

# ECOVILLAGES AS INCUBATORS FOR DEGROWTH?

## A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON DEGROWTH IN THE AARDEHUIS-OLST ECOVILLAGE



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# Colophon

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## Abstract

Nowadays, six out of the nine Planetary Boundaries have been transgressed as a result of human activity. Degrowth, although it has been perpetually contested, surfaced as a viable alternative to tackle economic growth and prevent a complete ecological breakdown. The interest in ecovillages has soared in the previous decades due to the increasing need for more sustainable lifestyles. Many claim that ecovillage communities facilitate as laboratories, social, sustainable and degrowth practices. This research delves into the understanding of the ecovillage-concept in connection with the degrowth theory by conducting a case study on a Dutch ecovillage, Aardehuis-Olst. Through conducting interviews and field observations, the study shares a deeper insight using Fairclough's (1992) Critical Discourse Analysis of how degrowth is being practiced and talked about in the community. The most paramount feature of the thesis represents the uncovering the alignment with Parrique's '15 Principles of Degrowth' and how they appear in the community. The results have suggested that vocabulary, as discourse tool, represents the true values of the residents of the ecovillage. Even though some misalignments were detected to Parrique's (2019) principles, linguistic analysis shed light on Sharing, Value sovereignty and Relational goods being the most relevant and present degrowth principles.

**Keywords:** degrowth, ecovillage, Aardehuisen, CDA, delocalization.

## Preface

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Maria Kaufmann for her valuable guidance, continuous support and for always keeping me to the point. Most importantly, I am profoundly grateful for her patience towards me throughout the whole research process. I felt lost great many times, but her thought-provoking questions and remarks always directed me to the right track.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background and research trajectory

Academic scholars have established that humanity is greatly overshooting the planetary boundaries (PBs) and is now on the verge of ecological breakdown, irreversible climate change, and biodiversity collapse (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015; Steffen et al., 2018; Hickel, 2020b; Lenton et al., 2020). The planetary boundaries framework more specifically identifies nine so-called ‘processes’ without which the long-term maintenance and longevity of our planet is incomprehensible (Richardson et al., 2023). All of these nine processes are presently heavily impacted by human activity. The model by Rockström et al., (2009) and Steffen et al., (2015) aims to delineate and quantify different levels that – if respected by the human race – allow our planet to exist in its ‘Holocene-like’ state. In their framework, Rockström et al. (2009, 2023) initially established safe and just boundaries – so called Earth System Boundaries, or ESBs – at sub global and global scales for: *“Maintain[ing] and enhanc[ing] the stability and resilience of the Earth system over time, thereby safeguarding its functions and ability to support humans and all other living organisms”* (Rockström et al., 2023, pg. 2). Climate EBS has been identified based on the minimizing of the likelihoods of overstepping our planets’ maintenance of its own biosphere and cryosphere functions and to stay below the oftentimes-mentioned 1,5-2 °C temperature rise/increase (Rockström et al., 2023). As an outcome of the exploiting and continuously destructive human actions have given rise to the epoch, which scholars identify as Anthropocene (Waters, 2016; Zalasiewicz et al., 2017). By definition, Zalasiewicz et al. (2017) identified Anthropocene as: *“... a time interval marked by rapid but profound and far-reaching change to the Earth’s geology, currently driven by various forms of human impact.”* (Zalasiewicz et al., 2017, pg. 56). In 2018 O’Neill et al. published a paper which is viewed as the first study attempting to determine and prove whether fitting and living life within the PBs would be theoretically possible (O’Neill et al., 2018). The scholars mapped 151 nations based on existing relationships in their social performance and resource use (Hickel, 2019a). They found that there was not a single country that would have met the most basic needs for its citizens at a globally sustainable level of using resources and although many wealthy nations – countries of the Global North (GN) – may

excel at social indicators, they significantly transgress biophysical boundaries (O'Neill et al., 2018; Hickel, 2019a). On the other hand, though, poorer nations – Global South (GS) countries – seemed to perform quite the contrary by showing strong data on biophysical measures, but lacking the social performance (O'Neill et al., 2018). O'Neill et al. (2018) adds, if humanity's goal is to live a happy and good life within the PBs, it would mean for provisioning systems to be fundamentally reconstructed to facilitate basic needs to be met at a significantly lower level of resource use (O'Neill et al., 2018). All in all, Hickel (2019a) argues that GS countries can theoretically achieve existence within PBs by using existing policy options, whereas GN nations can accomplish the same, but they must incorporate and comply to degrowth strategies – and reducing their environmental footprints by at least 40-50% (Hickel, 2019a).

The pressing problem of exploitation, climate change, inequality, and unsustainable resource use are calling for a shift to post-growth and degrowth strategies (Rockström et al., 2009; Hickel, 2020a). The voices of ecological economics envision a future where economic growth is not the number one governing principle and also not feasible in the long-term (Schneider et al. 2010). Hickel (2021) defines degrowth as: “*A planned reduction of energy and resource use designed to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being*” (Hickel, 2021, pg. 1). The controversial concept of degrowth is elaborated on in detail in Chapter 2, under 'Literature Review'. While degrowth serves as the core concept of this thesis, it is important to understand competing ideas. The idea of degrowth is oftentimes compared with and perceived as an alternative to the phenomena of green growth (GG) by many academics (D'Alessandro et al., 2020; Hickel and Kallis, 2020; Buch-Hansen and Carstensen, 2021; Parrique, 2021). Following the OECD's (2011) definition on green growth, it involves: “*fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that the natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies. To do this it must catalyze investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities.*” (pg. 9). Hence, green growth symbolizes a less radical transformation, compared to degrowth. Furthermore, it centers technological and political ‘fixes’, innovations and developments within the existing capitalist systemic logic (Fiorino, 2018). However, Vogel and Hickel (2023) argue that green growth remains attached to economic growth, making it unsatisfactory to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, even for high-income nations. Similarly to Vogel and Hickel (2023), Hickel and Kallis (2020), along with Parrique (2021) conclude – based on empirical evidence – that in

order to stay within the 1.5-2°C boundary requires radical transformations, with scenarios such as degrowth offering the only feasible solution.

In the degrowth literature, relocalization of ecovillages is presented as a widely accepted strategic approach helping a transition to a degrowth society (Latouche, 2009; Xue, 2014). Ecovillages are often described as being organized around - and as realizing - the lifestyle envisioned and promoted by degrowth (Xue, 2014). These communities deliberately rebuild local connections, renew commons-based practices and actively search for ways to enhanced well-being, and economic degrowth; this has become inherently valuable in reshaping the society (Levitas, 2013). Growing concerns about environmental damages and environmental justice have come to the forefront of intentional communities, like ecovillages (Lockyer, 2017). At the same time, however, the transition towards a degrowth society cannot be achieved by everyone relocating to rural ecovillages, yet these experiments can publicize their endeavors to motivate other actors (Lockyer, 2017).

As a critical approach, degrowth lacks well-defined, practical interpretation. Only a handful of studies have dealt with the connection between this paradigm and the ecovillage movement, especially those that focus on the discourses of different ecovillage stakeholders. Weiss and Cattaneo (2017) found knowledge gaps, when monitoring general degrowth domains and the assessment of their impacts. As holding relevance to this thesis, the authors found 5 academic, peer-reviewed and frequently recited publications on the domain of 'Housing' (Weiss and Cattaneo, 2017). Moreover, most existing literature only offers vague insights into the degrowth-ecovillage connection and their monitoring merely mentions ecovillages as a degrowth-initiative, many times without detailed analysis or specific case studies (see Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010; Lietaert, 2010; Xue, 2014, Lockyer, 2017). This research intends to address this gap by analyzing degrowth within the frame of a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on an ecovillage in the Netherlands, namely Aardehuis-Olst. Following the presentation of the core characteristics of degrowth, and the introduction of the 15 'Principles of Degrowth' by Parrique (2019), a short historical review on what to know about ecovillages will be showcased. The thesis takes on trying to comprehend how degrowth is being practiced at the previously mentioned intentional community, Aardehuis-Olst and how residents follow, envision and value different objectives in order to live more democratically, sustainably and autonomously (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010, Kallis et al. 2018).

Throughout the analysis of the ecovillage community the research aspires to disclose meanings behind values towards achieving sustainability, but more importantly degrowth, thus the ecovillage-concept can be alternatively further analyzed, understood and embedded into action.

The aims of this thesis have pointed towards the inquiry on the following research question and sub-question:

- **How Parrique's (2019) degrowth principles are disclosed within the Aardehuis-Olst eco community?**
  - o What – subconscious, but degrowth-related – reasons are behind people's decisions on living in this community?

## 1.2. Scientific relevance of the research

The degrowth theory lacks guidelines and hands-on examples about its implementation, and its monitoring which calls for more practical illustrations (Tseverenis, 2023). During the research process it has been found that there is only a limited amount of academic literature centering exemplifications (such as a specific ecovillage project) about the ecovillage phenomenon in connection to degrowth. Jansson and Rodhe (2009) found – when examining the degrowth-ecovillage connection in 3 Swedish villages – that the two ideologies have indeed similarities on a theoretical level, however, the biggest difference was on the spiritual dimension which is not emphasized in the degrowth concept. On the framework and concept of discourse in connection with the ecovillage-concept, however, Lennon and Gunnerud-Berg (2022) conducted research in case of a Norwegian ecovillage, exemplifying further, that scholars have found the interlink between the two concepts. Similarly, Lockyer (2017) also identified relation between the two by analyzing energy use, water use, etc. in an eco-community illustrating that such intentions are able to align with degrowth-traits by decreased consumption and maintenance of a happy life in the Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. Most importantly, however, these studies lack the explicit academic and analytic framework or remain rather vague. A substantial representation of this is Ergas's (2010) study that takes on the perception of *sustainability* goals in an ecovillage where the term sustainability has the shortcoming of being overly broad and scarcely tangible. Despite the increasing number of academic contributions, there is not enough overlap between the degrowth paradigm and the ecovillage initiative, which serves as a good basis for this research to be conducted. Fundamentally, the ecovillage presents

numerous signs of an ideal post-consumerist and post-capitalist society, strengthening the local-centric perspective of degrowth (Mocca, 2019). Still, Mocca (2019) argues that on the one hand, degrowth lacks an organic and clear theoretical framework of propositions, on the other hand, it comes short on how to achieve it.

The research investigates and maps the outcomes of the research sub-question (see above); these outlined motives are given a degrowth proposal category based on the work of Cosme et al. (2017). Thus, the thesis offers additional and valuable input about diving deeper into motives of ecovillage residents. Moreover, it supports and justifies the choice of the analyzed degrowth principles of Parrique (2019) (see in Chapter 5.) illustrating their relevance in the Aardehuisen. By contributing to the growing body of literature about real-life applications of degrowth, the most vital contribution of this recent thesis is the analytical stance that combines degrowth represented by Parrique's (2019) analytical framework, The '15 Principles of Degrowth', with the Aardehuisen ecovillage as practical example. Throughout these logical and coherent sets of points this research provides clear insights how a democratic, socially and ecologically just community operates, while being embedded in the mainstream world.

### 1.3. Societal relevance of the research

This research draws from the very core of bottom-up initiatives thus making it relevant for all levels of society, including ecovillage-residents, other stakeholders, and representatives, policymakers, but also the Global Ecovillage Network<sup>1</sup> in general. Other ecovillages or the GEN-NL have the opportunity to explore further ways to live more ecologically and socially friendly. Moreover, the study showcases many practical and technological features from the Aardehuisen that are proven to be ready to be implemented on broader levels of society (e.g.: reed bed filtration system for water purification, or the conscious building of the community). This resonates with Temesgen's (2024) claims, namely that understanding and analyzing ecovillages can help and serve as social inspiration for post-consumption and post-capitalist practices, implementing circular models of a community on smaller-scale level. The way the Aardehuisen operates, as well as the form of lifestyle its residents promote, serves as a possible

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<sup>1</sup> During the interview with the representative of the Dutch branch of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN-NL) the researcher was requested to share his work with the organisation upon completion, to add to the body of previous research on ecovillages, collected on the organisation's website as well as to serve as a guide for interested parties.

model for future policymaking on a municipal level. With its characteristics ecovillages are associated with higher quality of life, enhanced well-being, co-existence with others as well as with an improved work-life balance (Avelino and Kunze, 2009). A crucial part of the societal relevance of the thesis on the one hand is to bring degrowth and the ecovillage initiatives out of the shadows of academics, activists, or environmental policymakers. On the other hand, it wishes to translate the abstractedness and oftentimes intangible nature of degrowth through a hands-on, holistic case study. Moreover, Lockyer (2017) claims that different actors must collaborate in order to lead a morally grounded, degrowth-oriented transition (Lockyer, 2017).

