrigating wetlands, clear-cutting rainforest, poaching and hunting and eating wild animals and by living in these regions with cattle. This means, humans get in touch with places where viruses exist, which our immune systems do not yet have the capabilities to defend themselves against (Gibb et al., 2020).

Another crucial factor related to human interference in natural ecosystems is the reduction of biodiversity. Biodiversity is defined as variety in all forms of life— ranging from genes to species to ecosystems. While humans have contributed to species extinction for millennia, current extinction rates of species are 100–1000 times more than usual extinction rates. Extinction rates over the next half a decade are calculated to be 10 to 100 times higher than the present rates (Khetan, 2020). Humans have decimated the biomass of wild species of mammals (~5500 species) to only 4%,whereas humans and our livestock constitute 96% of mammalian biomass on Earth (Lorentzen et al., 2020).

Viruses are affected by biodiversity loss in the sense that the extinction of species and other organisms puts viruses under increasing evolutionary pressure to adapt and shift to other hosts. Dwindling numbers of species in the wild increase the number of viruses that develop the capacity to switch to humans.

Decreasing biodiversity has mainly been associated with habitat destruction as its principal driver. However, climate change can also play a role by forcing species to shift

habitat, or to change geographical range in order to survive in semi-natural habitats. This might bring wild animals closer to humans and cattle (Lorentzen et al., 2020).

Third, we create viral epidemics through industrial farming practices. In light of this, Rob Wallace and others have explained how the agro-food system is closely linked with the spread of big viruses (Wallace, 2016).

Schaltegger (2020) explains through industrial meat and milk production that humans create pathogens, which ignore the natural ecosystems of animals: The natural habitats and ecosystems of animals are ignored in modern livestock farming. This means that bacterial, viral and other illnesses can be incubated in these spaces and the likelihood to infect humans multiplies. Large sections of modern meat production, such as mass production of pork, beef, chicken and salmon happen in artificially created 'eco-systems'. These are designed to breed and fatten up these animals in short periods of time. The density of animals packed closely together and the artificial breeding and fattening practices implemented have a high potential to bring about illnesses and depend on huge levels of medications, including antibiotics (Landers et al., 2012). Consequently, a large share of the global antibiotics application is destined for meat production rather than for treating humans.

 The Coronavirus pandemic is also linked to economic crises due to demand and supply shocks in nearly every human endeavor. Ozili and Arun (2020) determined some of the most affected sectors globally include the travel industry, hospitality industry, sports industry, oil-dependent countries, import dependent countries, financial markets, health industry and the education sector, plunging overall economies into recession.

The detrimental effects on economic systems of the Coronavirus pandemic, have provoked debate on whether or not we can afford to invest in sustainable solutions to the global biodiversity-crises and climate-change that likely are interconnected to the

COVID-19 pandemic. Many ecologists have voiced the view that "we simply cannot afford not to" (Lorentzen et al., 2020: 4).

Concrete studies done reflect that, considering the rising costs of public spending in response to COVID-19, preventive efforts cost less and reduce the mortality rate (Dobson et al., 2020).

3.3.2 Narrative Choices of the Coronavirus Pandemic

We have seen that the Coronavirus pandemic is related to degrowth in that it connects to all the multiple interlocking crises explained in Chapter 1. While it is in the first place a public health crisis, there are complex ways in which it has been impacted and how it affects other imbalanced systems related to human activity on Earth (social, ecological and economic systems).What does the Coronavirus pandemic have to do with framing degrowth? The point is that the pandemic, like degrowth is subject to different kinds of framing that happen at the level of mediated communication. There is not one but many ways of framing the story of the Coronavirus pandemic. As seen earlier, existing literature on the matter suggests that when a message is released through the media, how something is said has a great impact on the way in which the public interprets the message. As such, the media could either mitigate or accentuate the crisis depending on the major frames adopted for the coverage (Ogbodo et al., 2020).

When a health crisis such as the outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic occurs, the sum of information flow can be overwhelming. This means that special careful communication is needed to avoid exacerbating the crisis. Hence, it is crucial to report the pandemic in a manner that allows to douse the risk of the crisis instead of increasing it.

Limited resources on best practices for crisis communication are available with no standardized set of principles. Mass media face the responsibility of disseminating information that strongly influences public opinion and decision making. According to

Glenn N. Schram "news [...] is an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of the event which is calculated to make the event meaningful to the reader" (Ogbodo et al., 2020: 7). Hence, the language of communicating the virus is crucial for escalating or relieving the tension caused by the pandemic.

It has been studied that war frames were used for the communication around COVID-19. Many journalists across different countries denounced this kind of framing coming from governments. Yuval Benziman (2020) described several themes that emerged in relation to war and in the communications emitted by UK and US governments during the months of the pandemic. These are the following:

Theme 1: Describing it as a War (249)

Theme 2: We Have a Plan (249)

Theme 3: Patriotism: Isolated We Stand, Uniting Together From a Distance (250)

Theme 4: Supporting Our Troops, Medical Teams as Heroes (251)

Theme 5: Between the Global and the Local—Everyone is Fighting Together, but We Are Doing a Better Job (251)

A couple of quotes stood out that could serve as possible explanations of the use of these frames. "In order for a message to resonate with an audience, the clues that communicators select and combine need to be taken out of a repertoire that is widely shared by the audience" (Kornprobst, 2019: 62). This suits the perception that frames need to connect with aspects known to people. There are two main criteria underlying the choice of a specific frame: how deeply the frame is engrained in the public's views and how the use of this frame shapes perceptions. Researchers Baker and Oneal (2001) state that leaders' speeches are of crucial importance since the public's response to crises is mediated by the president's management and presentation of events.

The findings related to the effects of war frames are: more leverage for the concessions that are asked of citizens and binary thinking, in terms of winning or losing and, the belief of a possibility of a concrete outcome, namely victory, without allowing for grey areas.

It has been critiqued that leaders did not prepare the public for recurring outbursts of the Coronavirus pandemic. Lastly, another effect of war framing is that societies tend to build a narrative that can explain why they are right, and the others are wrong. This conflict narrative is effective in that it motivates citizens to act according to what the frame demands. This can reach so far as to silencing alternative options of behavior and censoring opposing ideas (Bar-Tal et al., 2017, Janis, 1982, Mintz and Wayne, 2014).

The downsides of presenting the Coronavirus crisis according to Di Paola and Domaneschi (2020) are twofold: On the one hand, the war metaphor can only work to a certain extent, since the COVID-19 situation and war have superficial links. For instance, the virus might be portrayed as an invisible enemy, but it does not have an intention and cannot sign an armistice agreement either.

In addition, seeing hospitals as warzones, and doctors as heroes that fight the virus, because doctors are employees who are paid to do their profession, and not to risk their lives, and because hospitals should be safe places (Di Paola and Domaneschi, 2020). A second kind of concern is linked to the idea that the war frame of the pandemic situation as a conflict might not only have cognitive consequences, but—also and more importantly—behavioral effects that resemble wartime situations.

The argument is that the wartime frame will be activated by the conflict narrative with all its consequences. This means that individuals will not only think but also act accordingly. For example, if the virus is dominantly portrayed as an enemy, all alternative framings drop down and infected individuals might come to be treated as traitors since

they carry the enemy. In general terms, a war framing leads to think divisively. Another effect of wartime framing is that governors might present themselves as wartime leaders, and interlocutors would be forced at a cognitive level to accept authoritarian twists that unreasonably infringe on personal and civil freedoms. The authors of this work do not find scientific evidence for the link between wartime framing and the spillover onto behavior of the public receiving conflict frames, they find that conservative people tend to favor wartime frames and that further research is needed.

Among the critiques of the war narrative was an article in the Spanish newspaper *El País* (Labari, 2020). It said that we all know that this is not a war. And yet the leaders of France, the US and Spain claim that this is 'our' war. Newspapers and television echo this metaphor. The inflammable and dangerous metaphor is harmful for democracy. We cannot social distance from these words. It is dangerous because in war *todo vale* (anything goes[23]). Instead, the author of this article proposed a semantic field that is capable of valuing patience, confidence, care and everything that is considered feminine in society. She explicitly highlights that she does not mean 'women' but activities that are usually related to women[24], now applicable to all: staying home, waiting, understanding trusting, desiring leaders to manage, foreseeing, caring, protecting and organizing.

The Spanish peace scholars Manuela Mesa and Laura Alonso (2020) published an article related to the framing issues of the Coronavirus crisis. They applied Lakoff's frames of the *strict father* as opposed to the *caring family* to the conflict, associating each with the role that a state can take in the face of a crisis such as the pandemic. Each of the frames is imbued with certain values. The strict father model is authoritarian and security oriented, defined by values such as obedience and discipline. It is related to individual interest, competition and hierarchy, incarnated as a masculine figure. In this frame, a false

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[23] author's translation
[24] in her cultural context

dichotomy is presented between health and economy, which according to a social Darwinist logic suggests the inevitability of deaths of elderly people in the face of the costs associate with protecting them.

The perspective of the caring family frame incorporates values such as responsibility, protection, confidence, the collective, community, service, cooperation, generosity, liberty and empathy. The gender of this model is neutral. In this frame, the common ground is to be preserved in benefit of the community to pursue equity.

In this frame, vulnerability, the importance of care and sustainability of life are highlighted. It is also the frame where pacifist and feminist narratives belong, which appeal to cooperation rather than individualism. The authors position themselves in this latter frame and argue that securitarian logics ought to be dismantled since they bear within tremendous risks and imply relations of individual and collective subordination to an authority, instead of fomenting cooperation among humans.

The authors propose redefining security as human security, which focuses on the needs that exist for maintaining life on the planet. This concept is, according to feminist peace scholar Betty Reardon, an alternative to the dominant concept of security which state security manifests in a militarized fashion. Human security is broad, holistic and gendered (Reardon, 2010)

Mesa and Alonso (2020) explain that peace studies go beyond the absence of violence and opposition to war, and is linked to the capability of transforming conflicts through dialog, empathy, cooperation and the promotion of universalist values (Schwartz, 2012) related to justice, solidarity and respect for human rights.

What can be seen in these paragraphs is that the crisis of the Coronavirus can be interpreted in different forms, ranging from being one more crisis that shows how humans have messed with ecological biodiversity to being a war-like situation where the

virus is an enemy that needs to be defeated. As Mesa and Alonso hint at, the analyses of the situation linked to the value priorities that the ones framing the situation have. Identifying underlying values of degrowth would offer itself as a line for further research to find frames that resonate with the same underlying values. In the next section I elaborate on the ways in which degrowth has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3.3 (Feminist) Degrowth Responses to the Coronavirus Crisis

3.3.3.1 A Collective Feminist Degrowth Statement on the Coronavirus

The first is a manifesto by the Feminisms and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA). In the months of March and April 2020, about 40 participants of this network, quarantined in locations ranging from Chile to Finland, collaborated in a number of virtual conversations about strategies for political change as well as mutual encouragement for facing immediate challenges.

After ideas and drafts were circulated, the group wrote two public statements: Feminist degrowth reflections on COVID-19 and the Politics of Social Reproduction, a one page manifesto and an extended article 'Collaborative Feminist Degrowth: Pandemic as an Opening for a Care-Full Radical Transformation' (Paulson et al., 2020). These were published on the degrowth.info website and shared within FaDA's networks.

The publications state that the crises triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic "have revealed for all what many have long known: the foundations of the wealth and well-being of the world rest upon the sphere of social reproduction and the labor of care" (Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance, 2020b: 1). This work is mainly performed by women and by people whose lives and labor are generally undervalued and marginalized due to sexist, racist, classist, homophobic and ableist institutions and ideas. The heavy burden of protecting and securing public health was placed on people who care for others.

However, in many places society's capacity to respond has been reduced by depleted health care and social systems which have been prey to neoliberal and austerity politics.

The "patriarchal and crisis-prone" world economy is dependent on growth, which increases vulnerabilities (Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance, 2020b: 1). Hence, FaDA reiterates that the economic slowdown is not our degrowth, just like the austerity related to the 2008 economic crisis was not our degrowth. They further state that going back to normal is not an option, for normal was the problem in the first place. FaDA authors state that new pathways are opened by this crisis that provides an opportunity to abandon disrupted business-as-usual patterns and to reorganize societies in ways that better promote gender justice and the sustainability of all life.

The understanding that the world economy only functions because of the reproduction of life, health and happiness by means of the provision of care and the regeneration of nature leads to a call for several points: First, the recognition and regeneration of social and ecological reproductive capacities. Second, the recognition and support of egalitarian, diverse communities. Third, a fully democratized caring economy with a universal care income. Fourth, the promotion of a solidarity economy, including North-South solidarity and debt cancellation.

The first point is about restructuring our economy to shift away from the production of things to feed the growth-based economy towards the reproduction and provisioning of life and meeting needs (Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance, 2020a). Hereby, the sustainability of life should form the main goal of social organization.

The second point recognizes the significance of "Home as a site of production and reproduction". The privilege of staying home to care for the vulnerable is described as a luxury and the problematic term social distancing is replaced by physical distancing. For like pollution, the virus is not democratic. It discriminates across social inequities.

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Different forms of oppression and discrimination cumulate and interlock across the categories of oppression. For instance, it is pointed out that men have higher death rates due to the Coronavirus across all locations. It is also pointed out that home can be a place of violence for vulnerable people, mainly women and children, who are forced to stay at home with their abusers.

The third point is all about shifting towards a caring economy where all dimensions of life are democratized, where livelihood security does no longer depend upon wage-work and where care work, whether paid or unpaid, is revalued. A care income is proposed that differs from other universal basic income proposals by highlighting the social recognition of unpaid and gendered care work done to sustain the life and well-being of households and communities. This idea is proposed as "an investment out of commonwealth in capacities for all citizens to take care of ourselves, our kin, and others". It stands in support of the call for a care income by the Global Women's Strike (GWS) and Women of Color GWS.

The fourth point points the way towards a Solidarity Economy, whereby it is acknowledged that life does not recognize borders, that all humans are interdependent and eco-dependent. It also shows inequalities and different degrees of vulnerabilities across the globe. In light of this, the differences between the Global North and Global South need to be overcome through debt cancellation and the refusal of austerity and structural adjustment programs. This point shows that life does hinge on limits, underscoring that viruses like this are related to deforestation.