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. What to know about degrowth

#### 2.1.1. Emergence

In the beginning of the 1970s the debate about the idea that human activity will eventually reach a certain point of its limits became a global issue with the publication of *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972; Cosme et al., 2017). The authors warned that there are several limits of not only the extraction of natural resources, but also the capacities of the Earth's ecosystems to absorb the exponentially growing pollution of the transformation of lands and materials (Cosme et al., 2017). The paradigmatic proposition of degrowth assumes the possibility that human development and progress are feasible without growth (Schneider et al., 2010). By definition: “*Degrowth is a planned reduction of energy and resource use designed to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being*” (Hickel, 2021, p. 1105). Degrowth (‘*décroissance*’ in French) was first launched as a project for voluntary cutback of consumption and production that envisioned social and ecological sustainability at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and it quickly turned into a trademark phase against economic growth (Bernard et al., 2003). Martínez-Alier et al. (2010) argue that certain aspects of degrowth thinking can be traced back and run parallel with the appearance of ecological economics, but it is more closely interrelated to the specificities of the French degrowth movement. ‘*Décroissance*’ made its presumably first appearance in the previously mentioned ‘*Limits to Growth*’ report, carried out Meadows et al. (1972) to the Club of Rome (Demaria et al., 2013). According to Latouche (2006) the contemporary degrowth

movement was born from at the junction of two other movements, namely political ecology and the concept of development criticism. The term became an activist slogan in France in 2001, in Italy in 2004, and Spain in 2006 (Demaria et al., 2013). But what about the English term, degrowth? It first officially entered into the mainstream academic discourse in 2008, after a degrowth conference was held in Paris. This date also marked the birth of degrowth as an internationally acclaimed research area (Demaria et al., 2013). Finally, the so-called ‘Golden Age’ of degrowth started in the year of the Paris Agreement (2015), which triggered a cycle of international conferences and research to be conducted, as well as the establishment of global research networks and education programs (Parrique, 2019). As a result, nowadays a small piece of the general public has started to open up to the conception that economic growth might not be the be-all and end-all of human existence (Parrique, 2019).

### 2.1.2. ABC of degrowth

After introducing the reader to the roots of degrowth, the research proceeds to give a short overview on the theory. Degrowth is a normative concept with numerous analytical and practical applications. It introduces different disciplines from which degrowth research agenda derives, thus exemplifying the incredibly vast and versatile recognition of the concept (Kallis et al., 2018). Ecological economists endorsed the degrowth approach as something that is likely to entail lessening the aggregate economic activity, currently measured by the GDP (Hickel, 2019b). Proponents of this shift from traditional prosperity-measurement tool believe that the planned reduction of the material throughput can be accomplished within nations producing higher income per capita, while maintaining, or even further improving living standards (Hickel, 2019b). As previously introduced in Chapter 1., in theory, this paradigm shift would be feasible, but must happen correspondingly to lower consumption, production and resource use (O’Neill et al., 2018, Hickel, 2019a). However, degrowth scholars understand that the above-proposed reduction in the aggregate throughput is likely to lead to a decreasing GDP data (Hickel, 2019b). As a result of economists’ and policymakers’ firm belief in equating GDP with human progress, and improvement in well-being, it is sensible to conclude that GDP decline also entails decline in well-being, however, this is far from the truth (Hickel, 2019b). In reality, degrowth is not a recession, since it does not call for the shrinkage of the economy but urges a transition to a different form of economy (Hickel, 2019b).

## 2.2. On ecovillages and their role in a degrowth society

Chapter 2.2. solely focuses on the brief historical development and definition of ecovillages while searching for and understanding their place and role within the concept of degrowth.

In recent decades, a set of emerging movements have grown in significance, amongst others the ecovillage, or eco community movements (Boyer, 2015). There are multiple definitions, but most of them agree that they are envisioned as permanent human settlements with an ideological commitment to creating positive solutions and to coming up with alternative ideas as an answer to recent, global, environmental crises (Gilman, 1991; Dawson, 2006). The ecovillage-movement is one of the examples existing and constantly surfacing small communities of people that intend to build a sustainable community aspiring for more environmentally friendly way of living (Ergas, 2010). However, to identify from where ecovillages derive from, firstly, the concept of the intentional community needs to be understood. These are defined: *“As group of people usually at least five individuals, including some not related by blood, marriage, or adoption, who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values”* (Kozeny, 1995, p. 18; Smith, 2002; Ergas, 2010). Also, according to Smith (2002) and Herring (2002) these communities have the characteristics of sharing ideologies, beliefs, values, resources, knowledge (Herring, 2002; Smith, 2002). Intentional communities, thus ecovillages too, put cooperative management of their own shared resources into the focus of their existence and cluster around forms of common property holding. Other intentional community endeavors such as cohousing communities intend to reduce their residents’ negative environmental and social impact by substituting common property with shared walls, utilities, recreation space for private property as *‘distinctly bounded individual households’* (Lockyer, 2017, pg. 523). For the implementation aspect, ecovillages carried out many activities during their evolution process, including diverse ways of self-reliance, decentralization and spiritual enquiry (Sigh et al., 2019). It also derives from the so-called Back-to-the-Land Movement, from the 1960s and 1970s (Daloz, 2016). The initial thought was to establish intentional communities that are based on consensus building, collective thinking and paving the way for a shared vision on the future, without advocating for the mainstream, globalized and consumerism-based ways of living (Sigh et al., 2019). However, countless of these utopian communities were unsuccessful as a result of varying reasons, such as poor infrastructure, poor healthcare, hard and nature-dependency of agriculture, unanimous nature of decision-making and exclusion of strong economic base (Mare, 2000). Following the

establishment of the Gaia Trust in 1987, a continuous evolution of intentional communities started, all of which included the topics of ecology and environmentalism, ecofeminism, renewable energy resources, and integration of traditional cultures and sustainability (Mare, 2000). In 1993 the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) was established with the aspiration of formulating a network of sustainable communities and sustainable living, but it also aimed to promote several NGOs that stimulate ecologically friendly and alternative technologies (Sigh et al., 2019). Above all, the most essential belief of GEN is to share socially, ecologically and economically sustainable knowledge amongst the member communities.

To conclude, degrowth and the ecovillage movement – which echoes Xue’s (2014) argument that sees ecovillages as the right spatial settlements for a degrowth society – are closely intertwined. Xue (2014) further adds: *“Even though the concepts of urban village and ecovillage have originated without explicitly referring to degrowth, they seem to be able to develop social, economic and political activities and modes of lifestyle in line with the imaginary of a degrowth society largely based around localism.”* (Xue, 2014, pg. 132).

### 2.3. Theoretical framework – The CDA

As far as the theoretical framework is concerned this thesis applies the Critical Discourse Analysis, shortly CDA. Discourse analysis when used in research, aims to deduct claims about phenomena or issues based on interpretation of written and spoken text (Jaipal-Jamani, 2014). Hajer (2006) describes discourse as *“an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices”* (Hajer, 2006, p. 67). Discourse analysis has the ability to answer ‘how’ questions, but it also allows the researcher to see how the different discourses define a problem (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). CDA – as a form of discourse analysis – enables the analyst to go way beyond analyzing texts for patterns and social interactions (Gee, 2005; Jaipal-Jamani, 2014). Jaipal- Jamani (2014) also adds: *“When the interpretation of text, occurring at multiple levels, using tools of analysis that go beyond one discipline—transdisciplinary tools—converge, a claim for validity of interpretations in discourse analysis can be made. Validity as transdisciplinary convergence, therefore, presents a credible way to validate discourse analysis.”* (Jaipal-Jamani, 2014, p. 806). The CDA brings the critical tradition into social analysis and focuses particularly on the discourse examining how different discourses define problems, like nowadays’ growth-centered economy (Hajer,

2006; Fairclough, 2013). CDA not only describes the discourses but also evaluates them whether they represent pathways towards a just and decent society (Fairclough, 2013). CDA then helps to analyze how stakeholders of Aardehuisen define (by language and through spoken text) and practice degrowth, and help to understand the evaluation of values of ecovillages with characteristics of degrowth while reflecting on them critically. After the brief introduction on the CDA, the 3-dimensional representation of discourses by Fairclough (1992) will be presented – highlighting the discourses as *text* –, as Figure 3. illustrates below:

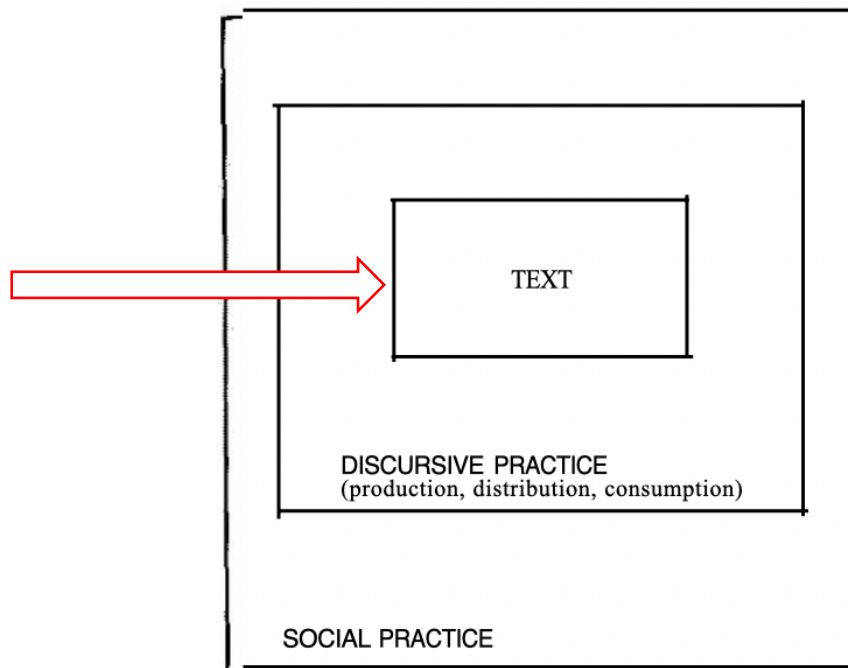


Figure 1: The 3-dimensional model of the CDA (Fairclough, 1992 pg. 73.)

The theoretical framework of this Master’s thesis utilizes solely the first/inner dimension of the model (indicated by the red arrow on Figure 1.); it analyses *discourses as texts*, to be more precise, what is being said and how – representing the micro level of the analysis. To justify this choice, the main sources of data for this thesis mainly consist of in-depth interviews – their transcripts – but also field observations. Fairclough (1992) adds that close textual analysis represents a linguistic understanding on how the principles of degrowth are composed by stakeholders and whether they legitimize or resist these principles. Essentially, the data of this thesis derives from the focus of linguistic traits, – such as conducting interviews with non-native speakers in English –, hence a wider examination of the discursive and social practices would probably result in unsubstantiated outcomes. A hypothesis of the research is that degrowth mostly happens subconsciously in the Aardehuisen. Examining language, expressions, word use holds great potential for these underlying discourses to be revealed, also

because the main source of data consists of coded, semi-structured interview transcripts – as indicated above. The coding process is built around ‘The 15 Principles of Degrowth’ following Parrique (2019) that reflect values of the Aardehuisen, which are encrypted in the (spoken) textual dimension of Fairclough.

To conclude, after Fairclough’s (1992) claims the study intentionally focuses on examining how language of stakeholders assembles meanings on degrowth principles and values. Critical approaches in text analysis of discourses assumes that the signs are socially motivated, moreover, they examine the vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and structure of texts (Fairclough, 1992). Additionally, Fairclough (1992) distinguishes three further ‘levels’ for text analysis to complement the previous four, thus forming 7 headings of theoretical structure:

- 1) ***Vocabulary*** deals with individual words, and how it unveils ideologies
- 2) ***Grammar*** focuses on words forming clauses and sentences, and on who acts
- 3) ***Cohesion*** is responsible for the interlinkage of those of the previous headings,
- 4) ***Structure*** handles larger scale texts, and exposes the layout of texts,
- 5) ***Force of utterances*** show the intentions of the communication
- 6) ***Coherence*** promotes the meaningfulness of the texts between shared ideologies,
- 7) And ***intertextuality*** emphasizes direct or indirect references to (external or internal) ideological beliefs and values.

These strong 7 points further provide the backbone of the analysis and support the researcher towards the understanding of the main research question, which places fundamental emphasis on comprehending how Parrique’s (2019) most relevant principles appear in the Aardehuisen, later in Chapter 5.

### 3. Conceptual framework

This section of the Master’s thesis describes the analytical framework (Parrique’s 15 ‘Principles of Degrowth’). As final point, the visualization of the conceptual framework developed will be showcased. Essentially, it leverages Parrique’s work and Fairclough’s guidelines of CDA (1992) into a novel tool towards analyzing discourses as texts, on how degrowth appears within Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage, and whether these discourses align with Parrique’s guidelines.

The lack of analytical and theoretical embeddedness in ecovillage-research – as discussed previously related to degrowth discourses – highlights a key deficiency in the field. As Fairclough (2013) claims, discourses are not independent entities we can define; in order to do this we have to analyze a set of relations, such as relations with objects from the physical world, persons, power relations and institutions. Discourse thus brings in the greatly complex relations of social life, namely meaning and meaning making (Fairclough, 2013). Subsequently, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is not the analysis of discourses, but the analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other elements, objects, or moments; hence CDA is a transdisciplinary form of research (Fairclough, 2013). This thesis employs these points directly, since it explores and evaluates how language of stakeholders relate to several principles of degrowth. Moreover, CDA’s primary focus is on the effect of power relations, ideologies in producing “*social wrong*” (Fairclough, 2013, pg. 8). Finally, academics utilize the term ‘critical’ in CDA, which stands for the assessment of “*what exists, what might exist and what should exist on the basis of a coherent set of values*” (Fairclough, 2013, pg. 7). This research seeks to present how meaning is given through language to the coherent sets of values of degrowth, such as Resource sovereignty, Sustainability, Circularity, Sharing, or Gratuity – see Table 1. below (Parrique, 2019). For the purposes of this thesis Parrique’s (2019) ‘15 Principles of Degrowth’ provides strong potential as the framework for the analysis to be conducted. Parrique (2019) frames these principles: “*An institutional map under a degrowth regime that writes down the rules of the game in a degrowth society*” (pg. 272). Although these rules were initially purposed as guidelines towards a degrowth economy, they can be re-interpreted for this research to provide protocol when examining the Aardehuis-Olst community. Parrique’s (2019) work ‘*The Political Economy of Degrowth*’ – with its approximately 800 pages is solely dedicated to summarizing and investigating degrowth from every possible angle – encapsulates these principles deriving from the combination and summary of existing degrowth literature. Based on that, it does not only offer a clear and solid set of analytical points, but it also proposes a toolbox for the researcher to code the transcriptions. Eventually, these value-driven points align with the general characteristics of ecovillages, stressed in Chapter 2.2. above, such as promoting voluntary simplicity, experimenting sharing and circular solutions and emphasizing relations amongst residents, individuals and nature.

<b>Parrique's (2019) degrowth guidelines</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>1) Resource sovereignty</b>	Be a steward of nature
<b>2) Sustainability</b>	Never deteriorate supporting ecosystems
<b>3) Circularity</b>	Waste not, want not
<b>4) Socially useful production</b>	What is not needed should not be made
<b>5) Small, non-profit cooperatives</b>	People and planet, not profit
<b>6) Proximity</b>	Produce local, consume local
<b>7) Convivial tools</b>	Technology as a tool, not a master
<b>8) Postwork</b>	Work less, play more
<b>9) Value sovereignty</b>	Wealth is nothing but stories
<b>10) Commons</b>	Decide together
<b>11) Gratuity</b>	Communities instead of commodities
<b>12) Sharing</b>	Sufficiency for all, excess for none
<b>13) Voluntary simplicity</b>	Outwardly simple, inwardly rich
<b>14) Relational goods</b>	Less stuff, more relationships
<b>15) Joie de vivre</b>	If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your economy

*Table 1: The analytical framework (after Parrique, 2019)*

However, Parrique (2019) emphasizes that these elements consisting of the framework are not fundamentally new; rather they were built and systemized from extensive prior research on degrowth. However, the researcher has not encountered any academic research that employs these points for analytical framework. By ‘*ordering the degrowth toolbox*’ (pg. 318), Parrique offers potential to examine a local degrowth initiative represented by the Aardehuisen, hence extending the hands-on, practical examples of the concept (Tsevrenis, 2023). Alongside these guiding principles of degrowth, the main research question can be answered (*How Parrique's (2019) degrowth principles are disclosed within the Aardehuis-Olst eco community?*). Furthermore, as an addition to the original ‘15 Principles’ the researcher extended the analysis by one additional inquiry of the thesis to answer the sub-question. Broadly speaking, it aims to lay down the foundations by giving examples, to what individuals of a society would need to commit to, to move towards achieving a degrowth society. The analysis of the sub-question also offers an introduction to understand from where the stakeholder discourses on degrowth originate and presents whether the discourses related to degrowth emerge deliberately or subconsciously. By contextualizing the different motives and backgrounds, discourses can be better understood, but it also foreshadows the reason behind focusing on the 7 most relevant degrowth principles during the analysis – see Chapter 4.2. for detailed explanation.

Conclusively, the merger of above introduced analytical framework and the theoretical framework pointed the research towards the visual portrayal of the final, conceptual model for the data analysis:

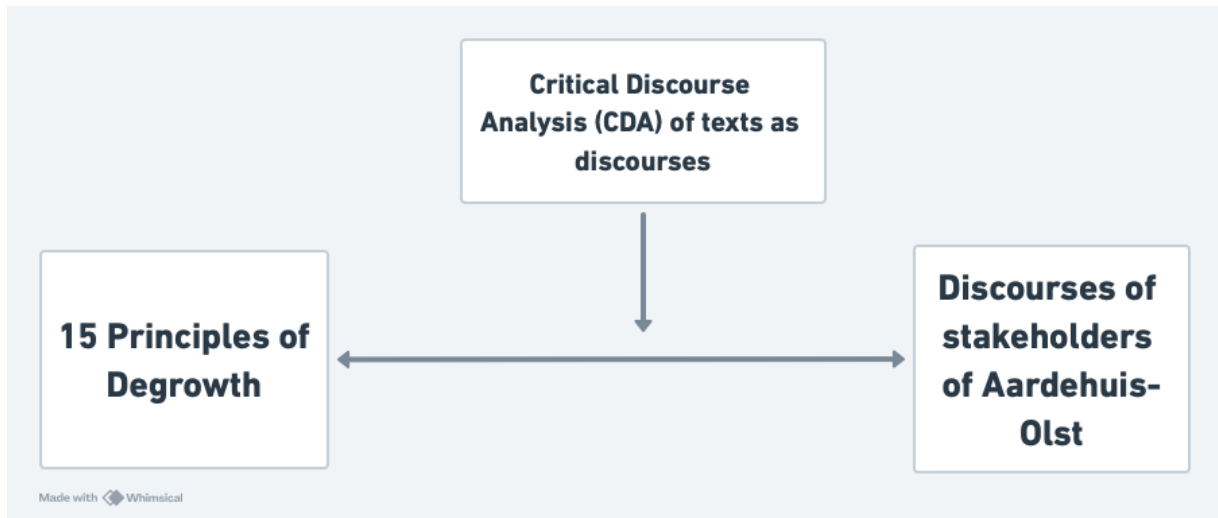


Figure 2: Conceptual model of the thesis – own edit (made at Whimsical.com)

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. There and back again: The case description of the Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage project

**“Building, working and living in harmony with nature, in connection with each other and to inspire the world”**

*-The mission of Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage (Vereniging Aardehuis, 2025)-*

This section presents an outline on the subject of the case study, namely the unique Aardehuisen ecovillage, – in English, the ‘Earth houses’, or ‘Earthships’ – as its residents shortly refer to it, is located in the small town of Olst, between Arnhem and Zwolle; somewhere towards the Northern segment of the Netherlands. It belongs to the municipal region of Olst-Wijhe that presently consists of around 18,000 inhabitants (CBS Statline, 2021). The location of Aardehuisen was consciously selected during the planning process, considering the proximity

of the ecovillage and the easy accessibility of the Dutch railways. According to the Aardehuisen-website, it is composed of currently 35 children and 40 adults living in 23 residential houses, with 1 community building, called the Middle house. The rarity and the distinctiveness of these dwellings are that they were built by the current residents themselves and with the help of volunteers from all over the world, mainly from second-hand materials (Vereniging Aardehuis, 2025). However, according to the interview with the founder of the ecovillage project, it turned out that only a couple of families are left living there from the original group of people who participated in the building process.



*Figure 3: The Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage from a bird's eye view - with the village of Olst in the background (Huls, 2023)*

The initial idea of establishing the community reaches back to 2005-2006, when the founder of the village and the ‘father’ of the initiative had the opportunity to participate in a similar Earthship-building process in Sweden, from where he came back with many positive experiences and numerous ideas. Thereafter, he held a successful line of presentations, later the idea spread like fire across the Netherlands. Subsequently, with the establishment of the ‘Association of Earth House East Netherlands’ the project was officially launched. In 2007 a feasibility study was conducted on how the Earthship-concept could be made to align with Dutch specifications, therefore, a technical (regarding materials, construction, alternative technologies), a legal (on safety building from car tires) and a financial plan was made in order to meet all the municipal, regional and national requirements (Vereniging Aardehuis, 2025). The Earthship concept that originates from the USA from architect Michael Reynolds, is a construction that builds upon the usage of waste and locally sourced building materials and is usually designed for self-sufficiency (Machado, 2024; ORIO Architecten, 2025). Around 2009, the group unanimously and collectively decided on the ‘ORIO Architecten’ architect office to lay out the plans and the design that was needed for the construction works to be started. ‘ORIO

Architecten' specializes in ecological and sustainable architectural design and pays dedicated attention to bring together people and nature (ORIO Architecten, 2025). These traits all align well with what the concept of degrowth represents, such as voluntary simplicity, localism, living an ecologically friendly life in harmony with nature. Regarding the construction site, the Olst-Wijhe municipality welcomed the project and facilitated everything that needed for the establishment: *“From the beginning, we took the initiative seriously and looked for ways to make it possible within existing regulations. We see it as a flagship project that contributes to our (and broader) sustainability goals. We actively supported zoning changes, permits, and infrastructure.”* – stated the Supporting Sustainability Advisor of the municipality on their relationship with the Aardehuisen project. *“As a municipality, we strongly value community-driven development. We believe in empowering residents who take initiative and work collectively toward a better, more sustainable future. Their proposal wasn't just about building houses—it was about creating a way of living that aligned with ecological and social values.”* — she added. Finally, the challenging and prolonged building process lasted from 2011, until 2015, when the last piece of the puzzle - the Middle house - was declared of being finished,. It took 4 years, 5,500,000 euros of investment to create the final outlook, shown on Figure 3 above (Vereniging Aardehuis, 2025).

## 4.2. Research strategy and design

The research strategy consists of conducting a case study on the Aardehuis-Olst. The previous subchapter dealt with the introduction of this unique and pioneer community and presented what eco-friendly living could in the mainstream capitalist and consumerism-focused society possibly look like. It integrates different forms of renewable, alternative energy sources, a smart-grid system, rainwater harvesting and waste recycling systems (Machado, 2024). These features are mirrored in the material practices of Parrique's (2019) degrowth principles, thus justifying (reinforcing?) the subject of the case study. Not only the residents, but other stakeholders were also generally open to sharing their ideas and thoughts during interviews, which can also strengthen the reason of choosing this location. In spite of being well-known nationally and promoting solid environmental, ecological and socially sustainable values, little research has been done on the ecovillage examining degrowth discourses.

During the research process it became evident that the core values of the community align well mostly with seven degrowth practices – as argued and listed by Parrique (2019) in section 3 –,

Sharing, Commons, Gratuity, Relational Goods, Voluntary simplicity, Value sovereignty, and finally the broader topic of Sustainability. Highlighting these principles ensures that the conclusions of the CDA echo the lived, situated reality of the ecovillage rather than focusing on the less relevant propositions. Since the CDA investigates the linguistics on degrowth in this case, the research aimed to concentrate on what principles participants perceived as key during the interviews. The community openly communicates its way of operating, forms of decision-making and its utter dedication towards strong ecological living. Conclusively, these traits encouraged the researcher to delve deeper into the understanding of how stakeholders of the community, especially its local residents give meaning to degrowth-related discourses based on spoken words and their language. After Mills et al. (2017) the scope entails an in-depth case study for which multiple sources of evidence were analyzed for comprehension and breadth of inquiry. This research utilizes qualitative research methods. The ultimate aim of a case study research is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue to better understand it from the participants' perspective and language on degrowth, which strengthens the application of Fairclough's (1992) CDA framework (Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Simmons, 2009; Yin, 2014). According to Flyvbjerg (2011), case studies help understand processes and context as well as their underlying causes; this helps the researcher to uncover ideas and discourses behind ecovillages and degrowth practices. For the most relevant 7 principles – based on the accumulated number of times a code of a principle appeared during the coding process–, several descriptive quotes from interviews were chosen then examined in detail using the 7 levels of Fairclough's (1992) text and discourse analysis. These results were then compared to Parrique's (2019) claims to illustrate how they are implemented and talked about and whether there are any signs of alignment or misalignment with of Parrique's arguments (2019).

This thesis is grounded in 10 semi-structured and in-depth interviews and 4 on-site field observations as main sources of data collection. For further insights and explanation, Chapter 4.4. explores how data was collected and subsequently processed, while the next section introduces the research philosophy.