Regarding the statement that *the economic slowdown is not our degrowth*, it is significant to note that degrowth is not at all about economic recession (Hickel, 2020b). What has led to this thought in the first place might be the notable changes in both ecology and economy due to the effects of the pandemic. At a global level, a 5.8%

reduction of CO2-emissions that ranged from 10.3% for China to 4.2% for the USA, was estimated for the first quarter of 2020 as compared to 2019 (Liu et al., 2020). An international study showed that during the peak in April and May, carbon emissions in individual countries fell by 26% on average (Le Quéré et al., 2020).

Degrowth scholar Stefan Schaltegger provides a number of arguments to support this: The fact that this does not count as degrowth. Firstly, the motive for the emission reduction is the opposite of sustainable, since it is related to people dying and losing their economic existence. Second, COVID-19 has also negatively impacted sustainability transformation of industries. For instance the pandemic has affected global supply chains of low-carbon energy due to closed borders which caused shortages of components for wind turbines, solar panels, electric vehicles (Goldthau and Hughes, 2020).

Third, while a sacrifice like the one enforced during the months of April and May 2020, does reduce emissions, this is by far not enough. Instead of sacrificing while sticking to current production and consumption models, structural changes of the economy are needed, in addition to sufficiency.

Besides a rebound effect which leads to pre-pandemic levels due to a fast economic recovery expected in many countries, in order to combat climate change effectively, emissions would have to be reduced by 55% or more (Christiansen et al., 2018).

This indicates a need for a consistent energy transition where less energy is required and the electricity that is created is produced by renewable systems such as solar, wind and hydropower. This kind of energy transition, necessitates an intelligent sustainability transition of businesses (Köhler et al., 2019, Schaltegger, 2020). This kind of transition is paramount in all industries and particularly affects automobile, tourism

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and retail businesses; all of which pertain to industries that previously received large financial aid packages due to their importance.

3.3.3.2 Proposing New Roots for the Economy

The New Roots for the Economy (Barlow et al., 2020) was written by the New Roots Collective including Jason Hickel, George Monbiot, Carola Rackete, Giorgos Kallis, Ashish Kothari, Julia Steinberger and over 1100 signatories. Its hashtag #newroots, is a reference to the literally radical change that needs to happen so as for our economies to center around what really matters. It asks for five points:

1) Put life in the center of our economic systems.

2) Radically evaluate how much and what work is necessary for a good life for all.

3) Organize society around the provision of essential goods and services.

4) Democratize society.

5) Fifth Base political and economic systems on the principle of solidarity. (1)

The first point argues that some sectors need to be phased out, such as spending on fossil fuel production, military and advertising, whereas others need to be promoted, such as healthcare, education, renewable energy and ecological agriculture.

The second point emphasizes the importance of care work and the necessity to adequately value what has turned out to be essential work during the crisis. Workers who depend upon what they call destructive industries need to be retrained to be able to ensure a just transition, which includes cleaner and regenerative work as well as reduced working times and work-sharing schemes. The third point is about the necessity to reduce wasteful consumption as well as travel while securing basic human needs such as food, housing and education for everyone and introduced through universal basic services and income models. Minimal and maximum incomes need to be democratically decided upon and implemented.

The fourth point on democratization is about "enabling all people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives" (Barlow et al., 2020: 1). It highlights the participation of marginalized groups and suggests an implementation of feminist principles into politics and economics. The feminist principles point is hyperlinked to a website with the previously exposed FaDA ideas. This point suggests the need for democratic ownership, decommodification and definancialization, whereby worker cooperatives and other economic activity based on principles of cooperation need to be promoted.

The fifth point on solidarity addresses justice and redistribution at the transnational, intersectional and intergenerational levels. Climate justice ought to be a guiding principle for a swift social ecological transformation. Economic recession is devastating as long as the economic system is dependent on growth. Finally, degrowth is presented as "a planned yet adaptive, sustainable, and equitable downscaling of the economy, leading to a future where we can live better with less" (Barlow et al., 2020: 1). To conclude pandemic is presented as a brutal crisis hitting the most vulnerable hardest, yet also as an opportunity to rethink and reflect. Degrowth is suggested as a movement and concept that "has been reflecting on these issues for more than a decade and offers a consistent framework for rethinking society based on other values, such as sustainability, solidarity, equity, conviviality, direct democracy and enjoyment of life" (Barlow et al., 2020: 1).

Both manifestos are very useful in relation to the Coronavirus situation as they debunk the myth that the economic slowdown related to the corona pandemic is an expression of degrowth; highlight the underlying unsustainable factors of the crisis-prone systems and how they are failing to support recovery from the pandemic as well as how human activity based on these principles foster these kinds of crises; recognize this crisis as an opportunity for change; redirect the reader towards what they do suggest needs to be

done. Their ideas converge in the usage of terms such as democracy, care, solidarity, putting life in the center, needs centered approaches to the economy.

They complement each other well. The FaDA statement is somewhat more academic and more focused on gendered and intersectional impacts and transformation, whereas the New Roots statement is expressed in slightly simpler language. The latter does not contain degrowth but instead uses degrowth as its last point of reflection, inviting readers to learn more about the movement and concept. The FaDA statements work on linking degrowth and feminist issues together, showing some of the complexities and maybe unexpected links between different vulnerabilities and violences.

All in all, the New Roots manifesto is written in a style that seems to target general interest and towards potential new supporters of the degrowth movement. However, at the same time, it fully supports the previously written FaDA statement and creates a hyperlink to it so as to allow readers who wish so to engage with them more profoundly.

Nevertheless, it is likely that the impact of these pieces of writing and what they endorse mostly preaches to the choir, in the sense that it tends to target audiences that are already growth critical and somehow in touch with degrowth thinking. I believe that people reading the manifestos on degrowth.info and sympathetic websites and blogs represent the metaphorical lowest hanging fruit as potential degrowth supporters, if they are not already involved. However, what would be interesting is to exit the usual places in which sympathizers are found and enter debate with critics and detractors. To a certain extent, this has happened as the debates on degrowth concept between Kate Raworth and Giogios Kallis at the beginning of this chapter exemplify. Other examples of more negative criticism include an article written for Forbes in April (2020) by the Corbin K. Barthold. In it, the author Barthold lists different successes of technological development,

suggests that the grave problem of inequality is a matter of perspective. He stresses the positive aspects of industrialization, such as how large-scale industrial farming has prevented famines, yet he ignores the downsides, such as that this kind of farming has the breeding ground for zoonotic viruses. The author makes use of de-contextualized self-critique of degrowth thinkers to support his argument for growth-led economic thinking, as degrowth supporters decry in a blog entry on the degrowth.info webpage (Sharma and Cabaña, 2020).

The same authors claim that "the dishonest representation" of their "critical degrowth perspectives on degrowth, weaponized to serve the predefined agenda of a pro-growth thinker" is not welcome (Sharma and Cabaña, 2020: 1). While the way in which degrowth was critiqued here is flawed, it does represent an encounter of different world views, which is precisely the interaction that degrowth needs to be looking for.

It is not to be expected that different world views harmonize on the topics of degrowth, but seriously discussing the differences and underlying values and the of degrowth can take is crucial to open up spaces for a new common sense. While the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has had devastating effects, the framing of a crisis is an opportunity (far from a won case) that degrowth supporters should not let pass to bring degrowth ideas closer to a broader public.

3.4. The Relevance of Peace(s) to Promote Degrowth
In the foregoing sections I have collected and commented on a series of alternative frames that have resulted from theoretical analysis by degrowth thinkers and the publication of two manifestos that were written by two degrowth collectives during the of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020.

To assess whether and how these theoretical and practical frames affect the ways in which people think about degrowth, would be insightful but exceeds the scope of this

work. Concrete empirical studies would be needed to gain an idea of the effects of framing degrowth in terms of care, putting life in the center and others on the public perception of degrowth. Such studies could build on previous work such as the article written Drews and Reese (2018) '"Degrowth" vs. Other Types of Growth: Labeling Affects Emotions but Not Attitudes'. These could contribute to finding frames in public communication that expand the reach of degrowth related discourse to increase the public support of a degrowth transition.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to relating degrowth back to peace, guided by philosophical peace reflections based on which new ways of framing degrowth can emerge for degrowth to be communicated accurately and strategically. Links between degrowth, feminism and peace(s) that I have hinted at previously are analyzed more in depth here. Thus, this subchapter deals with the way in which plural peace perspectives can promote degrowth.

So far, I have argued under the assumption that degrowth ought to be feminist if it aims to be just. Since injustice is a form of violence, justice is aspired for in the context of pursuing positive peace, beyond the absence of war. According to peace scholar Johan Galtung, the attainment of positive peace is related to overcoming structural and cultural violence, which is related to attaining social justice and equality. Yet, peace can be interpreted in different manners other than justice. While the pursuit of deontological and consequential justice is a part of a degrowth agenda, I suggest it might be insightful to inquire into other kinds of peace interpretations as drivers of a degrowth transition. Doing so could help to link degrowth to a larger spectrum of peace interpretations which according to philosophy for making peaces, should be able to co-exist.

What plural peace approaches suggest is that there is no such thing as *one* positive peace that applies for all humans and the ways in which peace is defined depends on the

perspective. The attempt to push one's peace onto another both at the interpersonal as well as at the global levels, is in itself violent. This issue brings about new complex questions of how peaceful living together can happen without excessive relativism. It has been subject for discussion within peace theory. What peace interpretations can contribute to promote degrowth necessitates a reflection on the relation of peace and degrowth, which I do in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 Challenging Historical Links between Peace and Development

The most dominant link that connects peace and degrowth is development discourse. Peace has been systematically associated with discourses on development since 1949 when Truman gave his inaugural speech as a president of the United States of America. In it, he introduced the blueprint for a linear development program that would become the hegemonic discourse linking poverty, economic growth, security and peace. In his inaugural presidential speech, Truman spoke of underdeveloped nations as needing development which was code for financial development. He framed development as a pathway for peace and security; for poverty would represent a threat to all. He proposed that the 'developed world' would help to alleviate the burden of the underdeveloped who were living under miserable conditions.

In Truman's words:

> We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens. (Truman, 1999: 591)

This inaugural speech can be considered the initiator of a new period in the management of international relations, when the Western dream of progress became a hegemonic imagination at the a global level (Omar, 2012).

The global proclamation of development decades by the United Nations beginning in the 1960s. In the late sixties the Pope Paul VI even affirmed that 'Development is the new name for Peace'. As Gustavo Esteva (1992, p.10) points out, the word development

> always implies a favorable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better. [It] indicates that one is doing well because one is advancing in the sense of a necessary, ineluctable, universal law and toward a desirable goal. (Esteva, 1992: 10)

Dissent to this generalized deep entrenchment of belief in linear development did not gain significant attention until the late 1980s. Peace scholar and historian Wolfgang Dietrich affirms that prior to this "doubts about the supposition that societies develop in a causal fashion were considered unscientific or politically incorrect heresy." (Dietrich, 2013: 177). This illustrates the ideological and quasi-religious character of linear development concepts at the time.

Within and outside academia profound critiques were voiced from the margins, led by authors such as Ivan Illich, Wolfgang Sachs, Gustavo Esteva, Vandana Shiva, Majid Rahnema, Arturo Escobar, Marianne Gronemeyer, Ashis Nandy, Claude Alvarez, Stuart Hall, Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. As criticisms emerged political discourses still clung to the concept and the resilient development idea that continued to be embraced and implemented. According to Dietrich, in order to completely abandon this concept, academic advocates of development would have been required to let go of their belief in a linear progression towards a more just world, which were shared by such disparate ideologies as Marxist, liberal and even Christian ones (Dietrich, 2013).

Despite some innovative approaches, development discourses have continued to suffer conceptual inflation and imprecision with clearly adverse consequences from its

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practices (Omar, 2012). The hegemonic sustainable development discourses and global politics continue to be in line with the UN Global Agenda 2030 which embraces 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Sachs, 2017). Development in all its reforms has been linked to the promise of peace, prosperity and well-being without ever questioning the paradigm of infinite economic growth. This has been true since Truman's inaugural and has not changed as of the year 2021.

In contrast, economic degrowth can be subsumed under the category alternatives to development, precisely because degrowth critiques and undermines this growth paradigm. This is due to the fact that it inherently promotes inequality and is ecologically unsustainable. As has been shown in Chapter 1, degrowth is not the only radical alternative to the hegemonic growth paradigm. Many other initiatives exist that share such a critique with degrowth, from different, but very much related angles.

In this sense, degrowth can be seen as a necessity that emerges from the recognition that the planet's limits require to reduce humanity's material and energetic throughput (extraction and waste). Moreover, this cannot simply be done by decoupling economic growth from materiality, since there is no evidence that such a decoupling can take place; in fact the opposite effect is being proven by the Jevons paradox (Alcott et al., 2012).

The Jevons paradox says that the efficiency of use of a specific resource is improved but the demand and consumption of a resource rises. William Stanley Jevons observed this first in the increased efficiency of coal due to technological progress. The greater efficiency did not reduce or contain its use but rather fostered even higher consumption rates of this resource. The same paradox has been studied in contemporary areas of energy efficiency.

The logic underlying degrowth has led some thinkers especially in the Spanish realm to claim that degrowth is inevitable, using the word in terms of the reduction of material throughput to which the economy is coupled. For instance according to the researcher, ecofeminist and activist Yayo Herrero (2013) degrowth in the material realm is not just necessary but unavoidable. The choice humans have is whether to prioritize life or to continue sacrificing life for the sake of the current economic model in this situation.

In a similar vein the philosopher, political science scholar and ecologist Jorge Riechmann (2013) argues that ecological, and hence social, collapse is imminent and that the question is merely whether we collapse better or worse, which is related not just to slowing down the ecological processes that have already been set in motion but to avoid barbarian conditions of humans dealing with these drastic changes, that is, to collapse better. What emerges from this is the phrase *degrowth or barbarie*, an analogy to socialism or barbarie by Rosa Luxemburg (Prádanos, 2012).

In line with the choices that Spanish degrowth thinkers Herrero and Riechmann propose, it is important to remember that degrowth is basically a democratizing process, where a collective choice for a better living is processed, rather than an imperative imposed by an external authority. Beyond a downscaling of the economy, degrowth is committed to democracy and social justice in that it seeks to redistribute wealth in an equitable and just way, as its definition says.

Degrowth provides an alternative response to the question of poverty reduction that the myth of a trickle-down effect resulting from economic growth has been proven to betray. Hence, from this perspective poverty is seen as materialized inequality (Gomes, 2012) and ought to be reversed by redistribution. The normative component of justice is both consequential (holding that degrowth leads to a more just world) and deontological (the way in which degrowth is implemented must be just) (Akbulut et al., 2019). The

latter ensures to protect from eco-fascist projections (Latouche, 2009a). In fact, understanding degrowth based merely on metabolism reduction in terms of material and energy flows would be too limited.