### 4.3. Research philosophy

When it comes to executing academic research, defining what the relationship is between the researcher and the research that is carried out is pivotal. To better comprehend this relationship the description of the research paradigm guides the way. These philosophical perspectives are a basic set of values and beliefs that lead and guide action (Moon & Blackman, 2014). It is

viewed as something that underpins the way the research is conducted and “*influences how a researcher creates knowledge and derives meaning from their data*” (Moon & Blackman, 2014, p. 1173). During this research the researcher utilizes constructivism as research philosophy. Advocacy and activism are both compatible with constructivist philosophical perspective, which holds that multiple forms of knowledge can co-exist although these constructions require continuous reflection and revision (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Moon & Blackman (2014), individual motivation within a community is a central focus of analysis. At the same time, the researcher must also be aware of the different interpretations held by community members. Highlighting these different perspectives is vital in order to comprehend the underlying differences and similarities within the group. This serves the core aspirations of this research well as it allows for a better apprehension of how language is used in different interpretations on degrowth.

#### 4.4. Data collection

Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews – with the sample size of 10 interview subjects consisting of open-ended questions – and 4 field observations in the Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage. The semi-structured interviews have the strength to bring forward commonalities and shared understandings of participants, but also different viewpoints, while being flexible and spontaneous (Karatsareas, 2022). Other than corroborating or challenging their knowledge, the researcher can establish new knowledge through the relatively open-ended questions (Karatsareas, 2022). Before conducting the interviews, a thorough identification took place, which provided a stakeholder analysis (see Appendix 1) of the most crucial actors of the ecovillage project, thus a more diverse approach of interview selection was established. Despite the stakeholder map’s initial content and its many actors, the researcher failed to reach some of them in spite of repeated attempts. Therefore, interviews were conducted with 5 focus groups from the map: founder, residents – these two representing the most vital groups –, GEN-NL, municipality, and architect. The criteria of picking interviewees were for the person to be either a resident (does not matter for how long, but preferably for more than a year), or an actor who works (or used to work) closely with the ecovillage and is aware of its operating values. Although for each sample group a seemingly altering Interview Guide was prepared, all of their cores were structured alongside the 15 ‘Principles of Degrowth’ in support of the coding process.

As far as the observations are concerned, the researcher had several opportunities to visit the premises and conduct inspections. These participant observations in real-life settings also expose inherent and non-verbal parts of the discourse, thus they provide backbone context for this Master's thesis. For the last observation, a protocol was prepared beforehand which facilitated the researcher in order to keep the focus on the core topic of the study (see Appendix 2.). However, the tours of the residential buildings and their premises happened unexpectedly, hence no specific observation guide was created; the researcher simply took field notes.

On both qualitative, data-collection methods, the researcher kept logs, which maintain the necessary details about the inquiries, see Tables 2. and 3. below:

Code name <sup>2</sup>	Age	Gender	Highest education	Occupation	Duration	Interview type
GEN-NL Rep/I-1	66	female	University degree	Food forest designer and seed saver/General coordinator of the GEN-NL	58 minutes	online, MS Teams
Village Rep/I-2	57	male	University degree	Self-employed; Representative of the Ecovillage Aardehuisen/Educator and consultant	1 hour 25 minutes	on-site, The Middle-house
Resident 1/I-3	52	female	University degree	Coach, counselor	38 minutes	on-site, The Middle-house
Resident 2/I-4	<i>timeless</i>	female	University degree	Artist, chef	41 minutes	on-site
Resident 3/I-5	34	male	University degree	Decorator and brand/graphic/spatial designer, event designer	52 minutes	online, MS Teams
Resident 4/I-6	57	female	University degree	Project manager for an environmental organization	53 minutes	on-site
Resident 5/I-7	48	male	University degree	Social worker, artist	58 minutes	on-site
Resident 6/I-8	67	male	University degree	Pensioner (Previously company doctor)	40 minutes	on-site
Municipality Rep/I-9	28	female	University degree	Supporting Sustainability Advisor at the	-	written answers to list of questions sent via email

<sup>2</sup> Although throughout the interviewing, transcribing, and the coding processes the researcher used the longer code names, this study further applies the shorter versions (I=Interviewee) – for the sake of clarity.

				Municipality of Olst-Wijhe		
Architect/I-10	52	male	University degree	Architect, company owner	49 minutes	online, MS Teams

Table 2: Log of the conducted interviews

No.	Location	Code name	Duration
1	Aardehuisen	House of resident 2	10-15 minutes
2	Aardehuisen	House of resident 5	10 minutes
3	Aardehuisen	House and residency of Resident 6	25 minutes
4	Aardehuisen	Ecovillage	1 hour 40 minutes

Table 3: Log of the field observations

Table 2 shows that the 10 interviewees were between the ages of 28 and 67 and consisted of both males and females, all of them having degrees, while the conversation lengths varied between 38 minutes and 1 hour and 25 minutes. The researcher utilized a purposive, but also snowballing, or chain sampling strategy to understand the different discourses of different stakeholder groups (Robinson, 2013). To be more precise, the latter strategy of Robinson (2013) “*Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich*” (Creswell, 2018, pg. 225). The sampling strategy, hence, adds more value to the research, as it focuses not only on the discourses of the residents, but also on those of other stakeholders.

Table 3 presents the observations that were conducted by the researcher. The first 3 of them took place in 3 different residential buildings, whereas Observation No. 3 incorporated a demonstration of the garden around the premises, a self-constructed, pilot-phased water-circulating irrigation system, a small fish farm and the smart grid system with 230 solar panels to power the whole village. Observation No. 4, on the other hand, included a full tour of the ecovillage, where the researcher was shown features such as the straw bale and car tire walls of the buildings, the community garden, or the reed-based, natural water purification system.

The 15 degrowth principles from Parrique (2019) simultaneously inspired the Codebook that was created in Microsoft Excel in order to structure and group the raw sets of data. Furthermore, after the interview and observation processes, the conversations were transcribed adopting the tools offered by Microsoft Teams. During the data analysis, the coding software Atlas.ti was

employed to generate codes within the interview transcripts. The utilization of this coding software facilitated the creation of individual codes, and code groups throughout the process. Within these groupings, subcodes were assigned to the core code (when necessary) to narrow down the inquiry to those topics that Parrique (2019) considered relevant. At the beginning of sections dealing with the examination of the chosen 7 principles, small tables forecast the center topics of analysis.

As a disclaimer, for all the interviews permission to use the data was obtained through consent forms that were sent out before the interviews and were signed by both the interviewee and the researcher. For the participant observations, verbal agreements were made for gaining access to the information.



*Figure 4: A car tire wall and the community garden in Aardehuis-Olst (own pictures of the researcher)*

#### 4.5. Validity and reliability of the research

Gee (2011) collects requirements to critical discourse analysis to ensure strong validity: convergence, agreement (external confirmations), linguistic details, coverage. Jaipal Jamani (2014) further developing the validity regarding DA and CDA adds the following criteria to Gee's work: semiotics (how humans make meaning to signs), systemic functional linguistics (language as a servant to social function) and critical theory. Critical theory, which is a form of CDA explains the current social reality, but also it challenges the recent social phenomena, while recognizing actors that have the ability to bring about transformative change (Jaipal Jamani, 2014; Tsevrenis, 2023). In addition, Huckin (1997) makes a connection between the (social) constructivist research philosophy and the CDA, arguing that many CDA practitioners assume that people's notions and language – apart from their individualist traits – of reality is largely constructed through interactions with others. According to scholars, constructivism is

embedded in qualitative analytic approaches, therefore, it validates the choice of using the CDA on this case study (Mills et al. 2017). For the research to be valid and reliable there is high need for the philosophy – constructivism –, the conceptual framework (Parrique’s principles and Fairclough’s CDA), research design, data collection and the analysis all to align in order to represent the initial aim of the research, hence providing trustworthiness and conceptual validity (Stake, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stewart. 2014; Yin, 2014). Moreover, Robinson (2013) found that heterogeneity in sampling also contributes to the reliability and validity of the findings. He also suggests that in-depth case studies should use a sample size between 3-16 participants (Robinson, 2013). Guest et al. (2006) points out the principle of data saturation, namely when after a certain point, additional interviews would have resulted in repetition – especially in a small-sized community, like the Aardehuisen – of rather similar themes and language use on degrowth principles in the case of the research. Mason (2010) argues this further by advocating for the detailedness and the in-depth understanding of qualitative case studies, which also justifies and validates the number of interviewees.

## 5. Results and analysis

Chapter 5. is appointed to present the outcomes of the CDA – the linguistic analysis of interview transcriptions as texts – applied on Parrique’s (2019) degrowth principles in order to define how meaning is given by participants and stakeholders of the Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage. During a short examination, a decision was made in the initial phases of the analytical process. More precisely, only those 7 principles that were the most frequently mentioned, or highlighted during the interviews and the coding process, are being eventually investigated (see Figure 5. – *the code groups are labeled with the same color*). Further, grounded on the analysis, these principles were also proven to be the most relevant in the participants’ discourses. Respectively, these principles are – all representing and were dedicated a subchapter – Sharing, Commons, Gratitude, Relational Goods, Voluntary simplicity, Value sovereignty, and finally the broader topic of Sustainability.

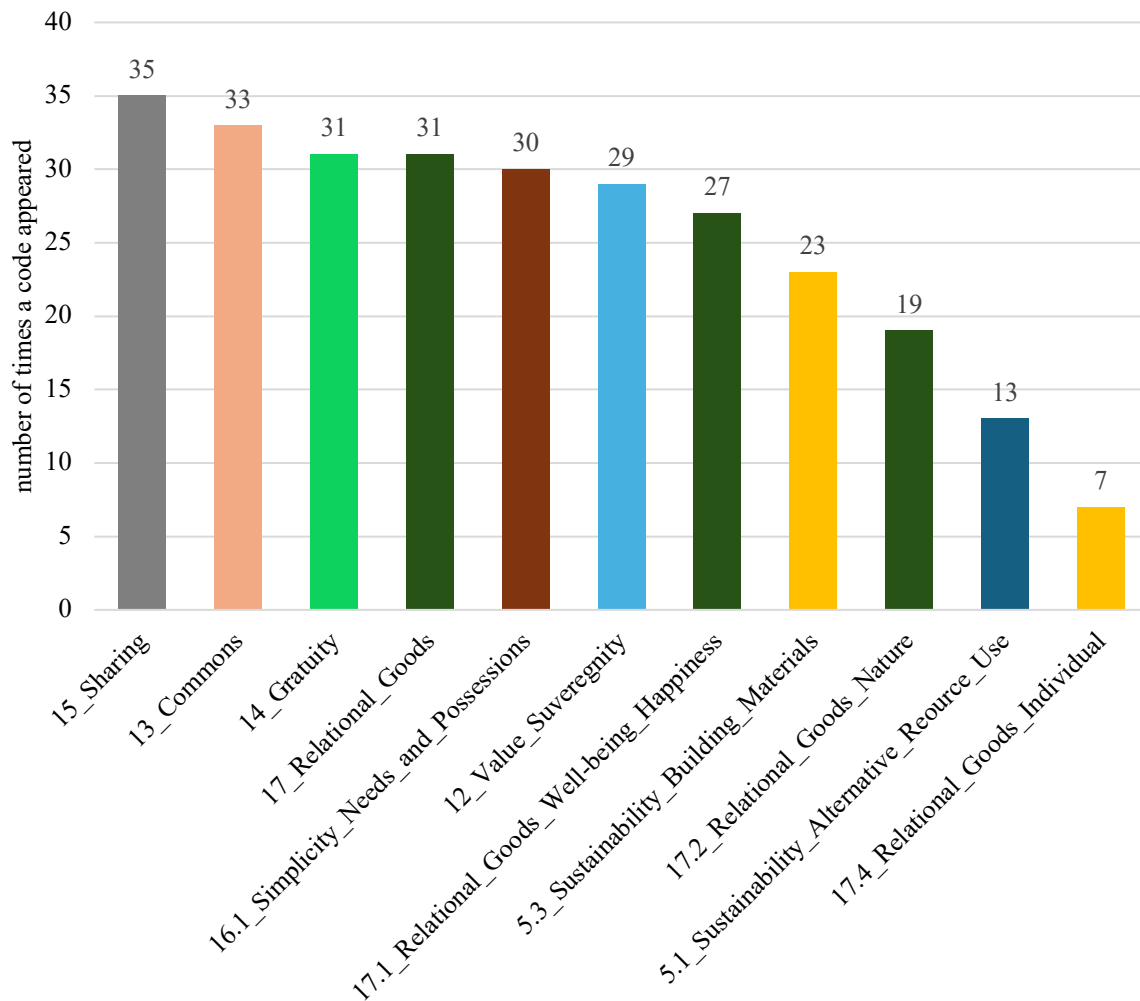


Figure 5: Frequency of the 7 most relevant codes – own edit

Before diving into the analysis, as an answer to the subquestion of the research (*What – degrowth-related – reasons are behind people’s decisions on living in this community?*), this thesis provides a visual presentation on this matter, while offering additional and valuable input to further understand the individual and collective values of ecovillage residents. The analysis of the subquestion also brings an understanding of the respondents’ discourses on degrowth and illustrate whether the discourses related to degrowth emerge deliberately, or subconsciously. By placing different motives into context, discourses of stakeholders can be better perceived, while it also foreshadows the reason behind focusing on the 7 most relevant degrowth principles in the analysis. In order to make them relevant to the concept of degrowth, and embed the findings into the academic research, the following highlighted quotes will be paired to the findings of Cosme et al. (2017), who closely investigated and mapped degrowth proposals. The Social and Environmental-related categories are represented by 5 examples

each out of many answers, whereas Economic reasons were only mentioned 3 times during the interviews.

Reason category	Interview subject	Example quote	Degrowth proposal category (after Cosme et al., 2017)
<b>Social</b>	I-1	“A big one definitely is also the social reason. People see that we are living much more and more separated and in isolation, especially elderly people.”	Invest in the restoration and strengthening of local communities
	I-2	“Away from the city and being connected to more people because where we lived there in, in the city, we had very kind neighbors but we, but we were not very close.”	Invest in the restoration and strengthening of local communities
	I-3	“So yeah, that that also shows how how, how special this place is. Like it's not something we really actually only moved for, for only for this house and this community. There is no other reason that we would would have moved in to this part of the Netherlands because we don't know anyone there.”	Promote shared living spaces (with shared chores) Invest in the restoration and strengthening of local communities
	I-7	“The reason for for me was to be able to to construct a community with people. Having more or less the same view.”	Promote frugal, downshifted lifestyles
	I-8	“Yeah, it's a new start. Fresh start.”	-
<b>Economic</b>	I-1	“I think that many people also have the strong feeling that the present economy, the present lifestyle is not functioning anymore and maybe even will collapse in the near future. Or not so near future.”	<i>Too vague to categorize</i>
	I-9	“Self-sufficiency: control over energy, water, and food., Cost savings: lower fixed costs through sustainable systems.”	Promote the recognition and management of common goods
	I-10	“...and to fit it into a certain price range to make it affordable so that that was one. One of the things because it's a very affordable. House and I had access for affordable. So that that was one of the things that people attracted to it.”	<i>Could fit into the broader topic of equal access to goods and services</i>
<b>Environmental, sustainability-related</b>	I-1	“The equality is also important part to connect more with nature, to live a simpler life. To more ecological, more eco based materials. But people who want to live more ecological don't necessarily enter an ecovillage.”	Promote the restoration of ecosystems Reduce energy consumption

	I-2	“The whole idea of being cheap, relatively cheap and you can do it yourself. And locally sourced as much as possible, all those things.”	Create incentives for local production and consumption
	I-3	“And at the time I was organizing a conference. Different kinds of leaders in community work in African parts of Africa. And I remember one day I was having a shower and I was realizing this was drinking water that I was having a shower with. And then an hour later, I would be speaking to people who would have to walk for half a day to to get to drinking water. And that felt very, very off, yeah.”	Reduce waste generation Reduce energy consumption
	I-4	“And also, I really wanted to live in a sustainable home much more than the home where I was actually living. So then this came along as an opportunity and I jumped in both feet.”	Decrease the number of appliances and volume of goods used or consumed per household
	I-7	“for our kids to grow up with other kids in a green safe environment.”	Improve social security

Table 4: Reasons behind people motivation to choose to live in the Aardehuisen

Later these motivations are connected to and embedded into a specific degrowth goal established by Cosme et al. (2017) after their peer review of 128 articles on the concept and related schools of thought. According to the authors’ findings, the majority of the goals in Aardehuisen are reached on the local level and fall into the category of bottom-up initiations (Cosme et al, 2017). These motives can be further classified into the broader degrowth Goal 3, namely ‘*Promote the transition from a materialistic to a convivial and participatory society*’ (Cosme et al., 2017, pg. 326). The data analysis for the subquestion and conducting the interviews have directed the structurization of the results towards a 3-dimensional ‘model’ (see Table 4) consisting of 1) Social, 2) Economic and 3) Environmental/Sustainability-related broader motives. The results to the research subquestion have demonstrated that the economic motives are less relevant within the focus group as opposed to the more social or environmental ones of degrowth. Economic reasons were not mentioned nearly as much as the other ones, which brought this study to the conclusion that they are less fundamental in the Aardehuisen. The social reasons are seen to be: closeness of the community, easy access to practical and emotional support, and safety. The language of degrowth translates this into **1) Promote shared living spaces, 2) Invest in the restoration and strengthening of local communities and 3) Promote frugal, downshifted lifestyles** (Cosme et al., 2017). As far as the environmental/ecological motives are concerned this study identified living in harmony and close to nature is crucial to degrowth– however, a strong factor were the mental health and

well-being strengthening capability of nature –, using alternative resources, lowering environmental footprint. In degrowth’s schools of thought, these reasons unveil **1) Promote the restoration of ecosystems, 2) Reduce energy consumption, 3) Create incentives for local production and consumption, 4) Decrease the number of appliances and volume of goods used or consumed per household, and 5) Improve social security** (Cosme et al., 2017). After thoroughly examining the interviews, economic motives revolve around financial feasibility and affordability. In Cosme et al.’s (2017) language this can be categorized to **1) Promote the recognition and management of common goods and the broader topic of 2) Equal access to goods and services** (housing in this sense).

## 5.1. Sharing

This section includes the analysis of the first, most relevant and present principle in Aardhuisen, *Sharing*. In this context, ‘most relevant’ covers the fact that Code 15 was found quoted the most frequent during the interview coding process, precisely 35 times.

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
15	Sharing	-	What are the sharing practices that are typical in the village and why are they important. How do sharing proposes to contest the traditional ownership.

Table 5: *Sharing principle, Code 15 (source: Codebook)*

Sharing is No. 12 on Parrique’s (2019) list of the 15 principles, as he puts it, “*Sufficiency for all, excess for none*” (pg. 317). He distinguishes between 3 different changes in order to achieve *Sharing*, with the first change being the organization of utilization of products (tangible and intangible) in a collective manner, which is highly represented in the Aardhuisen. The second change entails the ability of repairing what is broken, whereas the third stands for shifting from ownership to use of service (Parrique, 2019). The latter is also remarkably conspicuous in the ecovillage just as number one, therefore, the research focuses on analysing examples on these discourses.

Quotes – Sharing		
“Yeah. Well, for us, the most valuable thing we share is knowledge, I think. There's always someone in our village. It's that knows the answer of our questions.” I-5	“But one thing that's that we started with, for instance is getting rid of many washing machines, for instance, there's eight or nine households that share two washing machines” I-2	“...when we moved just to the house, we ordered a new ladder like we needed a ladder. We ordered some tools and we just ordered them because we didn't have time. Directly we got like from a lot of neighbors. I mean, we have it all here. Why did you buy it?” I-5

Table 6: *Example quotes on ‘Sharing’ principle*

The current investigation represents a clear and firm correlation between the principle – and also the three main changes, especially change number one and three – on *Sharing* and of those discourses appearing in the language within the ecovillage community. The **grammar** analytical level postulates that sharing is a collective action that is widely accepted; this is echoed by countless mentioning of ‘we’ and ‘our’. **Vocabulary** of discourses reflects the true values behind sharing in Aardehuisen. Words – such as ‘share’, ‘valuable’, ‘getting rid of’ – represent underlying values, as well as the strong opposition against capitalism, ownership, or overconsumption. An additional quote by I-3 strengthens this point: “*also indirectly that you share a view and that enables you to to make adjustments in your lifestyle.*”. **Vocabulary** illustrates again (‘adjustments’) that strong ecological living happens quicker if one’s surroundings influence one. Opposition against consumption is also depicted when looking at the **cohesion and coherence** levels; both of these imply shared intentions and the embeddedness of unspoken rules of degrowth. **Intertextuality** appears subconsciously, while interviewees refer to degrowth values linguistically. The discussions with residents further revealed that they share both tangible objects, such as cars – in a formal and an informal way –, bicycles, tools, clothes, food, spaces, but also intangible items, like knowledge, expertise, care and support. To exemplify the latter, I-6 noted: “*And (...) when my neighbor here over here, she fell off a horse and broke her shoulder. She needed help for cooking, cleaning, getting dressed, getting showered. That was shared online and people put in their names behind in the schedule and it was taken care of*”. This quote – especially the **grammar** and **vocabulary** level of CDA – robustly backs up the intangibility aspect of sharing practices, and what value voluntary-based sharing truly holds. Moreover, this aspect was mentioned by 2-3 more times by different interviewees too. However, when we take a closer look at the example of carsharing, the opinions vary among the interviewees. The majority of residents have their own cars, and seldomly take advantage of the carsharing option. For instance, I-7 claims something that seemingly goes against the fundamental values of sharing: “*We have a car again. We two years ago, we decided (...) to stop having a car. And we use the community’s. (...) So it’s very nice for close by, but we decided to stop with that and buy another set of second hand car again, yeah. I noticed in the past I thought it was (...) a little bit guilty when driving in a car, but for me that is not any I don’t have that anymore.*” The last sentence presents a straightforward example of a misalignment with Parrique (2019), or opposition with this degrowth value in the community, but also one of the main setbacks of carsharing platforms in general. The residents’ language echoes dominant values of substituting possessions for collective utilization, which sharply aligns with Parrique’s (2019) perspective on the principle

of *Sharing* although there are examples of contradictory practices. What is more, during an interview I-4 stated: “*I have my own washing machine, but I can use the the one which from there for everybody. It's just a choice I made when I started here and maybe when it breaks down I'm not buying a new one.*” Via this example it becomes clear that traditional ownership can be downscaled and one can move towards sharing. It solely depends on the individual’s decision, which is depicted by **vocabulary**: ‘choice’ and the **force**: ‘I’m not buying a new one’. The third quote in Table 6. was added in order to exemplify how the discourses of new residents (those who unintentionally bought a ladder during the construction of the roof) contradict with those who have been part of the community for longer periods and are in possession of a stronger, more embedded ideology on sharing. This is expressed through **force** and **cohesion** with the voice of the community being almost astonished from the lack of awareness of common values ‘Why did you buy it?’.

All in all, *Sharing* is clearly and deeply implanted in the discourses of stakeholders and residents. Apart from the contrast with carsharing, opinions reflect the same values and all point to the same direction.

## 5.2. Commons

In this part of the analysis the research illustrates the outcome of the CDA on the second most relevant topic of the coded discussions, namely *Commons*, appearing 33 times in all transcripts as the topic of the conversation.

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
13	Commons	-	How decisions are made in the village and what practices, habits, forms of decision-making are in operation; also, how do people perceive these, or how they see their value and success (as opposed to e.g. traditional, bigger-scaled decision-making processes)

Table 7: Commons principle, Code 13 (source: Codebook)

Parrique (2019) describes *Commons*, taking after Bollier (2014), as different paradigms that wish to interlink community with social practices, values and norms that are used to manage a resource. Moreover, it is also perceived as systems of governance, sense-making and managing (Bollier, 2014). Resource should be understood on a broader level and should include anything being of social value, whereas community – or association (De Angelis, 2017) – represents a group of people in relation with one another (Parrique, 2019). Resources can become

commons, if a community manages it and is able to establish a protocol that everyone abides by (De Angelis, 2017). As a specification to the core theme of the research, this can be translated into how the Aardehuisen community approaches decentralized, democratic decision-making on matters (*Commons*) that concern everyone, and how these practices are reflected in the participants’ discourses.