Thus, considering the reflections above, pursuing degrowth just for the sake of degrowth would not make sense. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it has been argued that it would be as preposterous as it is to pursue growth for the sake of growth (Romano, 2012). Degrowth author Onofrio Romano (2012) critiques that degrowth in itself lacks a deeper meaning of what this good life means. According to this author degrowth is limited to providing an umbrella for initiatives that denounce and oppose growth. It does not deal with what this good life shall look like.

There is some traction in this criticism since as Romano argues, degrowth remains confined within the limits of technical and purposeless life for the sake of life, without proposing some concrete more profound meaning. Responses to this quest to fill the empty shell of degrowth with a more profound meaning can be found in peace philosophy. In fact, it has been suggested that peace can be framed in terms of degrowth in a similar manner as development has been linked to peace, as the entry on pacifism argues in the *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* seen in Chapter 1 (Kothari et al., 2019).

Rather than a flaw, this emptiness lends itself for philosophical reflection and democratic deliberation on the question of what life is worth living and how this can be guaranteed for all. From a peace(s) philosophy perspective, the answer to the question is manifold. Plural approaches to peace fill the emptiness left by the degrowth framework and simultaneously, in my view, ask for degrowth as a path to foster cultures of peace.

3.5. The Potential of Plural Peace Approaches

We have seen that degrowth can be understood as good convivial life, in opposition to a life of more material abundance through economic growth. However, this term is as versatile as the term peace. This subchapter deals with the question what can plural peace perspectives, contribute as criteria to frame the good life that degrowth strives for in diverse ways to reach a broader audience.

Authors supporting plural peace(s) include Vicent Martínez-Guzmán, Francisco Muñoz (in the Spanish realm) and Wolfgang Dietrich's (who's transrational approach to peaces builds upon theories coined by John Paul Lederach). The crux of the argument brought forward by these authors is that there can be no single peace that fits all, since imposing one peace upon others would be violent and hence contrary to peace. Thus, diversity is a precondition for peace.

To grasp the notion of peaces it is useful to see in which context it emerged. As from the late 1960s (Muñoz, 2006) there was a shift from a conception of negative peace, namely as the absence of war and violence toward embracing and trying to define ideas of positive peace, and approximately twenty years later, the evolution towards a culture of peace (Galtung, 1990). These two shifts can be explained through the lens of mathematician and in many circles called the founding father of peace studies, Johan Galtung (Dietrich, 2018b).

Galtung (1990) uses a violence triangle to explain the parallels and distinctions between different forms of violence: direct violence and indirect violence, the latter of which can be divided into structural and cultural aspects. All aspects of violence are interconnected in this triangle, which like the well-established iceberg metaphor has a part that remains above the water and a much larger part that stays below and unseen. In

accordance with Galtung's violence triangle, peace not only seeks to overcome direct violence but all kinds of violence.

This way the notions of positive peace and of a culture of peace emerge. Vicent Martínez-Guzmán explains (2000), positive peace is the construction of social justice understood as the development of human potential to satisfy basic needs. In the European version, (as opposed to the US version), peace began to be related to development to increment social justice as a way of reducing structural and direct violence.

The underlying idea of a culture of peace was anchored in the UNESCO preamble in 1948. This, in essence, states that since war begins in the minds of humans peace is created in the minds of humans. There is a link established between culture and minds of humans, which can be understood in terms of common meanings constructed by humans. Wolfgang Dietrich infers from this :

> If UNESCO states that peace is created in the minds of human beings as a function of linguistic and cultural pretexts it follows logically that not only peace has to be understood as a plural word – the Many Peaces – but also Peace Studies as an academic discipline itself must be a plural. (Dietrich, 2018b: 199)

One of the early articles that advocated to consider peace in its plural form is *A Call for Many Peaces*, written by Wolfgang Dietrich and Wolfgang Sützl in 1997. In this paper, the authors argue against the notion of one peace, identifying it as violent and colonial, in the case of Christian and the Modern peace and development view.

The article states that European peace research has arrived at a postmodern stage and needs to acknowledge that war tends to "assimilate cultures to each other, whereas peace is that state in which each culture blooms in its own, unique way" (Illich in Dietrich and Sützl, 2006: 10). They argue that seeking "one peace" as part of a larger universalist mode of thinking that in its totality builds upon disrespectful and therefore unpeaceful basic tenets, which makes the guidelines for action and the real politics that stem from it at least have the potential for a continued renewal of violence.

Another important advocate of many peaces is Francisco Muñoz. He coined the notion of imperfect peace that claims that the adjective of imperfect is useful to open in some way the significances of peace (Muñoz, 2006). Although it represents a negation it can etymologically be understood as unfinished and procedural, which is the central meaning of imperfect in this context.

Muñoz also makes reference to the multiplicity of meanings of peace. He claims that from no perspective peace should be considered total, closed, a final ending or a utopia that can hardly be reached if not for many sacrifices, which is barely realistic and consequently frustrating but rather counterproductive in the sense that it can in itself become a source of violence.

This way, imperfect peace could serve to provide an intermediate path between maximalist utopism and conservative conformism: it is about changing reality based on the knowledge of human limitations and current scenarios without ceasing to plan the future or have a goal; imperfect peace becomes the goal, which is more modest but still globally desirable (Muñoz, 2006: 421).

3.5.1 Philosophy for Making Peace(s)

In order to understand Martínez-Guzmán's philosophy it is crucial to grasp the epistemological shift, which offers key insights for a different way of understanding and doing research (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000). As Martínez-Guzmán formed his school, the challenge was for the peace program at UJI to become recognized as a respectable new academic (inter-)discipline, which reached a milestone with the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace in 1999 (UJI, 2017).

The *epistemological shift* can hence be seen as the axis around which peace research at UJI Castellón revolves, as it questions and subverts common understandings of modern science and academia using philosophical thought.

Martínez-Guzmán's Philosophy for making peaces has been described at length in his own writings and other secondary literature (Martínez-Guzmán, 2001, Martínez-Guzmán, 2000, París Albert and Comins-Mingol, 2019, Reverter-Bañón, 2019, Forastelli, 2012, Nos-Aldás and Farné, 2020). Hence I put my main focus on a few ideas that I learned at the Peace, Conflict and Development Studies program which can contribute to finding new degrowth frames.

A central aspect of Martínez-Guzmán's (2005) philosophy for making peace(s) is performativity. He employs the works of Karl-Otto Apel and John Langshaw Austin as well as Judith Butler to speak about the idea that performativity signifies that human beings have the capacities or competencies to exclude, marginalize and kill one another, however, they can also live in plural diversity and equality with the ability to create institutions that are built on commitment, good governance and justice. In other words, humans are capable of everything implied by cultures of war as well as everything implied by cultures of peace(s) (Martínez-Guzmán, 2005).

It is important to point out that Martínez-Guzmán too sees diversity as key for peace, which leads to the plural form of the word:

> what is basic or original in human relationships is precisely peace: the diverse ways human beings relate to one another via peaceful means in an intersubjective configuration or performativity of relationships [...] The sensation that violence is primary to all else is due to thinking about peace in absolute and perfect terms. Really, this absolute and perfect peace becomes a totalitarian form of domination because it excludes diversity of knowledge, wisdom and ways that human beings can organize life in a peaceful manner. (Martínez-Guzmán, 2005: 6-7)

In this quote Martínez-Guzmán claims that diversity is a necessary condition for peace at the level of relationships. Beyond this, he argues that the view that peace must be perfect and absolute, makes violence seem predominant in society. Hence, diversity must be implicit in the definition of peace. Yet, this understanding does not prevent conflict. To the contrary: Clashes might result from different understandings of peace, that is, what is

peaceful for one party might be violent for another. Mutual interpellation and intersubjective dialog are thus essential to transform conflicts arising in diverse peaceful societies.

3.5.1.1 Lessons from The Epistemological Shift

In the following section I list and describe the epistemological shift proposed by Vicent Martínez-Guzmán's peaces philosophy. I then highlight and discuss several points and aspects that resonate with and support the work of this thesis. The epistemological shift refers to a change of theoretical stance towards what it means to know in the production of peace theory. Summarizing his philosophy at the end of one of his philosophical articles, *Saber Hacer las Paces* (2000) Martínez-Guzmán extracts fifteen points from his own philosophical reflection to recapitulate what this shift entails. When he uses the pronoun *we*, he refers to the peace research and learning community at the UJI Peace program and those who engage with this school of thought (2001)[25]:

1. Moving from objectivity to intersubjectivity and mutual interpellation.
2. As a researcher, having the perspective of a participant.
3. Knowledge is about relations between subjects, between persons, as the word persona shows: per-sonare is refers to the right to dialog or to resonate with each other.
4. Rather than naïvely or exclusively referring to facts, we recognize what we do to one another, to ourselves and to nature.
5. An epistemology committed to values where there is no neutrality.
6. Shifting from a paradigm of consciousness to a paradigm of communication. We reiterate the meaning of consciousness[26]
7. We peace workers see ourselves as realists. As humans we have many possibilities, which includes to reconstruct the competencies of living together peacefully.
8. We speak of reasons feelings, emotions, affection and tenderness. There is no dichotomy between reason and care[27]
9. There is no such thing as neutral justice. We advocate for solidary justice with care where people can relate to multiple entities. Here the social contract that

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[25] author's translation
[26] The Spanish word *conciencia* is composed of the two parts *con* and *ciencia*, which translate as *with* and *science*. They can thus be interpreted of the knowledge we create together
[27] The mistake is in creating a dichotomy where originally there was none. In Spanish the word care (*cuidado*) etymologically stems from the word knowledge (*conocimiento*).

makes us formally all the same is substituted by a new contract where everybody wants to be taken into account, no matter their gender or ethnic group, etc.

10. The world is not abstract but composed of a diversity of places.
11. Nature must not be dominated and controlled as if we were outside her. Humus, the etymological root of the term human brings us back to our terrestrial aspect, to the fact that we committed to our environment because we are part of it.
12. We overcome the dichotomy of nature and culture. We are aware that social and cultural conditioning have too often determined what is considered to be natural. Nature is in a sense socially constructed. Simultaneously we can still speak of certain alternative forms of living as more natural than others.
13. We incorporate gender as an instrument and category of study to consider where women have been excluded in the name of neutrality. We seek new femininities and masculinities.
14. Vulnerability can result in all kinds of violence but also tenderness.
15. Making peaces is not for heroes or saints but for people like us with our grandeurs and miseries, our egotism and solidarity. Hence public debates and social movements are necessary, as well as finding ways to conduct us, to govern us both, above and below the level of nation states.[28] (114-115)

As can be seen in the previously listed points, there Martínez-Guzmán shows a clear commitment to taking on a gender perspective specifically and adopting several other points that also draw from feminist work in terms of situatedness, diversity, care ethics and vulnerability. Moreover, by tracing the etymological roots of the word human, which is related to *humus* and means earth, he reifies the connectedness between humans and nature which is meant to overcome domination and lead to humility. This in combination with democratic, just and care-oriented values makes the epistemology of peaces philosophy resonate with degrowth.

Point five, the shift from a paradigm of consciousness towards a paradigm of communication is worth commenting upon further, since it can provide insights about the theoretical underpinnings of the framing method applied earlier in this chapter. Here, Martínez-Guzmán refers to a shift away from the facts/values dichotomy and the claims to neutral objectivity, which prevail in a descriptive and referential understanding of language. As an alternative, he endorses a performative understanding, in line with Austin's speech act theory (1975) and Habermas' communicative action theory (1981).

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[28] author's translation

Communication communities that transcend mere instrumental rationality value and practice intersubjectivity as a new kind of objectivity. What is said and what is omitted is considered part of what we do to each other, ourselves and nature. It can always be subject to mutual interpellation and accountability[29](Martínez-Guzmán, 1999).

The Communication for Peace concept, *sensibilización cultural* (cultural sensitization)[30] (Nos-Aldás and Farné, 2020), links to this idea of accountability. It is further elaborated on by Martínez-Guzmán in the following excerpt:

> *La sensibilización que propondremos consistirá en «abrir los ojos», darnos cuenta, y asumir   la responsabilidad de ese empoderamiento desde la perspectiva de las víctimas, tomándonos   en cuenta unos y unas a otros y otras y a la naturaleza y pidiéndonos cuentas por lo que nos   hacemos   decimos   y callamos, para iniciar su transformación por medios pacíficos.*   (Martínez-Guzmán, 2003: 219)

> The sensitization we propose consists in opening [our] eyes, by noticing and taking on the responsibility of that empowerment[31] from the perspective of victims, taking each other and nature into consideration and holding each other accountable for that which we say and that which we remain silent about, to initiate their transformation by peaceful means.[32]

> (Martínez-Guzmán, 2003: 219)

The act of communicating degrowth towards broader audiences can be seen as a process of moral sensitization and as a crucial requirement for the peaceful transformation of the suffering that degrowth denounces. The logic of moral sensitization within a Communication for Peace framework is furthermore inserted in an ethics of justice. According to Martínez-Guzmán, justice within speech act theory has two meanings: First, when we do, say and remain silent about things, we take on commitments and

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[29] Habermas himself uses the concept ideal communication communities to highlight that they are never perfectly realized. Hence, the ideal communication community serves as a model of free and open public discussion (Matustik, 2021)

[30] author's translation

[31] As Martínez-Guzmán explains earlier in the same book chapter, he means the empowerment of humans who individually or collectively have been disempowered or excluded by other humans, who can recuperate their capacities and transform their suffering, which has previously been seized by human voraciousness.

[32] author's translation

responsibilities and allow ourselves to engage in mutual interpellation. The relationships between two interlocutors (dialoguing partners) ought to be just, meaning adjusted to the equality of our common humanity and the diverse contexts and peculiarities of each of the possible interlocutors in each specific situation. Second, justice is also related to the demand of justification, meaning accountability (221).

The author claims that dialogic intersubjectivity breaks the relation between oppressors and oppressed, in a Freirean fashion, since genuine communication re-establishes principles of justice as everyone is recognized as a valid interlocutor. He claims: "*Una función fundamental de la sensibilización será la ruptura de las relaciones de dominación y el restablecimiento de las relaciones de justicia*" (222). This translates as "A fundamental use of sensitization shall be the rupture of relations of domination and the re-establishment of relations of justice."[33]

Justice is linked to discursive elements of recognizing our mutual validity as interlocutors. One function of dialogue is to achieve a state of justice. Hence cultural sensitization in our context can be seen as the process by which degrowth voices are heard and at the same time recognized as valid interlocutors.