Quotes – Commons			
	<p>“The other situation is aimed at maintaining the buildings and the grounds and everything that we own as a community. So we have working groups for the water maintenance, for the green stuff all around, for maintaining this community building and some other aspects of that. So you're you're part of that. You are expected to join one of those working groups.” I-2</p>	<p>“So one thing we have established is a monthly gathering where we don't have an actual meeting with notes and an agenda and decision making. But we just sit down and share. (...) People cry sometimes and they can recognize themselves or their own pain, or their own struggles in what other people are sharing that they didn't know, that was of any importance to other people. So it's very valuable.” I-6</p>	<p>“Part of this is the way we make decision. I think maybe other people told you about social, procedure and deep democracy. (...) I think is a pity that especially in politics, democratic politics. Decision-making goes very. It's not only slow and not efficient, it's so it's inefficient bureaucracy (...) and what I saw here is actually it's amazing (...) you put a lot of, well, high educated hippies together making building a community.” I-7</p>

Table 8: Example quotes on ‘Commons’ principle

To conclude, in the case of the Aardehuis-Olst community, *Commons* represent a profoundly embedded, anti-bureaucratic stance in the discourses. The language essentially reflects the mainstream degrowth values advocating for collective and deep-democratic decision-making, but also the opposition against post-democratic societies. In their language on *Commons*, respondents’ **vocabulary** plays a crucial role. Many technical terms are being employed (‘water maintenance’, ‘decision-making’), which shows alignment with the language used according to Parrique (2019). It further reflects awareness of ideologies, but also the solid embeddedness of mainstream political values, even within this alternative form of lifestyle. Respondents’ values – such as the strong rejection of mainstream political ideologies – are also echoed by using **vocabulary** and **structure**, such as ‘inefficient bureaucracy’ being placed against ‘deep democracy’ in the third quote. As the way towards a successfully operated degrowth community, the respondents stressed the point that they all feel part of and are included when choices are made regarding any community related matter. The **force** of utterances further exemplifies and strengthens these arguments with the first and third quotes regarding the more ‘formal’ way of decision-making and inclusiveness. This resonates well

with the claims of I-2: *“an idea can be enriched because there are so many points of view that are that are added to to the original one. That really helps”*. Although Parrique’s (2019) viewpoint on commons do not excessively protest against the inefficiency of democracy, he firmly claims and supports members’ participation in decision-making and organizing processes solely on a voluntary basis and exclusively in self-organized forms, just as the first quote in Table 8. illustrates. Additionally, I-4 notes: *“...we're all responsible. But if there's something has to be changed or redone. They they do it (the working groups) and if they needed to share it with the whole group because it's like a decision. Like totally different thing or. I'm transferring all the front doors in a different color. Than we have to do it group-wise, so the whole group has to decide. But if it's only a new supplier for testing the water quality we can do that in our group”*. Parrique (2019) distinguishes between the management of resources as natural (e.g.: the community garden, food forest), social (e.g.: shared facilities, water maintenance, building of the community) and cultural, which is seen to be less represented in the community although the presence of natural and social factors are very common. The conversation with the representative of GEN-NL – who, in fact lives in an ecovillage herself – shed light on the absence of the cultural aspect (Parrique, 2019) in Aardehuisen: *“If they don't have so much structure practice, like we also have, for instance, in school and childcare, organized in our community.”* As the Aardehuisen is a smaller community of people, there are fewer children who are distributed among fewer age-groups, hence an organized home-schooling alternative does not seem either feasible or viable. What is more, Aardehuisen residents have the opportunity to change working groups every two years, thus gaining expertise as part of a group with a different purpose. Even though involvement in the decision-making process on topics that affect everyone within the eco community is solely voluntary, there still seem to be some community-driven ‘pressure’ to take part and to vocalize one’s opinions by **force** of discourses – *“You are expected to join...”*. The topic of ‘working groups’ were mentioned by all residents during the interviews implying that everyone wants to be a part of decision-making process over community-related matters, which can be a great step towards a degrowth society. On the other hand, formal, collective and all-inclusive decision-making practices are supplemented with a routine, where voices can be heard in a more informal settings (Table 8., Quote 2.). The characteristics of these meetings bring balance and great additional value for the members, again, represented by the use of **vocabulary** (‘share’, ‘hear’, ‘valuable’). However, these informal meetings only attract a handful of people, meaning that not the whole community can benefit from these meetups.

### 5.3. Gratuity

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
14	Gratuity	-	How respondents think about and value the community life, community support and living closely together

Table 9: Commons principle, Code 14 (source: Codebook)

Parrique (2019) introduces *Gratuity*, as a pivotal principle in the “*de-economisation of social life advocated by degrowth*”(pg. 297), but also as a “*systematic shunning out of money*”(pg. 298) that puts the community into the centre of attention. It also claims that one shall focus more in detail beyond materialism and economic price on values such as community life, love, support and the benefits on residents of living closely with other people and nature (Parrique, 2019).

Quotes – Gratuity			
	<p>“And at the same time, as far as I know them, they have a very good and very nice atmosphere together. So I didn't see any tensions in terms of, yeah, conflict or hidden conflict. They have a really nice community, I mean, although they don't eat together every day, I mean still they have a sense of community and support. Mutual support.” I-1</p>	<p>“We all live here. We built this together. We grew together as a group and that to me feels like family so the connection to these people in this group. It has become way, way, way bigger, than I ever imagined.” I-6</p>	<p>“It's it's a mind thing. So it's not that they need things that they value for things are at least different. So what they appreciate and what they value is on a different level. They have focused their shift and if they shift their focus to something else. So it's not that they have, yes. They've gained more friendship, for instance.” I-10</p>

Table 10: Example quotes on ‘Gratuity’ principle

*Gratuity* in the Aardehuisen takes on a slightly different form than envisioned by Parrique (2019) . Given that his stance is primarily economic, some of his ideas apply to this ecocommunity to a somewhat limited extent Nevertheless, one core characteristic of *Gratuity* aligns with the lifestyle observed among the residents: “*The ultimate objective of gratuity is equity via social solidarity*” (Parrique, 2019, pg. 300). Necessarily, this aligns greatly with the claims and the fundamental vision of the GEN and the ecovillage movement in general, as the representative of the Dutch branch of the organization argued: “*We define ecovillages as a community where people have equal rights and access to decision making. It's based on equity and diversity.*” Subsequently, ecovillages strive for equity in the social sense and the language of Aardehuisen serves as great illustration, as shown in Table 10. Stakeholders when talking about the community, support, equity and equality, after Fairclough (1992) the spoken **vocabulary** and the **force** of utterances need to be highly underscored. The words used – such

as ‘mutual’, ‘support’, ‘connection’, ‘family’ and the constant referal to ‘we’ as the community – reflect collective embeddedness of Aardehuisen’s *Gratuity* values. This is supported by **grammar** use, which depicts taking action actively . The mirroring of powerful social bonds and the unique mindset of ideologies are mentioned regarding *Gratuity* amongst the participants. Alloy these with respect, acceptance and a handful of emotional **vocabulary** and we get the fulfillment of needs that is reflected in Parrique’s (2019) vision. The **structure** analysis of the second quote reveals the listing of values the community developed together, which further reinforces the appreciation what they have built together. These views are considered as a pattern in the interviews, indicating their firm presence in the ecovillage: “*So that was my big discovery that being part of a group of people that you really know really well is the the biggest way one of the biggest ways you can fill this gap in your soul.*” – I-6; “*I love that we did it because we really pioneered and spread that we did this and it really made us like a strong community*”. – I-7. The first and third quotes in Table 10 are external discourses, from I-1 and I-10 align greatly with the internal/residential discourses. Observing the latter example the **vocabulary** (‘shift’, ‘different level’) and the **structure** of the sentence identify a transition towards a degrowth society. All in all language of discourses on *Gratuity* contain the dedication to moving beyond materialism as ideology; instead, community spirit and belonging are emphasized and the influence of people on each other’s growth.

## 5.4. Relational Goods

**“If you're on your own, you move faster. But if you are together, you come further.” I-2**

To continue, this next section revolves around *Relational Goods* that covers a code group, within which, several sub-codes were identified during the coding process; see Table 11. for detailed information. Throughout the interviews and field observations it has become clear that *Relational Goods* are interweaved into almost all principles of degrowth that appear in Aardehuis-Olst. However, it is not only present everywhere, but it also seems to be one of the core, most fundamental guiding principle that – hierarchically speaking – stands above the rest.

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
17	Relational_Goods		"Less stuff, more relationships." (pg.317) The <b>collective</b> presence of relationships within the community

17.1		Relational_Goods_ Well-being_Happiness	How do respondents understand their well-being and happiness.
17.2		Relational_Goods_ Nature	This code signals information that was mentioned about the connection of nature and people and what additional value nature holds/why is it beneficial for people to live closely interconnected with nature
17.3		<i>Relational_Goods_ Spirituality</i>	<i>How spirituality is understood and practiced</i>
17.4		Relational_Goods_ Individual	This code stands for the info on the inner relationship of the villagers with themselves and the importance of personal growth

Table 11: Relational Goods principle, Code group 17 (source: Codebook)

As an early disclaimer, code 17.3, regarding spirituality received a light grey colour, since as opposed to the researcher’s initial hypothesis, it was concluded that it did not hold descriptive value for analysis. Conversely, Rodhe (2009) found proof of connection between degrowth and spirituality in ecovillages, however, after discussion with Aardehuisen residents it was revealed that this aspect is neither present nor practiced. Hence, it is not a part of this present analysis. Code 17.1 was added as it is perceived as a pivotal consequence and something that is greatly intertwined with *Relational Goods* and the concept of degrowth amongst community members. Therefore, it represents a focal point of the research.

It is crucial to note that Parrique (2019) shares the views of the anti-utilitarian, “*consuming concretely*” (pg. 305) mentality and finds it elementary to degrowth society. He further advocates for more meaningful, healthy and valuable relationships both collectively and individually (Parrique, 2019). This aligns well with Latouche’s (2009) claims, who additionally proposes “*friendships and neighborliness*” as approach to *Relational goods* (pg. 70). In his study Parrique (2019) concludes that degrowth is not too much of a value if there is no time for the enjoyment of life. Nonetheless, what is not being mentioned by the scholars, but this current Master’s thesis research disclosed – extending scholarly and scientific contribution – is the importance of the relation and the additional value of living in harmony with nature, coded as 17.2. What Parrique (2019) and other degrowth academics also fall short on is that the propositions of *Relational Goods* seem to be rather vague. Hence, my aspiration as researcher was to distinguish between different categories for this very principle to make it more tangible.

Quotes – Relational Goods				
	Collective	Individual	Nature	Happiness and well-being
	<p>“That it also is easier to adapt your lifestyle if you are surrounded by people who have similar outlook or have a similar lifestyle.” I-3</p>	<p>“So it's a learning path also to look at yourself. And developing personal growth in dealing with diversity and dealing with people who have different lifestyles and attitudes and backgrounds.” I-1</p>	<p>“What I was thinking about which I think is very important. In the philosophy of degrowth, I think we need to observe nature more if you understand the, how to say, abundance of nature, which you may be even more understand being Hungarian.” I-7</p>	<p>“They’ve made deliberate choices about how they want to structure their lives, and that sense of intentionality seems to bring them satisfaction. Their lifestyle may differ from the mainstream, but it reflects their values and priorities. That, in itself, can be a powerful source of well-being” I-9</p>

Table 12: Example quotes on ‘Relational Goods’ principle

According to Parrique (2019) the core conclusion on the *Relational Goods* principle is that degrowth eventually paves the way to (re)learning, co-existing and (re)entering in a relationship with the socio-ecological world that surrounds us. All four highlighted discourses share these views and impersonate Parrique’s (2019) way towards a picture of a degrowing community, or society. Another representative quote of these views was shared by I-7: “...*the best thing I can give you is that to understand what human being was. (...) We are not human doing. We are human being. Otherwise, we would have been called ourselves human doing. You know, that's what we need to do and I think when I'm talking about degrowth. Just being connected.*”.

**Vocabulary** of the discourses vocalizes the true meaning of relationships, but also their strength and transformativeness (‘similar’, ‘learning path’, ‘developing’) amongst residents. **Cohesion** and **structure** of the discourses illustrate, how treasured relations are with one’s inner self, with nature and with other residents. Here, **intertextuality** holds useful assets for analysis; the term ‘philosophy of degrowth’ implies the subconscious presence of the concept amongst residents. This supports what has been concluded previously: even without mentioning the word ‘degrowth’ and its core characteristics, the concept is widely and subconsciously accepted and talked about, thus justifying the case selection for this Master’s thesis.

Collective *Relational Goods* are closely intertwined with the social motives behind residents’ decision to live in the Aardehuisen, as shown in Table 4. This emphasizes that the *Relational Goods* degrowth principle, as defined by Parrique’s (2019) - more specifically its collective

dimension - was indeed the key factor in the success of this unique project. The essence of discourse in Aardehuis-Olst lies in being together, fostering connection and collaboratively paving the way for something groundbreaking. Regarding human- nature relationships, the closeness of flora and fauna definitely affects the well-being and relational aspect of degrowth in the Aardehuisen positively. This statement was supported many times by respondents themselves. All houses were consciously designed and built with gardens – that are all taken good care of by their owner – including the community garden and the food forest. To conclude, there are plenty of alternatives where residents can get closer to nature: *“As therapy, really. I'm taking walks out of doors.”* said I-3, whereas I-7 mentioned: *“And then I realized how big how wealthy it is to live among birds and trees.”* **Vocabulary** shows in the previous two examples that people see the natural connection as ‘therapy’ and it also makes them feel ‘wealthy’. Well-being in the Aardehuisen takes many different forms and the discourses varied. However, one thing is for certain, namely that the sense of belonging to a community that consists of like-minded individuals, with closely identical values and ideological beliefs forms a powerful safety net that supports each and every resident of the community. This was further reinforced by I-2 interlinking nature’s benefits to well-being of members: *“That is not specifically in that order, but the the green oasis we live in here augments to to a sense of of well-being, and well, there are some these days. Lots of research on the influence of green surroundings to a person's physical and mental health, which is yeah, which is absolutely brilliant there.”* In this quote, **vocabulary** (‘green oasis’), **force** (employment of slightly emotional tone) and **intertextuality** (mentioning researches as external discourse) work together linguistically to deliver how *Relational Goods* on well-being are perceived. Some discussions revealed that many residents have been, in fact, happier, ever since they moved into the village, which greatly captures the essence of a degrowth community, like Aardehuis-Olst. However, not everyone is always happy and well, similarly to the mainstream, not degrowth-oriented society, the ‘weight of life’ often finds its way: *“Of course, life happens and then stuff happens and so I'm not happy all the time. In fact, I've been very depressed for periods, but that is being here helps a lot, especially.”*, remarks I-3. What is more, one conversation exposed a contradicting opinion by **structure**, when talking about general happiness: *“I think I was more happy in the city, which is a really strange answer to your question”*. There are, however, community initiatives for reintegrating those, who may have drifted away from the group, but I-6 claims, it is a demanding ambition, and unfortunately not yet successful.

## 5.5. Voluntary simplicity

This current section deals with analyzing the stakeholder discourses and their alignment (or misalignment) on Parrique’s (2019) next principle, *Voluntary simplicity*, with its code frequency of 30.

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
16	Voluntary_Simplicity		"Outwardly simple, inwardly rich" (pg. 317)
16.1		Simplicity_Needs_and_Possessions	How people see the questions of having to possess less and to cut back on excessive consumerism in order to live a fuller life

Table 13: *Voluntary simplicity principle, Code group 16 (source: Codebook)*

Parrique (2019) perceives this degrowth principle as the necessary reduction of an individual’s consumption, both in terms of quality and quantity. In order to achieve the retrenchment of overconsumption, the remedy seems to be simple and logical: consume less. *Voluntary simplicity* within the degrowth concept would result in consuming fewer goods, but gaining more in terms of well-being and a sense of belonging. To put it simply, this principle encourages residents to continuously reflect on their own resources, especially time (Parrique, 2019). Parrique (2019) follows Andrews’ (2006) train of thought focusing on the essence of *Voluntary simplicity*: “to work less, spend less and rush less” (Andrews, 2006, pg. 215). This section and the related codes in Table 13 above also derive from Cattaneo and Galvadá’s (2010) diagnostics that they ran on degrowing ‘rurban squats’ in Spain. They found that members of such communities have already reached a phase where they consciously aim to have less (belongings, material objects).

Quotes – Voluntary simplicity			
	<p><b>“In terms of energy, water purification, and also sewage, that's all included within well the the small maintenance fee we pay to the association which is to share that for us it's I think also 45 EUR per month. So that's actually what our house costs.”</b> I-2</p>	<p><b>“...sometimes I sit on on the terrace in some feeling like like some kind of a mafioso. Just feeling rich, let's put it that way because the fun thing is, if you look at our income compared to the average income in the Netherlands, we are way below the poverty line. And it's it's fun to notice that. Yeah, we don't have lack of anything.”</b> I-2</p>	<p><b>“...if you're not confronted with it or are in need, or you have less and be creative to reduce things. If it doesn't come in your notice it's hard to to think about it by yourself. Like I never buy clothes. Only in maybe a second hand store.”</b> I-4</p>

Table 14: *Example quotes on ‘Voluntary simplicity’ principle*

The discourses above give a valuable overview on how *Voluntary simplicity* can be maintained. All example quotes represent the pure meaning of simplicity, and the discourses also reveal

strong opposition against the ideologies of the traditional economy and society, such as capitalism. The **grammar** level of CDA highlights the importance of all-round responsibility of residents, and active action-taking (Table 14). In the example quotes **vocabulary** echoes the enjoyment of simplicity ('feeling rich', 'fun'), but also illustrates dominant values of *Voluntary simplicity* and its interpretation ('have less', 'reduce'). The **structure** of the first quote lists facilities, through which simplicity has been reached, whereas the second one's compares the Dutch average salary to I-2 being 'below poverty line'. This conveys a fundamental message to all: degrowth's *Voluntary simplicity* can be achieved and cultivated by downshifted lifestyles in small communities. To support this, the **force** level of CDA utilizes a playful and factual tone in the second example by mimicking the mainstream, capitalist world. Fundamentally, in Aardehuisen simplicity stems from using second-hand building materials, building one's own house, utilizing alternative energy resources, and being self-sufficient with energy production, or water purification, all of which result in a significant cutback on expenses. On the other hand, sharing facilities, tangible objects contribute to naturally owning less, but also to the need for further unnecessary consumption; this is reflected in the conversations with I-2 and I-3: "...it's easier here because you share facilities which helps you not buying them.". I-5 concluded, after joining the community: "I just discovered that I was most happy when I had the less stuff and now I sometimes already feel that that we just have too much.". It is evident once again that a strong correlation exists between the above-mentioned discourses and those of Parrique's (2019) notion of simplicity, as reflected by the emotional tone (**force** level) in the previous quote, against owning too much. In addition, Parrique (2019) stresses that downshifting attitudes and practices are markedly related to housing, models such as ecovillages. Similarly, he lists several further aspects that are also represented within the Aardehuis-Olst eco community: alternative food systems (self-production), working less – this connects to Parrique's (2019) *Postwork* degrowth principle –, rephrasing money, connecting to people, approach to clothing, spirituality, science and travelling (carsharing, cycling – "The thing is not really necessary for holidays to fly somewhere, so that's a conscious choice." I-7 ). Apart from absence of spirituality and science, by 'ticking the boxes', residents of the community attained *Voluntary simplicity* throughout their forceful, shared discourses (mainly through **vocabulary**) that reject modern consumption patterns and material abundance. They aspire to replace those with awareness of others and nature while practicing self-limitation (Parrique, 2019). Finally, a recurring discourse pattern was found during the interviews which is vital for residents to achieve simplicity: "I think I need to be shown examples of how it's

done.” – I-3. This captures the essence of knowledge sharing, setting examples and being transformative within and outside this eco community.

## 5.6. Value sovereignty

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
12	Value_Sovereignty	-	What the respondents hold valuable other than money and financial/material wealth.

Table 15: Value sovereignty principle, Code 12 (source: Codebook)

After Parrique’s (2019) illustration on this next degrowth principle, it is vital to note what is considered valuable within the community. What is valuable, is clearly a rather vague and relative concept. The philosophy of *Value sovereignty* overlaps with many, previously discussed principles of degrowth, such as *Voluntary simplicity* or *Gratuity*. Section 7, which deals with the limitations of the research, elaborates on the fine line that is drawn between these principles when transforming them into a tool for social analysis. Nevertheless, Parrique (2019) firmly states, that in a degrowth society, social and moral values should always come first as opposed to economic valuation (Parrique, 2019).

Quotes – Value sovereignty			
	“...degrowth principles are somehow ingrained in our deeper longing for balance in harmony, living in in harmony with life and the planet, in our systems.” I-2	“Yeah, we’ve been thinking about thinking along these lines for so long that I forget how other people are on a different level of consuming or environmental footprint. It’s not that we are very, very slight consumers, but we’ve been reducing over the past 20 years compared to other people in this country.” I-3	“For example, they, they value togetherness and. More than financial wealth and or the pursuit of financial. So it’s, it’s their. Their mindset is different.” I-10

Table 16: Example quotes on ‘Value sovereignty’ principle

Parrique (2019) is relatively short-spoken on *Value sovereignty* in his book, ‘The political economy of degrowth’, nevertheless, he remarks: “The goal is for different forms of values to co-habit and to never let one story of value become a heteronomous force imposed upon a community. We are back to the analogy with nature: an ecosystem of monies for an ecosystem of values.” (Parrique, 2019, pg. 639-640). As a result of the lack of detailedness of this principle, this research makes use of a broader interpretation. An answer of I-9 offers a substantial introduction how *Value sovereignty* of residents is reflected in spoken language:

*“Ecovillages embody a fundamentally different way of living—one that places community at the heart of daily life. In our current society, there is a strong emphasis on individualism. People often live more isolated lives, and the sense of collective responsibility and mutual support has diminished in many neighbourhoods and towns.”*, I-9 appends. Just like this prior quote, in Table 16 the choices of **vocabulary** (‘degrowth’, ‘harmony’) **structure** (contrasting of Aardehuisen and the mainstream ideological discourses) and **cohesion** unveil the meaning to this degrowth principle given by respondents. By mentioning ‘degrowth’ literally, an extrinsic discourse is being referred to in the form of **intertextuality**. Many socio-ecological and value-related words are used (‘environmental footprint’, ‘togetherness’) against the idea of prioritizing and accumulating ‘financial wealth’ representing the embeddedness of degrowth into the every-day life of Aardehuisen.

The interviews and the analysis have pointed the research towards the acknowledgement of the educational aspect of *Value sovereignty*. This endeavor is twofold: on the one hand, the Aardehuisen keeps an open mind for external advice and for continuous learning. On the other hand, they serve as a showroom by organizing monthly village tours for those interested. Both learning and educating are fundamental parts of their vision and mission, which is reflected in the discourses too: *“...sometimes we are a showcase and sometimes we are just humbly learning from others.”*, notes I-2. Furthermore, it is essential to mention the impact of Aardehuisen on policy making and on the broader municipal, or regional level: *“elements like collective energy generation, circular construction, and community building can certainly be applied more broadly, but also the importance of giving space to citizen initiatives. This has influenced our sustainability policy and how we collaborate with residents.”* claimed I-9, the Sustainability Representative of the Olst-Wijhe municipality. Consequently, **structure** of this discourse (listing of advantages) illustrates how successfully degrowth practices are able to scale up and be embedded into policymaking. Conclusively, taken the results of CDA into consideration, the core forces, beyond material wealth in Aardehuisen can be summarized as: **1)** collective belonging, **2)** living closely and safely with others and nature, but also the **3)** conscious reduction of environmental footprint, **4)** leading by example and educating, or external relationships, and the **5)** strong opposition (activism) against the neoclassical capitalist mindset and its ecological degradation.

## 5.7. Sustainability

Finally, the last principle serving as material to be analyzed is Parrique’s (2019) *Sustainability*.

Code number	Code name	Sub-code name	Description (Parrique, 2019)
5	Sustainability		"The economy’s throughput should remain within the regenerative capacities of renewable natural resources, within the stocks of non-renewable resources that one has morally allowed oneself to consume, and within the assimilative capacities of nature." (pg. 316)
5.1		Sustainability_Alternative_Resource_Use	What alternative resources and technologies are in practice and how people evaluate them
5.3		Sustainability_Building_Materials	What building materials were used and where were they sourced from

Table 17: Sustainability principle, Code group 5 (source: Codebook)

Although *Sustainability* is another vague principle in Parrique’s (2019) work, this section seeks to narrow down its broad interpretation in relevance to degrowth and the Aardehuis-Olst. By assigning subcodes to the main one (see Table 17 above), the CDA focuses on degrowth-related themes when analyzing linguistic traits of descriptive quotes. Parrique (2019) follows the global path of *Sustainability* by referring to crucial elements of it, such as permacircularity (Arnsperger and Bourg, 2017). The term includes the circularity of green growth, but more importantly the frugality of degrowth, thus it does not result in the increase of consumption. Parrique (2019) further advocates for ideas, like zero waste, or cradle-to-cradle strategies within *Sustainability*. To summarize, however, Parrique (2019) solely focuses on the global and international levels of *Sustainability*, local practices are not mentioned in this part of his work, which offers more freedom for interpretation to this section of the research.

The CDA is first and foremost employed on three exemplary quotes: firstly on one of the overall, more general *Sustainability* practices, then one on the alternative resource/technologies and the building materials each.

Quotes – Sustainability			
	Sustainability	Alternative resource/technology	Building materials
	“I personally feel that the change is not well, indirectly is coming from consumerism, but we need instant measures now to fix this system, you know, like	“...we don’t strive for self sufficiency in food production, we do strive for that in as for for energy production. And right now on the car park, we have a carport with which supports	“The whole principle of an earthship is that you find local materials and use them. So it’s all in the essence of the dialogue.” I-10

	<p>I'm very happy to no longer use plastic straws in newspaper straws (...) but I think 80-90% of plastic pollution in the oceans is from fishery. I'm happy to return my glass bottles (...), but this is not what this is the small scale." I-3</p>	<p>230 something solar panels. And we have a neighborhood battery store now. It'll be the first neighborhood battery in the municipality. And probably in the wider area as well." I-2</p>	
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Table 18: Example quotes on 'Sustainability' principle

Firstly, *Sustainability* takes many forms within the community that is also reflected in the discourses of the respondents. It goes without saying that the resistance of unsustainable practices, resource extraction and excessive pollution are greatly emphasized, just to mention some fundamentally pressing environmental matters. Their individual values of resisting all the previously highlighted problems form a collective identity and sense of duty. To *Sustainability*, many other principles can be connected that were found present in the ecovillage: *Sharing* of cars, or tools, *Circularity* when it comes to the water purification system, or the composting toilets. However, I-7 summarizes the shared philosophy and the core trait on *Sustainability*: “It was the sustainability common saying that bind us together. The connection to the Earth and that was what all people wanted.”. Although the first quote’s (Table 18.) **grammar** and **structure** analysis reveals a personal opinion, it urges to take collective responsibility over humanity’s actions with a strong, emotional call of **force**: ‘we need instant measures, now’. Just like by previous principles, value-based and technical **vocabulary** proposes the meaning-making in the ecovillage to *Sustainability*: ‘consumerism’, ‘plastic straws’, ‘fishery’. **Intertextuality** also appears in the form of an external discourse on the polluting fishing industry, but **cohesion** opposes it against a great matter of *Sustainability*; what is the point if small-scale sustainability ambitions, when global companies pollute nature and extract resources at humanity’s damage? This exemplifies greatly that even the most devoted members of society have second thoughts over the feasibility and effect of their alternative lifestyle.