Martínez-Guzmán mentions certain ideas that resonate with degrowth, stemming from different kinds of development critiques. On the one hand, he refers to the first generation of the Frankfurt School, which criticizes modern science for its reduction of rationality to instrumental rationality. It is reductionist in that it limits itself to observation and objectivity. Critical theory situates the objectivity claimed by modern science within the socio-historical frame inhabited by scientists. It condemns the fact that specific socio-economic conditions have promoted a certain kind of industrial development and not others, privileging certain social classes and not others (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000).

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[33] author's translation

On the other hand, the author quotes Indian ecofeminist Vandana Shiva, who says that ecofeminism uncovers the narrowness of the basis upon which science and development are built, showing that ecological destruction and marginalization of women are not inevitable, neither from the economic nor the scientific point of view.

In the context of international relations, Martínez-Guzmán (2000) also suggests to critically rethink the meaning of security. The reduction of wars between states makes us aware of other kinds of threats to security: fear of one's own government, economic pressure, illness and environmental issues.

The original idea of philosophizing, according to Martínez-Guzmán, consists in being stunned by the discovery of our dependence on and interrelated with the Earth and other human beings. This experience of intersubjectivity and human fragileness creates the need to find new manners of thinking about politics which are detached from violence and attentive to interculturality: The latter refers to the interpellation of our culture from the perspective of others and vice versa, since we are all constituted by mutual reciprocity (Martínez-Guzmán, 2015).

In 2015, Martínez-Guzmán refers to the economic crisis which became a prevalent feature in Spain after the financial crash in 2008 and so-called austerity measures taken by states. Despite living through times of economic hardship in Spain and consequently in his peace studies program, he points out that our current understanding of economic crisis derives from the difference that all of a sudden middle class people from rich countries have been affected by it. However, Martínez-Guzmán (2015) points out that he and his colleagues have been calling the crisis out when supposedly everything was going well, but inequality between humans was increasing. Martínez-Guzmán declared that politicians tend to adapt morality to their convenience, applying only the first part of Kant's maxim, in which he calls to be sagacious like serpents. The second part of this

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maxim calls for candor, which can halt sagacity and promote action without falseness, thereby linking politics to morality. This has led to the actual state of a cleptocracy, the government of thieves and corrupt ones.

In times during which crises were limited to impoverished countries, Martínez-Guzmán claims, that 'we' defended a culture of austerity. He does not refer to the austerity measures taken by states at the expense of the common citizen but to the one proposed by Ivan Illich in his work on conviviality (1974). The culture of austerity is, according to Martínez-Guzmán at the basis of peace and development studies, or post-development studies which as he mentions inspires newer propositions of degrowth. Austerity according to Illich refers to reduction to the necessary, separated from the superfluous and likeable. This is a severity linked to straightness without the negative connotations these terms have, since they are virtues that are fulfilled with joy. This defense of austerity precisely has the aim of transforming inequality, marginalization and exclusion. In contrast, the austerity generated since the financial crisis of 2008 generates more inequalities. Hence, the usage by Latouche of the concept frugal abundance.

With regards to gender, Martínez-Guzmán references Betty Reardon (1985), a pioneer in contemporary theories on gender and peace. He distinguishes between misogyny stemming from the lesser known gynophobia, which he describes as the fear that men (can) feel when they realize their dependence on women and, demonstrates their fragility[34]. A form of reacting to this is sexism, which becomes institutionalized as masculine domination expressed through a security system based on war against the constructed enemies, the others (Martínez-Guzmán, 2019). This reaction which is deep down caused by a fear of the other is disguised as bravery to be able to dominate them and feel safe.

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[34]Note that these are ideas of the cited author. Speaking about these generalized conceptions of woman- and manhood without a critical distance can contribute to reifying a culture where gender and sex are conflated.

Reardon's alternative is to interpret feminism as a new humanism, whereby feminism is about learning to embrace new masculinities and femininities. Whereas the term feminist, gender studies and specially women's studies can from the outside be misinterpreted as being about women's contributions or additions to science and knowledge, Guzmán stresses that without a gender perspective, all of humanity is degraded, converting the fear of the other into a system of domination and institutionalized security based on violence and war.

A further aspect mentioned in the epistemological shift is that peace is *for people like us*, meaning the every-day person, and not for angels or heroes. This is linked to the perspective that peace workers are realists and not idealists, since contrary to those who only see violent behavior in humans, those of us studying peace are aware that we humans have the capacities for both, violent and peaceful behaviors. This point summarizes the power underlying the entire epistemological shift, since it conceives that a different world is possible and sets a possibility for peaceful transformation by claiming that it is possible.

One of the points that most resonate with previously analyzed degrowth frames is point eight: "We speak of reasons, feelings, emotions, affection and tenderness. There is no dichotomy between reason and care" (Martínez-Guzmán, 2000: 87). First the author gives space to the possibility of speaking about human faculties besides the rational mind capable of thinking. As he acknowledges feelings, emotions, affection and tenderness of humans and simultaneously in point two advocates that peace researchers take on the perspective of a participant, we can infer that according to this view there is no such thing as a purely rational researcher. The word care stands out in the next sentence, as a mirror of the degrowth frame given by FaDA and the New Roots collective as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Martínez-Guzmán makes the claim that care and reason both stem

from the same word, *conocimiento* which means knowledge and states that there ought to be no dichotomy between both. This insight confirms the need for reifying this link between care and reason.

3.5.1.2 Insights from Care Ethics

Peaces philosophy researcher Irene Comins (2008) has elaborated on the notions of care from peace(s) philosophy and feminist perspectives. She draws from feminist care ethics, studying proposals by Carol Gilligan, known for proposing care as an alternative ethical framework to justice for all humans (Flanagan and Jackson, 1987). Gilligan (1977) explained the different moral capacity that women develop through socialization and their practice of care. She critiqued a moral theory by psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, which was based exclusively on the moral judgment of males but claimed universal validity. Gilligan's analysis showed that females tended to prefer the preservation of relations as opposed to an ethics of justice.

Following these insights, one key challenge for Gilligan was the question of how to foster human responsiveness within a competitive, individualistic (US American) culture. She claimed educators should nurture both, their students' empathetic skills and their reasoning skills. If not, the students may do more harm than good, likely to ignore the harm that they cause people through their achievements as professional physicians, lawyers and businesspeople who are mainly busy with fighting diseases, winning cases, and increasing profits respectively (Tong 2009).

Irene Comins further elaborates on the links between care ethics and the valuing of diversity. The image of the other an enemy is built upon a negative conception of diversity, stemming from a reductionist modern universalizing worldview. However, from the realm of a care ethics perspective, the fear of diversity can be overcome by

means of embracing complex thought to perceive diversity as enriching. One of the key elements she pinpoints as a crucial aspect of such a complex thought is the development of a cosmic consciousness, a connection between all beings, which is worth recuperating as a value. For the worst factor responsible for a lack of care is the missing connection to the Whole, the consciousness that does not perceive itself as part of the universe. In line with other authors like Vandana Shiva and Leonardo Boff, she sees the living interconnectedness of all beings, human and nonhuman natural world, as the only guarantee of maintaining life on the planet. (Comins-Mingol, 2003).

Ex-priest and liberation theology supporter Leonardo Boff (2008) wrote a book about care which is worth reflecting upon in this context. Boff purports care as an essential characteristic of human beings:

> We must acknowledge that the attitude of taking care is a fundamental mode-of-being, which is always present and which cannot be removed from reality. It is a fountainhead, an original and ontological* aspect which it is impossible to totally disregard. (15)

In Boff's reasoning the ontological aspect of caring is related to the notion that the way in which humans believe that the world is affects their image of humans. The question of what it means to be human can thus be responded to in a myriad of ways, depending on what aspects of life are put in the foreground. The modern idea of human as a rational animal stems from the perceived superiority of science and culture. The idea that human fundamentally cares stems from the "human being as a being-in-the-world-with-others always in relation, building his habitat, occupied with things, concerned with people, willing to suffer with and be happy with those to whom he feels united and whom he loves" (17). The ontology that Boff describes resonates with some aspects of plural peaces philosophy.

Boff proposes a list of seven concepts that translate care into different concrete forms. They include: love as a biological phenomenon, the right measure, tenderness,

caress, cordiality, conviviality and compassion. Other care resonances include synergy, hospitality, courtesy and kindness. However, according to the author these are implicit within the listed concepts (Boff, 2008: 72).

From a degrowth perspective the two care expressions that stand out most are the *right measure* and *conviviality*. The right measure is straightforwardly related to degrowth through the reference to quantity that degrowth also has implicit. It expresses the fact that quantity matters, and more is not always better but that care implies knowing how much is necessary and good in any given moment.

The notion of conviviality derived from Ivan Illich's theory (discussed in Chapter 1) is also recognized as important and posited as an expression of care. Boff sees the need for conviviality as a remedy for the effects of mass production that has made the human beings who intended to replace slaves with technological instruments into slaves of their instruments. Conviviality according to Boff is defined as:

> The capacity to make the dimensions of production and care, of affection and compassion, live together; the careful molding of everything that we produce using creativity, freedom and imagination; the ability to maintain the multidimensional balance between society and nature, and the reassuring feeling of mutual belonging. (88)

This principle of conviviality, according to Boff can have two crucial effects: One is that it combines the technical value of material production with the ethical value of social and spiritual production.

> After having elaborated the economy of material goods it is important urgently to develop the economy of human qualities. Is not the greatest resource, infinite and inexhaustible, perchance the human being? The human values of sensitivity, care, living together and veneration can impose limits upon the voracity of power domination and production-exploration. (88)

The second is that conviviality is a remedy against the ecological crisis by deconstructing the foundations of the industrial process and its devastating effects on the Earth system. The two principles associated with conviviality directly relate to degrowth, which is

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unsurprising since the notion of conviviality has been an inspirational source for to degrowth theory and practice.

Overall, Boff's reflections of care complement and provide a valuable theoretical underpinning in support of using care as a frame for degrowth. In light of this, beyond the two expressions of care I have highlighted, it is worth exploring other expressions of care and linking these to degrowth ideas.

3.5.2 The Applicability of a Transrational Peace Approach for Degrowth

Another source in peace(s) philosophy that can serve to open opportunities for exploring degrowth frames is the transrational approach to peace. In the transrational approach to peace the point mentioned in Vicent Martínez-Guzmán's epistemological shift on human faculties besides reason[35] is taken up and expanded on by Wolfgang Dietrich (2012).

In his *Many Peaces* trilogy, Dietrich (2018a, 2013, 2012) describes peace in a holistic, systemic manner. Drawing from Western and Eastern knowledge and perspectives of peace, within and outside of academia, he uses the term transrational in reference to the transcendence of rational knowledge as the only way in which we humans can know. In the third volume of his trilogy, Dietrich mentions a quote that emerged as a key insight from the Mind and Life Institute[36]in 2005, as one of many forms in which he captures the meaning of transrational. "The quality of reason is the gift to capture the intuitive presence of the real beyond oneself and to perceive the connectedness of all existence beyond rational consciousness" (2018a: 326).

In simple terms, transrationality can be understood if we consider that, from a peace studies perspective, that which we claim to know can and must go beyond rational knowing. The journey towards the transrational peace approach began as Dietrich studied

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[35]the point number 8 in the 15-point list of the epistemological shift
[36]The author describes the Mind and Life Institute as an organization that promoted dialog between Eastern and Western knowledge traditions

and categorized the diverse interpretations of peace across different cultures, distinguishing at first between energetic and moral peaces (Dietrich and Sützl, 2006), to later add modern, postmodern and transrational peace families as he shows in his Many Peaces trilogy (Dietrich, 2012, Dietrich, 2018a, Dietrich, 2013).

Transrationality as a peace approach includes methodological, ontological and epistemological reflections for research. The entire system is too broad and complex for the framework of this thesis, so I shall just highlight some aspects that can serve degrowth reflections.

Norbert Koppensteiner points to different ways of knowing that complement modern rationality based on the Cartesian ontological differentiation into subject and object which predominates in science and academia (Alvarez et al., 2018). The forms of knowing represent the different ways humans have of accessing the ontologically plural world. These are complementary and in a homeostatic balance, swinging between differentiation and integration.

Transrational epistemologies are in line with Gödel's incompleteness theorem, which states that "any sufficiently powerful formal system cannot be consistent and complete at the same time, but always balances between consistent incompleteness and incomplete consistence" (Alvarez et al., 2018: 66). The ways of knowing Koppensteiner proposes include knowing through senses, knowing through feelings, knowing through thoughts, knowing through intuition and knowing through witnessing.

The transrational peaces interpretation perceives peace systematically rather than mechanically. In his work, Dietrich builds upon John Paul Lederach's conflict pyramid (Figure 5), to add several other dimensions which can explain the complexities of peace and conflict transformation.

According to Lederach conflict situations are not only one-dimensional but also

two-dimensional and more. Conflict situations happen in several layers; in grassroots, middle, and top layers, which are all interconnected. The description of degrowth actors in Chapter 2 applies a division like this into layers as well. The paradigm that Lederach proposes creates a new perspective in peace and conflict studies, where he shifts the attention from group and individual into the connection between conflict actors.
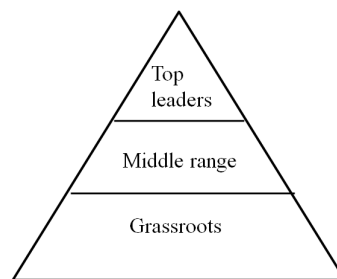
Figure 5 *Levels* according to Wolfgang Dietrich (2018). Source: own elaboration
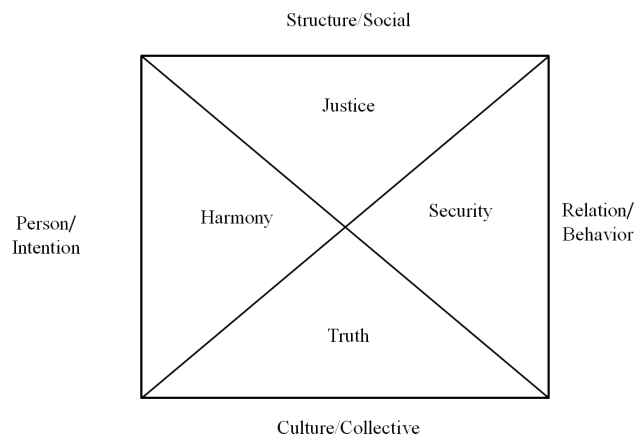
Figure 6 *Peace Families/ Peace Themes* according to Wolfgang Dietrich (2018). Source: own elaboration

For the purpose of this work I shall focus on the peace families (Figure 6). The peace families of energetic, moral, modern and postmodern, which are also called peace themes, are the result of Dietrich's field research on peace interpretations with people from different cultures and backgrounds in combination with extensive historical research which he describes in his book *Interpretations of Peace in History and Culture* (2012).

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The four peace families Dietrich analyzed also include a fifth category, the transrational peace family. This can be seen as standing on the tip of the pyramid, able to see all four sides as complementing viewpoints from which to interpret peace and conflict- related issues. The author has found a key element in each of them to describe how they interpret peace so that the following pairs emerge: energetic peaces understand peace as harmony, moral peaces focus on justice, modern peaces deal with security and postmodern peaces interpret peace in terms of truth.

For Dietrich, to take on a transrational peace perspective, the four peace themes are integrated so as to get into a homeostatic, moving balance with one another, rather than having one dominate others. Hence, transrational peaces share the postmodern value of plurality, while reintegrating the spiritual component that the energetic peace family embodies. What results from this is that transrational peaces accept multiple overlapping but not totally coinciding viewpoints, allowing a shift of perspectives between different lenses that do not completely merge (Echavarría-Álvarez, 2014).

First, "the transrational interpretation of peace includes the energetic worldview and considers the role played by harmony and vibrations in social contexts" (2013: 103). Since harmony is a physical, biological, intellectual, and psychological process that exists in interpersonal encounters, it is a necessary basic part of peace.

Second, justice is understood as a matter of subjective and communal needs and satisfaction rather than a mechanistic fulfillment of a demand. Dietrich uses the word growth in the context of human needs, claiming that "growth is understood as a process, not in teleological terms as a purpose. The focus is on what we already are and what we need right now, and not on what we should do in order to live up to the definition of a future ideal." (Dietrich, 2013: 198). While the term in this case does not specifically address economic growth, it becomes apparent that Dietrich rejects a generalized vision

that growth in general is good for the sake of itself. In relation to the issue of justice, what the author criticizes is a tendency to project justice and peace into a future as opposed to accepting the present moment as peace.

Third, from the transrational perspective the notion of security is considered in terms of the shifts that have taken place in how wars are waged, implying a shift from a sovereign to a relational type of security in the twenty-first century (Dietrich, 2013). The characteristic of peace operations under this new conception is that civilian-military cooperation is a norm in missions due to the growing importance of understanding security relationally. Soldiers need to have a different profile and training that gives them knowledge about socio-psychological processes, and above all, "an awareness of how one's own behavior affects the local population" (Dietrich, 2013: 133). This bears a similar understanding to the misleading belief in pure objectiveness in research because each variable or person in a system ultimately is affected by others and vice-versa.

Fourth, transrational peaces embrace the postmodern call for pluralism that emerges from its notion of truth and which contributes to respectful communication across diverse cultural contexts (Dietrich, 2013: 180).

Before elaborating on the applicability of the transrational approach in the context of promoting degrowth it is pertinent to point out certain points of friction between this approach and feminist degrowth perspectives. Wolfgang Dietrich's work has received criticism from both postcolonial and feminist perspectives for perpetuating colonial and patriarchal violence. Before specifying the aspects of transrationality that are nourishing in the context of this thesis, a deeper analysis of its critiques needs to be done.

Peace researcher Annette Weber, who has taught feminist conflict theory at the Innsbruck peace program, adds to the edited book *Transrational Resonances: Echoes to the Many Peaces* with her essay 'Why a Feminist Standpoint Epistemology Is Necessary

in Times of Hegemonic Masculinity: Thoughts on Intersectionality and Transrationality' (2018). She partially applies concepts from the transrational approach and takes on a critical position towards a few elemental aspects of the overall framework. Her main reservations concern alleged neutrality or all-partisanship in non-feminist mediation settings—positions which are expected from mediators in conflict transformation. This critique stems from a politization of the gender relations present in a conflict, where oftentimes gender issues remain silenced, either unheard altogether or superficially addressed by adding women to negotiation tables without a deeper engagement in gender violence issues. Weber advocates feminist peace and conflict transformation, which seeks to overcome unequal structures through theory and practice. This includes "pointing out violence where social conventions deny their existence (domestic violence, exclusion)" (86), to question conventional peace and reconciliation settings.

Moreover, the author makes a series of remarks which reflect the heterogeneity of feminist standpoints. These include the observation that there exist different kinds of feminist positions, out of which some are pacifistic and others patriotic or prone to war. Furthermore, she refers to different kinds of essentialist positions, which tend to be characterized by a moral and a holistic belief in harmony. The moral aspect of this positioning justifies patriarchal structures whereas activist narratives tend to view feminine caring characteristics as transformative. Both, according to Weber bind "the caring and peaceful mother to the powerful and violent man" (90).

These stand in contrast with postmodern notions of feminism, which question the gender dichotomy and focuses on the social construction of gender, as Simone de Beauvoir famously pointed out through her phrase "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949: 301). According to Weber it is useful to adopt what Gayatri Spivak calls strategic essentialism to be able to speak of womanhood as a social

construct. This term refers to the need to acknowledge certain terms, such as the category of womanhood, as unified for the purpose of emancipation (Spivak, 2010). It is thus a political tactic for heterogeneous groups that seek to achieve certain goals.

Weber's critique of the transrational approach is deliberately not against the spiritual engagement of conflict workers or the holistic approach to conflict transformation altogether. Instead, she focuses on a few interrelated issues. Among these, she decries that in Dietrich's work religion is portrayed as a non-political system and limited to Christian-Judaic and Asian religions[37]. The patriarchal authority figures in these religions put spiritual experiences as a "restrictive gender corset" (102).

Moreover, the transpersonal literature that Dietrich employs is based upon sources written by predominantly male and white authors. This is problematic since it is from these sources that a claim of universal access to experience is made, which makes the need for a dialog with subaltern positions seem obsolete. From an intersectional feminist perspective however, an analytical self-aware contextualization of the narrator's location is a key prerequisite, to give space to a discourse by those whose experience is marginalized, with the support of their allies. Finally, Weber alleges that Dietrich's view appropriates cultures and genders. Cultural appropriation refers to the appropriation of aspects of a non-dominant culture in a manner that fails to respect their original meaning. The limits of cultural appropriation are debatable due to the flexibility of understandings of culture and other ambiguities depending on the different scenarios in which such processes can occur (Ziff and Rao, 1997).

A further critique of the transrational approach to peaces, which in part supports Weber's view, is made by Carlos Cordero Pedrosa (2014). The author dedicates a significant part of his master's dissertation in peace studies to the transrational approach.

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[37] Weber makes a vague reference to the religions of the continent of Asia in her essay, whereas Dietrich's use in his trilogy much more differentiated.

Taking on a postcolonial lens, he condemns the transrational approach for being Eurocentric and reductionist. Cordero refers to it as engaging in metonymic reasoning. Metonymic reasoning according to de-Sousa-Santos (2007) "claims to be the only form of rationality and therefore does not exert itself to discover other kinds of rationality, or, if it does, it only does so to turn them into raw material" (162). It can be seen as arrogant since it fails to valorize other experiences and lazy because it imposes a particular experience as a universal one.

Moreover, Cordero (2014) states that the transrational approach imposes its own logic on what it observes, and more specifically, applies what Donna Haraway (1989) calls cannibalistic Western logic. This logic readily constructs other cultural possibilities as resources for Western needs and actions. Cordero notes that in the way Dietrich describes the transrational approach different ways of seeing the world are "labeled as energetic, spiritual, relational, harmonious, moral, holistic or organic" (55). Cordero's (2014) criticism, generally speaking, of peace studies is that "a narrow view of science characterized by a positivist epistemology pervades peace studies" (81).

Both, Weber's and Cordero's critique of the transrational approach merit attention since they point toward some aspects that lie at the basis of the assumption of intersectional feminist and postcolonial thinking, which clash with the way in which the transrational approach to peace is described by its founder.

Overall I find Weber's and Cordero's critiques worth considering, since each make valid points in their own way. However, in particular the feminist criticism could engage more profoundly with the original work by Dietrich, so as to elaborate on the possibilities and shortcomings of applying this peace approach while simultaneously holding feminist perspectives. A more nuanced argumentation based on dialog would thus be desirable.

One author who engages with some sources that can possibly foster such a dialog

with the transrational approach is Jennifer Murphy (2018) in her contribution to the edited book *Transrational Resonances: Echoes to the Many Peaces*. Murphy proposes a series of authors who think and write in feminist and postcolonial terms, offering similar, complementary visions to the transrational approach to peace.

Dialoging with the proposed and so far, omitted voices in the mentioned context supersedes the scope of this thesis but certainly deserves thought in future research. Particularly the aspects of racism and patriarchy need to be given attention to in the transrational environment. An engagement with such issues, which mainly concern structural injustices, seems more necessary than ever in times where, as Weber claims, political correctness is ridiculed, "aggressive masculinity is back in style"(84) and voices outside of the dominant subject are silenced.

Hence, in order to pursue a deeper transrational analysis of feminist degrowth, it would be crucial to first find intellectual spaces for these voices to be heard in ways that do not confine their epistemological significance to limited realms of a fixed map, but to allow for a careful, collective and constructive adaptation of the approach, so as to let the sources it draws from enrich its own self-understanding.

Due to the reservations discussed above, the goal of this section is not to engage with transrational onto-epistemologies as ways of enhancing degrowth but to potentially connect degrowth discourse with a more diverse public by finding frames for degrowth based on the lessons that plural peaces can evoke.

The themes that Dietrich identified are relevant for degrowth communication since they can be interpreted as communicative frames. In Dietrich's work the four themes are assembled in ways that make them neatly fit the four sides of a pyramid (Figure 6) and the quadrants of a model with interior/exterior and individual/collective divisions (Figure 7).

	individual	collective
interior	Energetic peaces **Peace as Harmony** *personal*	Postmodern peaces **Peace as Truth** *cultural*
exterior	Modern peaces **Peace as Security** *relational*	Moral peaces **Peace as Justice** *structural*

Figure 7 *Peace Quadrants* **according to Dietrich (2018). Source: own elaboration**

Degrowth can gain from transrational peaces by identifying the four sides of its pyramid as a framework of peaces which synthesize four very different coexisting views of what it means. In this sense, interpretations of peace correspond to interpretations of good life and hence address the quest of linking degrowth to a deeper meaning. From the perspective of the plural peaces approach, the existence of peace necessitates diversity in the sense that diverse peace interpretations coexist.

I contend that the potential of the transrational approach for degrowth lies in its broad systemic, albeit incomplete, view of peace. Peace families or peace themes, representing inventory of possible frames to think about degrowth and to communicate degrowth.

Based on the assumption that interpretations of peace as security are equally valid as other interpretations, the challenge is to be able to frame degrowth in all four ways yet twisting them in a transrational manner. In light of this, the crux is that certain frames are more difficult to frame degrowth compared to others. For instance, a person with a high

sense of justice might not perceive degrowth proposals as foreign or far-fetched, since justice is closely linked to degrowth, as it is part of its definition.

However, I believe that from a peace communication perspective, audiences that think and speak in terms of security would not be easily persuaded by a person advocating degrowth for being more just. What will be more likely to appeal to them is an argument framed around security. However, security should not be framed as militarization, border control and war discourse. Instead, security would be presented in its relational aspect.

In this context, different philosophers show diverging approaches to whether and how to speak about security. Martínez-Guzmán proposes to abandon the notion of security despite the broader understanding of human security beyond arms (Martínez-Guzmán, 2004). He considers security to imply a linguistic trap, that invites carelessness and that implies a diminishment of liberties and human rights. Hence, he argues, vulnerability and fragility ought to be tackled from the perspectives of capacity of agreement and new ways of understanding governmentality, from both more global and more local perspectives.

In contrast, philosopher and degrowth author Jorge Riechmann (2015) deems security a term that can be reclaimed from the political left. Referring to Zygmunt Baumann, he argues that without security the effective democratization of political, economic and cultural life cannot even be thought of. What differentiates the alternative notion of security from the traditional conservative one is that it is not related to the issues of defense but to the prevention of ecological and social devastation. Riechmann calls for a leftist discourse about security that is intelligent, solid and credible (125).

The framing of peace as truth is a very broad idea that is approached by degrowth discourse as it deconstructs meanings of certain key beliefs in the dominant economy

jargon, such as 'growth is good' or even Wall Street film character Gordon Gekko's phrase that 'greed is good' (Sutherland, 2015). Degrowth is quite in line with the understanding of peace as truth, in general. However, here the crux is that conflicting truths might emerge for which degrowth cannot account for. For instance, degrowth has been critiqued for merely paying lip service to decoloniality (Hanaček et al., 2020), rather that profoundly engaging with the truth that euro-centric modernity's dark side is colonialism and that colonial continuities exist today, and may be active even within degrowth discourse.

From the perspective of peace as harmony and what Dietrich calls energetic peace, it is quite clear that peaces framed this way resonate with Indigenous cosmologies and with holistic perspectives. These, however, tend to be missing in degrowth analysis, which seeks to be geared for a modern secular Western mindset. What would it mean to understand degrowth in terms of harmony?

I believe that there are powerful reflections that emerge from thinking of degrowth in terms of transrational peace themes as frames. Degrowth seems akin to both, peace as justice and peace as truth. However, the other two which seem diametrically opposed to each other, are more difficult to frame degrowth in. Degrowth as security necessitates a twisting of the notion of security which has very strong connotations of militarization. Peace philosopher Martínez-Guzmán seeks to avoid this frame altogether. I argue in line with Riechmann for reimagining security discourse, based on the acceptance that the notion of security is a basic human necessity.

On the other hand, peace as harmony is not as far-fetched for degrowth but it is also not an intrinsic part of degrowth reasoning. The balance of spiritual, emotional, physical aspects of beings and the conception of interrelatedness of all beings is hinted at but not an explicit aspect of degrowth. Degrowth as a Western scientific analytical

activist-led science rather remains on the side of rational argumentation. However, as both Martínez-Guzmán and Dietrich coincide in underlining that humans have other faculties besides reason. I believe these need to be acknowledged in order to be able to work with them. In Dietrich's theory the transrationality is reflected at the individual level as layers of the previously mentioned pyramidal model.

3.5.3 Drawing from Adjacent Fields: Spiritual Activism and Relational Ontologies

The previous sections have shown ways in which plural peace perspectives can contribute to the diversification of degrowth frames by means of contemplating the validity of coexisting and different peace interpretations. These may provide frames for gearing degrowth ideas to different audiences. In addition, the intra- and interpersonal layers of the persona identified for mapping conflict transformation can prove useful since they provide a more holistic picture of the aspects of being human that might influence decision-making in terms of adopting a new frame or not. Reasoning is only one human faculty and only one out of many ways of knowing. However, peace is neither only nor the first discipline that make this annotation. In this sense I deem it pertinent to consider adjacent disciplines and theories that rely on a similar expanded epistemological and ontological ground and must not remain unacknowledged because they tend to remain marginal and are yet ground-breaking in their proposals.

For instance, commenting upon the issue of reason and rationality, Africana philosopher Lewis Gordon (2014) makes a criticism of the focus on rational remarks the distinction between rationality and reasonability:

> The former cannot suspend logic, for to be what it is, it must, at minimum, demand consistency. The demand for consistency eventually collapses into maximum consistency, in order to be consistent. In effect, this means that rationality must presume its method, and it must resist straying from its generating grammar. Reason, however, offers a different story. To be maximally consistent, although logically commendable, is not always reasonable. Reasonability can embrace contradictions. Even more, it must be able to do so in order to evaluate

even itself. This means that the scope of reason exceeds rationality. (Gordon, 2014: 85)

In other words, rationality is limited because it is not always reasonable to be one hundred percent rational. However, the pursuit of rationality can become a sort of dogma due to its own need to confirm its method. Therefore, the shift beyond rationality that a transrational approach suggests does not abandon the rational, it merely consciously expands within the confinement of the reasonable into new epistemological realms.

In this context, I believe that deepening the engagement with decolonial feminist thinking is necessary, not only from the perspective of challenging the material inequalities that a degrowth discourse and practice might continue to perpetuate, but from the perspective of challenging cognitive injustices (de-Sousa-Santos, 2015) that result from the rationalistic argumentation of scientific language that degrowth seems to be trapped in, for the sake of finding resonance within academic settings. It is precisely within certain kinds of decolonial feminist theory that we can find diversity of ontology and epistemology.

In the realm of feminist decolonial perspectives there is a criticism of the limiting features of the academic pursuit of rationality and what Ana Louise Keating (2016) refers to as spirit phobia. The feminist author investigates feminist scholar, political activist and intersectional feminist Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of spiritual activism. For her this includes demonstrating the importance of spiritual knowledge-praxis and to "chip away at the spirit phobia and hyper-secularity dominating academic life" (Keating, 2016: 103).

Now one might say: what do these feminists have to do with degrowth after all? Nothing directly, since they have never written about it or focused on any topics related to questioning the economic growth paradigm. Anzaldúa's work (2015, 1999)can be situated in the spectrum of post-colonial feminist literature.

Anzaldúa inhabits this liminal space where borders are crossed and where *traición* (betrayal[38]) is a critical tool. As a *mestizo* woman from Texas she is not loyal to her 'race' nor to her culture, as a lesbian she rebels against the limitations of the female gender and in her academic writings she mixes Spanish and English as another frontier that she inhabits.

The border that Anzaldúa describes in her renowned work *Borderlands*, among others, defines barabarie in the sense that it delimits the margins of what has been defined as the civilized world. The border delimits, divides, separates and warns us of the dangers of hybridization with the other. It redefines us and them, 'the others', who are a menace to 'us'.

The power underlying her thought is that her border thinking appears as a decolonial strategy that reconfigures different identities. The other displaced, de-territorialized and inappropriate ones who belong to strange groups that defy hegemonic feminist logic, profoundly question the mechanisms of production of difference. These border identities describe a new more complex reality that goes beyond any kind of essentialism. Living on the border means living without borders and understanding that we are always an intersection.

Keating (2008), an expert on Anzaldúa's works, complains about the fact that Anzaldúa's spirit politics often remain unheard. She claims, those of us working in academic settings are trained to rely almost exclusively on rational thought, anti-spiritual forms of logical reasoning, and empirical demonstrations.

The Latino/a and Chicano/a feminist scholar and expert on decolonial spiritualities, Laura E. Pérez made a similar point regarding spirituality in intellectual circle in 1998:

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[38] author's translation

> Beliefs and practices consciously making reference to the s/Spirit as the common life force within and between all beings are largely marginalized from serious intellectual discourse as superstition, folk belief, or New Age delusion, when they are not relegated to the socially controlled spaces of the orientalist study of "primitive animism" or of "respectable" religion within dominant culture. Even in invoking the spiritual as a field articulated through cultural differences, and in so doing attempting to displace dominant Christian notions of the spiritual while addressing the fear of politically regressive essentialisms, to speak about the s/Spirit and the spiritual in U.S. culture is risky business that raises anxieties of different sorts. (Pérez, 1998: 37-38)

This point of the intellectual marginalization of spirit as the common life force from serious intellectual discussion is certainly not just limited to US culture but applicable to academic practices in general.

The feminist scholar, teacher, and activist M. Jacqui Alexander (2006) notes that recently scholarship has begun to link spirituality with socio-political transformation. However, "there is a tacit understanding that no self respecting postmodernist would want to align herself (at least in public) with a category such as the spiritual, which appears so fixed, so unchanging, so redolent of tradition" (15).

Keating (2008) comments that when it comes to Anzaldúan scholarship her spirit vision draws many to explore it, yet this aspect risks placing the scholar in a position of an intruder in academia and undermine the reputation of Anzaldúa as a scholar to be taken seriously, tagging her work as New Age, reduced to escapist ramblings. Anzaldúan scholarship combines inner works and public acts in ways that connect private concerns with social issues. The simultaneous attention to the personal and collective distinguishes her work from the New Age movement and from conventional organized religions.

What stands out most about Anzaldúa's conception of spiritual activism is that it does see the personal as a start, yet it simultaneously remains aware of the material and structural outer dimensions of reality. As Keating observes, spiritual activism does not fall into solipsism, ego-centrism, self-glorification or any other kinds of possessive individualism. Instead, it fosters self-reflection and self-growth in combination with

compassionate acts directed outwards, which are designed to bring about social change. Anzaldúa accounts for the intertwined dynamics of awareness, oppression, resistance and transformation in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera*, where she claims that the dynamics among persons belonging to different dominant or oppressed groups in border towns are mirrored in the minds of these people.

> The struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian-our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads. (Anzaldúa, 1999)

In a different essay on Anzaldúa's work, Keating and (2018) Kakali Bhattacharya make reference to her 'magical thinking' that is present in her work and yet not honored or understood in academic settings. The crux of magical thinking is that it produces onto-epistemologies that are "not bound by rationality, but uninhibited in imagination, creativity, and inspiration" (346).

The authors claim that this sort of thinking performs a decolonial turn by inducing material- and spirit-based approaches to thought and imagination. Through her writing Anzaldúa (2015) proposes to decolonize conventional, Enlightenment-based understandings of reality by bringing attention to what can be intentionally, selectively, and expansively be brought into our awareness. She draws on Indigenous wisdom, occult traditions, and Eastern teachings traditions to conjecture a physical/literal reality. This reality which is perceived through our basic senses, is privileged as it is usually denominated the objective reality. However there are also *imaginal*[39] realities that include and go beyond basic sensory perception.

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[39] The adjective *imaginal* is very much related to the noun *imaginary* referred to in Chapter 1. In the book *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality* Anzaldúa (2015) borrows the term *imaginal* from the scholar of Islamic mysticism Henry Corbin.

It is because these ways of knowing have been absent from academia and considered to be superstitious, mythological or backward that the authors argue that integrating spirituality as a crucial component in grasping, making sense of and authoring narratives, enacts a sort of decolonial move (Bhattacharya and Keating, 2018).

Escobar's concept of the Pluriverse and the notion of relational ontologies tie to Anzaldúa's onto-epistemological move. As introduced in Chapter 1, Pluriverse is a concept that has been put in relation with degrowth most notably through the newest version of a post-development dictionary published under the title *Pluriverse: A Post-development Dictionary* (Kothari et al., 2019). Pluriverse refers to a world where many worlds fit, which is the slogan associated with the Pluriverse idea. It is a Zapatista concept that counters the so-called one-world worldview that is typical of modern thought. In modern ontology, individuals, communities, mind and body, economy, the market, capital, economy and world are all understood and created as self-sufficient elements. In this ontology, life is full of individuals that manipulate objects in the world more or less efficiently.

Ontologies are enacted through practices. They do not merely exist as imaginaries, ideas or as representations, but are displayed through concrete practices. These create worlds. In addition, ontologies are manifest as histories or narratives that allow to understand more or less efficiently the kinds of entities and relations that form the world (Escobar, 2015).

Relational ontologies stand in contrast with modern ontologies. They avoid the separation between nature and culture, individual and community, us and them; which are fundamental to the dominant modern ontology. This is to say that struggles can be read as ontological struggles.

These different worlds and knowledges (ontologies and epistemologies) carry the capacity to de-naturalize the hegemonic separation of nature and culture on which the liberal order is based and which in turn provides the foundation for the distinction between civilized and Indians, colonizer and colonized, developed and underdeveloped. (Asher, 2013: 39).

3.6. Promoting Feminist Degrowth—Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have dealt with the question how can degrowth can be promoted. I have argued that the degrowth movement needs a strategy if it is to fulfill its purpose. This includes a more nuanced language to communicate it to a larger audience. Despite its increased success however degrowth as a movement remains on the fringe.

Although the missile concept strategy of degrowth is useful in specific contexts, I have claimed that complementary communication strategies are required for degrowth to become adopted by society at large and to be considered a common sense. The underlying idea was to adopt a range of different frames for degrowth communication to reach and engage with a broader audience, based on the notion that a small percentage of very diverse actors can function as what Lederach referred to as *critical yeast* to promote degrowth.

Applying framing theory, I have searched and analyzed alternative signifiers of degrowth both at the level of theory and in the realm of contemporary communicative practices around the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, I have identified the need for further research to empirically study the effects of framing degrowth in different manners.

Moreover, I have taken a peace(s) philosophy perspective to shed light upon the possibility of finding new frames for degrowth which might help to complement and promote the movement's ideas. I have outlined a few ideas from plural peace

perspectives: philosophy for making peace(s) and from the transrational approach to peace. I have found valuable contributions at the level of providing grounds to reflect on a deeper purpose of degrowth and to engage with unconventional interpretations of a good life or *buen vivir*.

Finally, I have linked previous findings to other existing strands outside of peaces philosophy. In particular I drew from postcolonial feminist, onto-epistemological standpoints of spiritual activism and the notion of relational ontologies. These two find themselves at the margin of academic discourse and can be a very valuable contribution to conceiving degrowth differently, representing what the transrational approach to peace argues, from the perspectives of marginal feminist and decolonial ontologies. These fill the gap of engagement with spirituality in degrowth literature, while adding valuable decolonial and feminist perspectives to peace research.

In terms of the transrational approach I have mainly built upon the idea that the four peace families can provide new directions towards which to gear communication around degrowth. The flexibility of these themes is exemplified by the fifth peace family, transrational peace, which integrates elements of all the others in a homeostatic balance, moving beyond the historical and cultural contexts Dietrich and colleagues have identified peace families in. Transrational peaces thus understand peace as harmony, justice, security and truth. The map of the transrational approach proposed by Dietrich conceives itself as a theoretical pendant to elicitive conflict transformation, which considers peace and conflict as relational. It thus makes sense that relations among different aspects of being are pinpointed and researched more in-depth to transform conflicts. When juxtaposing degrowth with this peace approach the peace theme that resonates most is justice, since it is built into degrowth's definition. Peace scholar Martínez-Guzmán considers positive peace as the construction of social justice

understood as the development of human potential to satisfy basic needs. Dietrich integrates justice into his framework but is careful about the use of the term justice due to the ease with which peace is projected into a better future, which stands in opposition to accepting the present as peace.

Dietrich's reservations towards the notion of peace as justice can be seen as both a strength in terms of individual empowerment and a shortcoming in terms of a collective deliberative processes. His lack of engagement with justice is paralleled by his rejection of the notion of structural violence, which he explains in the third volume of his trilogy (Dietrich 2018). The author reasons that the way in which structural violence is portrayed by Galtung is too apodictic for him. One of the allegations he has is that a neurotic momentum is attached to this idea, in which "individual fixations onto third-party responsibility for a person's personal suffering are well known and assessed as a psychotic mechanism" (324). The benefits of adopting Dietrich's position as an individual are related to avoiding such blaming mechanisms and to taking responsibility for one's own present situation. At the collective level however, I believe there ought to be a possibility for conceiving structural violence or injustice as a reality. The very omission of a discussion over whether or not such structural violence can be considered violence in itself.

Nevertheless, my contention is that it can be very valuable to consider other interpretations of peace, to arrive at additional ways through which degrowth can address the search for peace. This thought consciously elevates and limits the conversation based on the debatable assumption that all humans in one way or another search for peace, yet their interpretations of peace differ.

Degrowth discourse seems to be somewhat more distant from discourses on security. However, I have hinted at the possibility of reflecting upon ways in which

security can be understood and twisted to support a degrowth perspective. In this respect, I align with Riechmann's ideas, who suggests that speaking about security would make total sense in the context of prevention of ecological and social devastation. In fact, discourses that new social movements around the climate crisis adopt are very much in line with this concern. For instance, the name of *Extinction Rebellion* testifies to this claim (2021). This climate mobilization movement identifies human extinction as a threat that needs to be named and faced.

The interpretation of degrowth as truth is tricky, since as it has been posited earlier, plural peace perspectives understand the need for peace(s) in plural to coexist, since imposing one peace for all would be violent in itself. Hence, the question arises how then degrowth is, or can be, communicated as truth. Degrowth scholarship dedicates significant aspects to debunking what are usually unquestioned truths in the public eye. These include mainly the idea that economic growth is a necessary pre-requisite for prosperity, well-being and peace.

However, at the same time degrowth proposes to have a key to truth: Namely that economic growth, which is portrayed as the solution to all problems is in fact a problem in itself. If it were a simple task to communicate degrowth as a truth, then this thesis would be based on a different question. For the question how to promote degrowth stems from the insight that merely being good or just is not sufficient in this context of inquiry. The reason is that degrowth proposes a paradigm shift rather than an addition to generally endorsed way of thinking.

Hence, the necessity to seek for efficacy after a revision of degrowth's legitimacy from feminist and plural peace perspectives. After a revision of framing possibilities, the embarking onto a journey into the transrational approach has contributed in this respect is implicit in the clever shift that the transrational peace family proposes: By utilizing but

twisting known conceptions of peace, the transrational approach gives space to dialog and diversity in the realm of peace interpretations. A reference to diverse peace interpretations and the possible relations of degrowth towards these opens possibilities for a broad debate about what peace and its derivatives, such as a good life, mean for both, degrowth advocates and detractors. The search for a common ground can be a useful point which transrational peace perspectives have an ease for and which avoids the imposition of one absolute truth. A qualitative study of degrowth in relation to peace interpretations would be helpful to further explore these ideas.

The category of energetic peace interpretations which understand peace from the perspective of harmony can (and have been) criticized from post-colonial perspectives where certain epistemologies are relegated to the realm of the energetic and spiritual, while at the same being stripped from any claims to rationality. Such kinds of criticism merit attention and call for scrutiny of utilized concepts in the transrational approach. Apart from these pitfalls, it is nonetheless possible to look beyond these aspects to understand harmony as a basic aspect of peace, including the physical, biological, intellectual, and psychological process that are present in interpersonal encounters.

Focusing on this aspect it becomes apparent that peace interpretations that link to some understanding of harmony tap into a valued source of meaning that lies beyond the rational search for scientific truth. The emptiness that Onofrio Romano (2012) denounces as he claims that degrowth is merely a *teukein* (a technique) and fails to address the *legein* (sense of life) can be represented by, and interpreted from understanding degrowth from a peace as harmony perspective.

Moreover, it is particularly significant to place ideas such as Gloria Anzaldúa's spiritual activism in dialog with the transrational peace approach, since very similar notions are addressed. This for me shows that the transrational approach has much to gain

from engaging with feminist and decolonial literature.

The aspects I address in the last section of this chapter are relevant in that they represent a nexus between the lack of engagement with feminist and decolonial perspectives that the transrational approach shows and the previously identified missing gap in degrowth literature when it comes to feminist and decolonial perspectives a well as reflecting upon the deeper meaning of the life. Putting such disparate theories and approaches into dialog can be seen as an example of threshold theorizing (Keating, 2012). I do so in the spirit of taking the liminal opportunity of exploring unexpected combinations and new beginnings which can occur when moving "betwixt and between" (10) divergent spaces. Such ways of theorizing stem from the presupposition that all human and non-human existence is intimately and inextricably linked on multiple levels and in different ways.

CHAPTER 4—Discussion and Conclusion

When you reach the end of your resource then the magic happens. When we exhaust what we know then what we don´t know becomes possible.
Charles Eisenstein (2018)

Watch your mind. Without training it might run away and leave your heart for the immense human feast set by the thieves of time. Joy Harjo (2015)

4.1. Overall Summary

The thesis question that guided this work is:

How can degrowth be promoted through a feminist and plural peace perspective?

My motivation for researching this topic stems from a preoccupation with the multiple global interlocking crises in the economy, ecology, society and, most recently, public health realms that have exacerbated in the COVID19 crisis. Witnessing these has pushed me to seek theoretical and practical paths to engage in a profound revision of the ways in which humans interact with the environment and each other.

Hereby, I consciously situate myself as an intersectional feminist researcher in the Global North who engages with degrowth from a peace(s) philosophy perspective. The movement and activist-led science of sustainable economic degrowth shows how the dominant economic growth paradigm fosters societal and ecological disruption and also provides a matrix of practical alternatives that can enable sustainable livelihoods on Earth. It represents the motor of my research and main subject around which I organized my study.

Both, degrowth and feminism are movements and interdisciplinary theoretical fields that provide rich grounds for exploration; individually and together. Feminism has come a much longer way than the relatively recent degrowth movement that emerged in the 2000s. Degrowth however, draws from several other disciplines and traditions, including feminisms, for its theory. Yet, until the 2010s there was almost no literature on

degrowth from feminist perspectives and vice versa. In 2016, the Feminism(s) and Degrowth Alliance (FaDA) was founded. FaDA is a growing network of researchers and activists dedicated to exploring the alliances among them. Its aim is to make feminism an integral part of degrowth reasoning rather than just to "add women and stir" (Perkins, 2010: 5).

The main purpose of this thesis was to study how degrowth might be promoted, since the dominant growth paradigm does not seem to tackle the worsening crises with its means, and degrowth ideas remain quite marginal. However, in the analysis a preliminary step to be able to promote degrowth from feminist and plural peace perspectives is to enhance degrowth by critically reflecting upon its possibilities and limitations. The primary link between feminisms and peace is degrowth, yet I argue that it cannot be peaceful unless it is feminist too. The reason is that feminism is a transversal aspect of peace due to its commitment to gender equality and justice.

The research question of this thesis is complex because it adopts both, feminist and peace perspectives. Chapters 1 and 2 deal mainly with enhancing degrowth, as a pre-requisite to promote it, whereas Chapter 3 directly addresses the aspect of promoting degrowth by means of discussing communicative strategies to attract a broader audience. The overall thesis is written within a peace, conflict and development studies PhD program and is guided by a philosophy for making peace(s). The peace(s) philosophy perspective is presented in the section titled theoretical framework and deepened in Chapter 3. Chapter 1 introduces degrowth, its responses to crises, strategies, strengths and limitations. Chapter 2 is about the links that have been made, and which can potentially be made between specific kinds of feminisms and degrowth, in order to enhance degrowth. Hence, while feminist and degrowth studies overlap, I maintain degrowth as the main element of study in this work.

In the following section I discuss a series of findings, their relevance, meaning and contribution to the field that I have researched. These are presented in chronological order, except when I deem it important to highlight their connection with findings from other chapters.

4.2 General Thesis Discussion

Chapter 1 outlines degrowth as a response to a series of global interlocking crises. This part is derived from an extensive literature review and hence, is not novel. However, the way they are structured is worth commenting upon: I deliberately chose to divide the crises into four—economic, ecological, social and imaginary—and degrowth into three strands: bioeconomics strand, social strand and a strand of the imaginary. It can be seen that the essential shift that degrowth proposes is represented by the merged bioeconomics strand, as can be studied in the research field of ecological economics, that degrowth is nurtured by. An added crisis in connection to the aforementioned ones is the Coronavirus pandemic, as I hint at in the introduction and argue more in-depth in Chapter 3.

The division of the degrowth strands is that can be compared and contrasted with the three pillars of the much more widely applied dominant discourse on sustainability: economic, social and ecological (Fournier, 2008, Mensah and Casadevall, 2019). Here we can see that the degrowth approach includes, restructures and moves beyond typical sustainability discourses. Figure 8 illustrates this:

Crisis	Sustainable Development	Degrowth
Economic crisis	Economic growth	Bioeconomics: economies are embedded in ecological systems
Environmental crisis	Environmental protection	
Social crisis	Social equality	Social equality
Crisis of the imaginary	Economic growth is necessary to tackle all kinds of crises	Decolonizing our imaginary/ Imagining alternatives to infinite growth

Figure 8 Crises, Sustainable Development and Degrowth. Source: own elaboration

This thesis contributes by engaging in theory building through a hermeneutic and dialogical constructive process as described in the methodology section (I.3). Generally, I have intended to navigate and employ academic discourse in ways that amplify understanding for non-academic readers to bring theory and practice closer together. However, within the setting and purpose of obtaining a PhD, my pursuit of making an accessible piece of writing with a concrete contribution to a movement has remained limited within this specific format, due to requirements and institutional structures upholding certain standards of knowledge production and productivity.

With regards to the aim of fostering profound societal change, at this point it is pertinent to make a distinction clear: The critique of SDG's that I align with as a degrowth advocate is one that points at internal fallacies, inconsistencies and deadlocks of development discourses, including its newest version the Agenda 2030. The main problem of the SDG's from this perspective is linked to the continuation of the economic growth paradigm. In light of this, the original term sustainability is not an inadequate idea *a priori* but was hijacked by business as explained in Chapter 1. Hence, the need to search for alternatives.

At the end of Chapter 1 the strengths and limitations of degrowth are presented from a peace(s) philosophy viewpoint as outlined in the introduction. Each of the

strengths of the degrowth discourse can be considered as contributing to peaceful transformation in a way that growth friendly development approaches fail to achieve. The peaceful aspect of the transformation that degrowth proposes is embedded in the broad range of issues it covers and relates to each other systemically, as explained in the paragraph above. Beyond this, it is important to recognize that the way in which degrowth proposes change is very much compatible with certain ideas that inform the field of peace studies: starting peace from within, from the individual to the collective, in line with the Gandhian notion to be the change we want to see in the world (Gandhi, 2013), as explained in the introduction and in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 focuses on feminisms with certain traits to study how these could enhance degrowth. These are derived from my previous work (Bock, 2020, Bock, 2015) and explained in the theoretical orientation in (I.4): first, seeking gender equality, second, addressing the deep roots of patriarchy, third, being intersectional and fourth having a concern for nature. The feminism traits have served as guidelines to choose feminist discourses to dialog with in relation to degrowth. They can be put into relation with peace theoretical concepts, as particularly the second trait shows: As I address the deep roots of patriarchy, I posit that radical strands of feminism can in a way address not only direct and structural forms of patriarchal violence but also the underlying, often invisible, aspects of patriarchy, which could be considered cultural violence (Galtung 1990).

The fourth characteristic of feminism, namely to be in some sense concerned with ecology, makes sense in the same way it is logical for any life-affirming person to seek to protect the environment, since humans are at all levels dependent upon nature. Beyond this, in particular the parallel oppressions of women and nature are studied more in depth. While in this thesis the link of degrowth and peace is approached by means of ecofeminism, there are other ways by which the relations of degrowth and peace can be

linked to ecology. One is the emerging field called of peace ecology, which Randall Amster (2015) named his book after.

Chapter 2 presents a range of different feminist positions that resonate with degrowth. Materialist ecofeminism is compared and contrasted with so-called cultural ecofeminist positions. The pitfall of identifying ecofeminism with the idea that women are naturally closer to nature, often endorsed by cultural ecofeminists, has made many feminists and researchers dismiss ecofeminist theories altogether. It has also made many ecofeminists scatter into diverse other concepts researching and politicizing the intersections of politics, ecology, feminism and the economy.

Over the past decade, ecofeminism has been rediscovered and reclaimed within academia, with a clear non-essentialist stance (Gaard 2011). The Feminism and Degrowth Alliance thus focuses on materialist feminist contributions, to highlight its non-essentialist nature.

In light of this, I caution that an exclusive focus on materialist ecofeminist perspectives might have the tendency to miss out on some of the insights that other not explicitly materialist ecofeminist stances can provide. While an essentialist position is not only untenable from a scientific perspective it is also politically problematic since it forces women and men into a dichotomy that perpetuates the dominant model of patriarchal capitalist and colonial oppression, as explained further below.

Besides the tendency to essentialize womanhood, the allegations against cultural ecofeminism are that it lacks scientific grounding, uses unscientific language and is associated with the practice of neo-pagan rites and Goddess spirituality (Kaur, 2012, Merchant, 2017). These points are not acceptable from the perspective of scientific rigor and objectivity. However, cultural ecofeminist positions represent opportunities for mutually enhancing dialog and can even be considered as potential allies in action and

(Carlassare, 2000).

In this thesis, the study of ecofeminisms was conducted with the aim of finding kinds of feminisms that could enhance degrowth. The way that degrowth is enhanced is by adopting a feminist and peace perspectives. It could thus be said that the ultimate question that guided this dialog is: What kinds of feminism can make degrowth more peaceful? In this context, the *othering* of a specific body of ecofeminist seems violent from a peace perspective, due to the marginalization of and lack of dialog with diverging viewpoints.

In previous research from transrational peace perspectives I considered the value of promoting the *feminine principle* as a tool for meaning-making and for a revival of qualities associated with femininity, including alternative values for a different economy outside of the growth paradigm. However, situating this consideration within the patriarchal neoliberal modern capitalist mind set did not help to envision a concrete, successful manifestation of such an endeavor.

Thus, this dialogic and reflective process led to the insight that advocating the feminine principle devoid of any shift in collective consciousness about gender binaries would not be powerful enough to dismantle patriarchal and capitalist structures. Due to their marginality in comparison to the dominant patriarchal growth logic, they would rather be swallowed by these. Consequently, advocating a feminine principle would rather reinforce the division between gender and perpetuate inequalities. This idea could, for instance be used to continue to propagate the old, still prevalent idea that motherhood ought to be part of womanhood, which upholds the patriarchal and capitalist order.

If one were to be consistent with regards to this risk, then Mother Earth imagery and Goddess spirituality would not be recommendable to endorse, since within a patriarchal system these provoke a continuation of the subaltern positions of women and

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the Earth.

The problem that this represents is linked the concept of the coloniality of gender, coined by María Lugones (2016). The fact that any imagery suggesting a female connection with nature is dangerous to use because gender is interpreted as a binary, and femininity as subaltern, is in itself violent, patriarchal and colonial. Notions of Mother Earth and Goddess spiritualities are aspects most found in pre-colonial and current day Indigenous cultures that have remained basically untouched by monotheistic religion and modern science as described for instance in *The Death of Nature* (Merchant 1981) and *Caliban and the Witch* (Federici 2004). In this context, it has been argued, although also contested, that many pre-colonial cultures and certain contemporary peaceful societies do not exhibit patriarchal features (Lugones 2016), so that the link between femininity and the earth would evoke sacredness and respect.

The pull that many cultural ecofeminists have of reclaiming such principles and imagery, including spiritual practices, may be interpreted as a yearning for such pre-patriarchal relations. Their oftentimes anti-science and anti-technology stances make it difficult to enter serious theorization from social science perspectives. However, the deliberations of this thesis show that an upfront rejection of these should be and seek to learn through further dialog. In light of this, both, anti-science and technology as well as pro-science and technology stances would have to be critically revised as standards by which to legitimize certain theories.

In this sense, the statement by Carolyn Merchant (1990) "materialism, not spiritualism is the driving force of social change" (103) might make sense from a strategic or political point of view, since it avoids essentialism and prioritizes considering how the grosser, material aspects of being which can be seen and must not be ignored, including intersectional oppressions.

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However, the implications of such a statement further deepen the Cartesian split of body and mind, which I believe ought to be transcended by acknowledging the interrelatedness of the material and nonmaterial aspects of being. It makes more sense that thoughts create reality, in line with the tenets of political ontology (Escobar 2016). Anthropologist Mario Blaser explains three levels at which ontology can be defined (Blaser et al. 2013) operationally. The second level corresponds to the idea that thoughts can become things, since ontologies are realized or enacted through concrete practices, not just ideas or representations.

Considering the controversies with regards to ecofeminism in relation to binary thinking, this research has identified queer ecofeminism as a field and method for moving beyond dichotomies within feminist degrowth theory. Setting the queering of binaries as a priority can be a solution to dissociate values from specific binary genders. By its very definition to queer means to dissolve binaries and limitations as well as essentialist tendencies. This seems to be a much more urgent, peaceful and transformative task in the face of the master model of hetero-patriarchal-colonial-capitalist thinking, than aiming to enhance the lower half of a constructed binary. From a queer position, values such as care lose their gendered dimension and can gain a whole new meaning.

The last part of Chapter 2 identifies and classifies ways in which feminisms have contributed to degrowth discourse. The division into care, commons and subsistence perspectives has been useful as distinctions of different starting points through which to think of degrowth from feminist perspectives. However, they do not speak about separate parts but rather represent different angles of the same. One possible interconnection is among care and the commons. Bengi Akbulut (2017) argues that both ideas should be taken together as *commoning care*. This merging of these concepts is a proposal of revaluing care and beyond this, treating it as a resource to be shared in an equitable form

by all, since it is "arguably the largest and most fundamental commons on which all of us depend" (1), to which we owe our existence.

The notion of subsistence describes the feminist degrowth project more from a vision of life stripped of capital accumulation towards which degrowth can lead. This depends upon care and commons and has been there all along in societies and communities that have not (yet) been pulled into the vortex of consumerism, productivism and extractivism. The subsistence perspective proposed by the Bielefeld School importantly recognizes links between patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism.

This idea is also taken up by sociologist Boaventura de-Sousa-Santos in his seminal work *Epistemologies of the South* (2015). His work is a complex and highly interesting addition to think philosophically and practically about how we can know things, from the margins. One crucial idea underpinning his work is that there can be no social justice without cognitive justice (de-Sousa-Santos 2015, de-Sousa-Santos 2018). He refers to the idea that capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy work united in a system of oppression and violence, whereas the resistances are still too divided. Hence, the point is to forge alliances also between the resistances of these oppressive forces of the Global North.

Chapter 3 raises the question of how tangible social change can arise through degrowth. In other words how feminist degrowth can be effective. In this context, the results of dialoging the peace studies concept of the critical yeast as proposed by John Paul Lederach (2005) , in addition to Harald Welzer's (2013) view on social change, serve provide good reasons to target broader audiences. This work only allows to take one necessary step towards the much more complex process of forming a critical yeast, which represents a roadmap for social change. Continuing along this path is a research line in that ought to be further explored.

Both the unique role as a missile concept and the limitation of the word of degrowth deserve recognition. In the search for strategies to promote degrowth, there is an elemental distinction between the sense of a word and its underlying denotation, or meaning (Zalta, 1995). The results of discussing degrowth show that although degrowth is a path worth pursuing for peaceful transformation, it is important, but must not be limited to promote degrowth ideas under that slogan. Degrowth ideas (declared and undeclared as degrowth) overlap with related ideas from other theoretical and activist sources in a Pluriverse of initiatives and movements that resist the dominant growth paradigm, proposing livable alternatives.

In Chapter 3 the promotion of degrowth is discussed from a communication for peace perspective, specifically addressing framing principles to assess the different ways in which degrowth can attract a broader audience. This leads to several insights: Degrowth should continue as a missile concept rather than be replaced by other, more easily accepted concepts. Instead of staying in the either-or logic a *Yes, and* stance is adopted, where other frames for degrowth can complement the movement. Recognizing that the missile concept has remained limited to a certain group of supporters, a few other frames emerge that can help to describe degrowth differently, that can help to debunk possible misinterpretations and contribute to gain a broader public. Alternative slogans are discussed that share degrowth's underlying values but do not mention the concept. In both cases some are more in line with feminist thinking than others.

The feminist slogan of *poner la vida en el centro* (put life in the center) is a particularly powerful one that speaks about the interdependence and eco-dependence of human beings. Generally speaking, the Spanish speaking realm shows a number of important, sometimes alternative interpretations and insights for reflections on degrowth and feminisms that seem to more easily move beyond the limitations of degrowth

discourse in English. One of them is the suggestion to think in terms of an unavoidable material degrowth and the necessity to accept this reality and adopt measures to adapt peacefully. Further dialog between English and Spanish speaking degrowth literature could create some interesting synergies as it enhances the overall knowledge of the field.

In the search for frames that would help to reach a broader audience, certain contradicting imperatives appear: On the one hand it is important to resonate with the deepest feelings of the majority, to foster cultural efficacy (Nos-Aldás and Farné 2020). On the other hand, the point of degrowth is to shift common sense, and it seems as if only by challenging economic growth provocatively against majority views, there is space to speak about alternatives.

An example in which the framing dilemma comes up is in the proposal of framing it as *independence from growth*. This frame shows that the context matters in which the term independence is placed. From a feminist and peace perspective the glorification of human independence in general should be replaced by an acknowledgement of radical human interdependence. However, independence from growth rather resembles an understanding of independence from addiction to something unnecessary for survival, which is harmful in larger quantities. In fact, dependence would be seen as addiction and independence in this sense would refer to freedom from addiction. As Illich already claimed in 1973, "growth has become addictive" (98), manifested as consumerism and productivism, which rely on increased resource extraction and pollution. It has been studied that the latter can precisely be gained through a restoration of community ties (Alexander 2015).

Although this research is not empirical, it is contextualized since it integrates the current situation of the Coronavirus pandemic into the picture in relation with the other concepts utilized. The findings hereof are that the frame of care is much more peaceful

and efficient in terms of propagating the types of attitude needed to face the pandemic, as opposed to war-like frames that refer to control, war, fighting and winning. It is striking that a care frame has been proposed as an alternative in media and literature for lay audiences. This resonates well with one of the feminist degrowth perspectives proposed. The reflections made upon the basis of these few materials provide a basis for future empirical research on the reception of degrowth frames before and after the emergence of the Coronavirus. It would be to study the ways in which degrowth is portrayed and examine public reactions to it.

As a further theoretical contribution that could open a possible future empirical research path is the transrational approach to peace due to its diverse reasons to endorse degrowth because of plural peace interpretations. In other words, putting degrowth in a plural peace perspective might allow to frame it differently to resonate with different people.

The usage of different framing ideas is based upon a number of premises: Every human at an individual level desires peace. However, humans interpret peace differently, depending on their cultural and historical contexts as well as individual experiences. Peace interpretations have been researched and grouped into different families (Dietrich 2012). If the desire for peace is common to all human beings and positive peace interpretations resemble ideas of *buen vivir* or a good life, then peace interpretations and interpretations of a good life are likely to be taken from the same angle. In this sense, the elements of harmony, justice, security and truth proposed in the transrational peace approach can orient the search for diverse audiences for a degrowth perspective. Reaching a broader audience would entail touching upon these issues in relation to degrowth. However, the transrational approach as exposed in Dietrich's *Many Peaces* Trilogy is also worthy of criticism due to a lack of consideration for decolonial and

feminist voices. A dialog with such voices is thus a necessity and enriches the transrational approach.

Nevertheless, from the discussion of the angles of the four peace themes several insights arise that hint towards new lenses through which to consider degrowth. While peace as justice remains central to degrowth reasoning, the other peace interpretations challenge degrowth to take a position and dialog with preoccupations that are reflected in the terms: security, truth and harmony. Whereas each of these peace families is linked to historical and cultural contexts researched by Wolfgang Dietrich, it is within the transrational peace family that they find a communion and the necessary flexibility to serve in the degrowth context. This flexibility entails understanding concepts in ways that they are not usually understood. For instance, the understanding of peace as security would have to transcend traditional connotations of militarization and be linked to relational needs, threatened by climate and social crises due to human interdependence and eco-dependence. Such transrational twists allow for the exploration of common ground through dialog and across perspectives that tend not to engage with each other, thereby broadening degrowth's discursive capacities.

In the last part of Chapter 3 I introduce Gloria Anzaldúa's (2015) idea of spiritual activism and her notion of magical thinking (Keating 2008, Keating 2016). These theories from the margins serve as a nexus between the missing of engagement with feminist and decolonial perspectives of the transrational approach and the previously recognized gap in degrowth when it comes to both, feminist and decolonial perspectives as well as a reflection upon the deeper meaning of life. In this context, I consciously choose to propose a dialog among these different theories as an example of threshold theorizing, since they in part resonate with each other and in part contradict each other.

4.3 Overall Conclusions

The dialogic, hermeneutic analysis and constructive theorizing undertaken in this thesis have shown that the activist-led science of degrowth can benefit widely from being considered through feminist and plural peace perspectives. In broad terms, feminist perspectives can enhance degrowth by making it more just, and plural peace perspectives can help to promote degrowth by means of communicative strategies and as a profound reflection on the deeper meaning of how degrowth relates to peace.

The feminist perspective of this thesis has allowed for an exploration of the links between different kinds of ecofeminisms, feminist economics, decolonial feminisms and queer (eco-)feminisms. Feminism is to be understood in plural due to the heterogeneity of inner frictions and disagreements among its advocates. From a plural peace perspective, feminist contributions to degrowth have been explored in a critical, dialogic and yet constructive way. Despite valid and important inner discussions and contradictions among distinct positions within ecofeminisms, for instance, it seems necessary to foster a strategic alliance among these.

The feminist contributions that have been made to degrowth address central topics such as care, commons and subsistence perspectives, which can be seen as overlapping themes that emerge from feminist theorization and ought to become an integral part of degrowth reasoning. The theme of care has recently gained more prominence as the Coronavirus pandemic has shed light upon existing gender inequalities related to basic, lifesaving and feminized and undervalued, care work. The theme of care is a particularly fruitful for further exploration due to its relevance for degrowth as well as peace studies.

Putting feminism and degrowth into dialog with one another in a peace framework has opened pathways that call for further exploration. For instance, degrowth is a valuable addition to peace, conflict and development studies since it presents itself as a radical

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non-violent alternative to development discourses. Rather than being one homogenous proposal, degrowth must be seen as a matrix of alternatives with a certain kind of discourse, emerging from specific self-reflective contexts of the Global North and yet inextricably linked to the Global South.

Degrowth is as connected to epistemologies of the Global South as it is to feminist theories in terms of the sources of its original understandings. The interconnections of degrowth with adjacent movements and theoretical discourses ought to be acknowledged and dialoged humbly and with a good dose of self-reflection. Among others, a possible broader framework to consider degrowth part of is given by the Zapatista concept of the Pluriverse and a large range of alternatives which together resist dominant discourses that evolve around the dominant growth paradigm.

The starting point of this thesis was philosophy for making peace(s), along with the epistemological shift provides an excellent framework to conduct value-based research. In this case, the notion of openly admitting that we research peace because we desire peace is transposed into the idea of researching degrowth because we desire peace.

Degrowth is deliberately not positioned as an end in itself. Instead, this thesis has shown that degrowth can be seen as, among others: a process towards a steady state economy (a means for an end and much more); an approach critically (re)thinking how we can live together in harmony with nature and each other—that is, a critical path that identifies problems and proposes solutions—a practical and theoretical path that connects diagnosis and prognosis, *what is* with space for *what if;* a concept that does not seek to prescribe what a good life is but leaves space open for democratic deliberation on this matter; a challenging twist and new alternative to Western universalized development discourse, questioning current expressions of democracy and justice; a stepping stone towards peaceful livelihoods.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

This work is to a large extent theoretical although it intends to make practical contributions to the intersecting fields of degrowth and feminism from a peace(s) perspective. There are several points I have marked within the thesis that invite further research. One fundamental aspect is that it would be pertinent to flip the research question and place the focus on the feminist movement, to question what degrowth considerations could contribute to feminism.

The desire of bridging theory and practice has been addressed in this work and remains a work-in-progress. For instance, whereas I seek to support intersectional and decolonial thinking, this would require a deeper scrutiny of concepts that I use as well as dialoguing more with literature to realize this intention. For example, the use of patriarchy as a singular term might at times convey the mistaken image that patriarchy is separate from capitalism, colonialism and other forms of oppression.

Gaining a conceptual sharpness to specify what kind of patriarchy I am referring to each time, as well as how I understand the relations between gender inequalities and other systems of oppression by applying the analytic sensitivity of intersectional thinking, is a major undertaking that would certainly influence the future of my research. In other words, coming from a white Euro-modern background myself, I recognize the need to further deconstruct such universalizing tendencies that the usage of concepts such as patriarchy, nature, traditional which are fraught with a colonial or white supremacist legacy. A deeper engagement with the ways in which imperialist white supremacist patriarchy functions would probably help to make my own intersectional thinking become sharper and reflect more in my writing.

Moreover, a main part that I believe requires empirical research is my proposal of finding diverse ways of framing degrowth. It would be useful to study how the concrete framing proposals that I have collected affect emotions and attitudes of different publics. The question that arises is how to identify the differences among the public, in other words, by what criteria different people should get interested in degrowth so as to make it common sense. Using the four quadrants from transrational theory representing an inventory of peace interpretations is one possibility—yet this ought to be tested and compared with others. Alternative classification could rest upon Schwartz's theory on values (2012), which has been widely tested and adopted across different cultures. Studying the underlying values of degrowth supporters would be helpful as a basis for consistent framing strategies and to raise awareness within and outside the realm of degrowth's value priorities.

Finally, the notion of relational ontologies deserves much more attention and cross-pollination with degrowth research. The limitations that I have identified within the degrowth theory concern its ontological narrowness. Yet the scientifically sound interdisciplinary approach has given degrowth the legitimacy and recognition as a serious academic field with a clear normative standpoint. The strengths of degrowth lie in its sharp focus and as a countermovement to growth, as this way it cannot be hijacked. The question should not be about how to make a just, peaceful degrowth transition happen but about alliances among different dialoging movements that seek to challenge and provide multiple alternatives to the dominant obsolete growth paradigm and all the harmful consequences that come with it.

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