Secondly, as far as the alternative technologies and resources are concerned, some have been already mentioned in previous sections. In energy production, Aardehuisen is self-sufficient, with the main source of energy being solar power. Subsequently, the energy is stored in an enormous battery, which is able to maintain the annual energy needs of the ecovillage. **Grammar** and **structure** of the second quote of Table 18 foreshadows that collective action was taken towards the off-grid existence of this ecovillage project. **Vocabulary**, furthermore,

showcases the existing proficiency and knowledge within the field: ‘self-sufficiency’, ‘solar panels’, etc.

Finally, a rare aspect of sustainability is how the earthship-styled residential buildings were created. *“We also found them locally, so that was one of the main targets we had during the building phase that we would actually strived for. Sourcing all materials as locally as possible to suppress the carbon footprint. And well the radius. For we strive for was 50 kilometers from the building site.”* recalls I-2. Therefore, many buildings consist of car tires, straw bales, old ship deck parts, biobased and organic materials, used glasses, even to the smallest details. However, some villagers were skeptical towards the car tire walls: *“This was the only thing I didn't like on project was this whole car tire. It's good thing to reuse it to reuse stuff in a house or in something you create doesn't matter what, because then it does not become waste. But people did not realize what was the first question I asked before we built anything. Somebody already built a house with car tires?”* mentioned one of them. The **structure** of this discourse (rhetorical question) illustrates, how some degrowth values were questioned, even by these people with deep ecological attitudes. When it comes to the building, materials, and generally speaking the whole earthship concept, a unique characteristic trait of the Aardehuisen must be emphasized: *“And actually, if you want to join in, you'll have to be prepared to get your feet in the mud literally and build it yourself. Otherwise this is not a project for you, and you can go to other initiatives where I have people to build it for you. That's not us.”*, highlighted I-2, when talking about the importance of the community building the whole village together. The **vocabulary** and the **force** of utterances of the CDA reflect a rigid commitment towards strong ecological living, from the beginning of the project. I-6 strengthens this argument: *“never before had a project in this magnitude being developed with a complete group. The earthship itself was relatively new. We were quite radical in how ecological this project was. So self-sustainable homes, self-sustainable in water, wastewater management, drinking water purification, electricity, heat and building materials.”*

In conclusion, it would be challenging to establish whether there is an alignment with the *Sustainability* degrowth principle after analyzing the stakeholder discourses. As discussed at the beginning of this section, Parrique’s (2019) claims on this pivotal principle are focused on a global level and are obscure. However, broader sustainability goals are definitely accomplished, such as reduction of environmental pollution, living within the ecological limits of nature, and using second-hand building materials.

## 6. Discussion

This section links the findings of this thesis to academic literature, then discusses them through comparing and contrasting. As stressed above, academic literature lacks practical examples on degrowth. Moreover, only a handful of case studies have been conducted on ecovillages – either in general, or focusing on a single project – as initiatives for degrowth (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010; Lietaert, 2010; Xue, 2014, Lockyer, 2017). Finally, it needs to be disclaimed that the researcher has not encountered an academic paper that centered the concept of the degrowth-ecovillage-CDA triangle. More specifically, CDA-based, linguistic analysis of ecovillage stakeholders on degrowth has never been executed before. Hence, the comparison of results is less feasible with a one-of-a-kind study. Nevertheless, the analysis of this Master's thesis still resulted in the discovery of many outcomes that in fact, can be of basis for comparison.

Cattaneo and Galvadá (2010) examined two 'rurban squats' near Barcelona, Spain from a degrowth perspective. Self-sufficiency was found to be specifically emphasized within the values of both projects (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010). This resonates with the outcomes of this thesis, since Aardehuis-Olst is also proven to strive for self-sufficiency, however, solely in energy production. Conversely, the rurban squats emphasized both energy and food production amongst their goals (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010). Parrique's (2019) *Commons* principle focusing on democratic and collective decision-making is also found as key practice in the Aardehuisen, therefore it overlaps with Cattaneo and Galvadá's (2010) results. A further alignment is that representative democracy and bureaucracy were depicted in both studies to slow down decision-making and deprive the community level of power (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010). Furthermore, in the two rurban squats, free time is directed for the satisfaction of needs beyond materialism (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010). What principles of *Relational Goods*, *Gratuity*, *Voluntary simplicity* and *Value sovereignty* all have in common, is that they facilitate residents of Aardehuis-Olst to autonomously allocate their time on more valuable aspects of life. May these be fostering relationships with oneself, nature and other people, or move beyond materialistic values and live life in a simpler way, the ecovillage offers alternative path for its residents. Speaking of the *Voluntary simplicity* principle, the researchers also detected that those 'rurban squatters' had reached a phase, where they consciously have fewer material belongings (Cattaneo and Galvadá, 2010). Similarly, in the Aardehuisen the CDA discovered

that residents aim to lay off the accumulation of material belongings, and substitute ownership with utilization of services.

The findings of this thesis echoes those of Lietaert (2010), who discovered that co-housing (a similar form of intentional community with many of its traits aligning with the ones of ecovillages) communities represent deeply embedded signs of sharing practices. In the Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage the *Sharing* principle turned out to be the most relevant (*code frequency: 35 times*) from Parrique's (2019) list of the 15 degrowth principles. Tangible objects (cars, clothes) and intangible ones (knowledge, care) are shared and are in circulation, which leads to the conclusion that both co-housing and ecovillage communities view them as constructive steps towards a neighborhood-level of degrowth society. Although in Lietaert's (2010) work, the sharing of intangible 'objects' are not mentioned, they were proven to be fundamental in the Aardehuisen. Correspondingly, Mocca (2019) also highlighted the transformative example of sharing within ecovillages, as a path towards a degrowth society. Additionally, she argues the significance of the strong ecological setting, democratic and participatory decision-making of these intentional communities (Mocca, 2019).

Xue (2014) revealed, when he examined the feasibility of degrowth from an urban planner's perspective, that the decentralized feature of an ecovillage "*completely neglects the existing urban structures and thus represents unrealistic solutions.*" (pg. 136). Conversely, the numerous field observations and the CDA of respondents' language presented the importance of many existing features (shared spaces, community garden, off-grid energy production, decision-making). These are not only viable within the Aardehuisen but also influenced municipal policy-making and were disseminated regionally.

Last but not least, Lockyer (2017) detected the presence and significance of green building techniques in the Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in the USA. As discussed in detail in the previous chapters the Aardehuisen consists of 'earthships', which takes sustainable living to the next level. The hand-built, ecological homes that are solely based on second-hand materials display great example of deeply ecological way of living. Lockyer (2017) further mentions degrowth characteristics of Dancing Rabbit that this Master's thesis also enclosed within the examined eco community: cooperative housing arrangements (which stops the houses to be sold on the market), stewardship over commons (see section 5.2. about the *Commons* principle), organic food production (community garden and food forest), and consumption reducing strategies (see section 5.1. on *Sharing*). Although Lockyer (2017) found correlation between ecological, degrowth-centered living and higher levels of well-being, his study fell short on underlining

the value of relationships within ecovillages. The linguistic analysis of this Master's thesis revealed that the glue that keeps residents stick together and form a shared ideology is to foster deep, meaningful relationships with oneself, with nature and most importantly, with other members of the community.

## 7. Conclusion

This final section delves into the findings of Section 5., namely the Critical Discourse Analysis applied on descriptive spoken discourses of the stakeholders of the Aardehuis-Olst eco community. The analysis followed the path alongside those 7 selected degrowth principles from Parrique (2019) that were deemed most relevant and expressive, while examining the village. Moreover, this section contains the answers to the sub-question and the main research question, as presented in Chapter 1.3. Finally, suggestions for further research, then the limitations related to this Master's thesis research will be revealed. This current study was structured around the research question – **How language on Parrique's (2019) degrowth principles is constructed and disclosed within the Aardehuis-Olst eco community?**.

As a disclaimer, out of the 7 residents interviewed, only 2 heard about the existence of the concept of degrowth and could define what it stands for, whereas 2 out of the 3 external stakeholders did not need introduction to the phenomenon. In order for those, who had little, or no knowledge to degrowth, the researcher gave a brief overview summarizing the core characteristics, to place the conversation into perspective. Conclusively, 4 interview subjects gave answers based on only their own expertise on the topic, while the rest required minor background information. However, the interview guides were consciously constructed, which facilitated the answers not to be predetermined.

The interviews revealed persistent patterns and styles in the spoken language of residents and external stakeholders on each degrowth principle. Likewise, language unveiled the underlying, strong and consensual refusal of mainstream ideologies, and in the vast majority of cases, illustrated subconscious dedication towards degrowth goals. These values are predominantly expressed in the **vocabulary** and the words utilized, such as '*get rid of*' (unnecessary belongings), or '*inefficient bureaucracy*' in traditional society. Several times, the contradicting **structure** between the philosophies of Aardehuisen and mainstream ideologies are implied by the clashing of opposing words, but also many technical and socio-ecological terms were found

in use. This exemplifies the amount of knowledge on the topic at hand within the community. Further, the continuous, value-, and ideology-based word use, like ‘*community*’, ‘*mutual*’, ‘*friendship*’, or ‘*harmony*’ are demonstrations and alignments with Parrique’s (2019) *Gratuity*, *Relational goods*, or *Voluntary simplicity* degrowth principles. They mirrored residents’ collectively shared attitude towards having less things, and fostering meaningful relationships. Alongside their closeness to nature, it formed a solid social bond between them. To assist these conclusions, in terms of **grammar**, the interviewees regularly used active voice to emphasize shared responsibility, ideologies and legitimacy of their actions. Nonetheless, a clear misalignment with Parrique’s (2019) philosophy on the *Sharing* principle is present, shown by the compelling example of the **vocabulary** on carsharing. The findings illustrate that for some, leaving behind the comfort of commuting by one’s own car, still remains an unresolved issue. Still, empirical evidence has depicted the most relevant correlation between the Aardehuisen discourses and degrowth on Parrique’s (2019) *Sharing* and *Value sovereignty*, showing that the former principle is twofold. Moreover, Parrique’s (2019) ‘definition’ on the *Sustainability* principle was found rather vague and intangible, though, discourses helped to narrow down and specialize this guideline to Aardehuis-Olst by elaborating on alternative resource and technology use. **Vocabulary** of discourses was not only supported by **grammar**, but also sharply by the **force of utterances**, which appeared as supplementary tool for **vocabulary**; at times it even mimicked the mainstream discourses. When needed, though, it called for action, or instant measures against unsustainability, which exemplifies again the strong activism and open critique of pressing issues of humanity’s current era. **Intertextuality** emerged as auxiliary ‘dimension’ for CDA. It relied on external discourses, such as the issue of commercial fishing, ecological relevance of earthships, the general philosophy of degrowth, or the meaning of living in small communities.

All in all, to answer the main research question, texts as discourses, or language in use within the stakeholders of Aardehuis-Olst is an integral representation of the presence of degrowth practices after Parrique (2019). Residents utilize language – specifically highlighting **vocabulary**, supported by **grammar**, **force** of utterances, **structure** and **intertextuality** – to justify their strong, but subconscious commitment to follow the transformative path of degrowth. Despite the fact that not all of Parrique’s (2019) principles are relevant in the community, stakeholders discourses unveil that the Aardehuisen ecovillage is indeed a viable case to promote a degrowth society. The results have suggested that vocabulary, as discourse tool, represents the true values of the residents of the ecovillage. Even though some

misalignments were detected to Parrique's (2019) principles, linguistic analysis shed light on Sharing, Value sovereignty and Relational goods being highly relevant and existing degrowth principles in the ecovillage.

### 7.1. Suggestions for future research

Further researches could be conducted to compare stakeholder, or more specifically residential discourses on degrowth of two or more ecovillage communities. Also it seems intriguing to dive deeper into the comparison of ecovillages in different countries, to reveal, how cultures and different histories shape discourses on degrowth and different principles of it. As far as the scientific and societal relevance are concerned, this Master's thesis adds to the growing body of literature on degrowth focusing on the deep analysis of a viable initiative of the concept. Although ecovillages have been perceived as social hubs for degrowth, academic literature has been lacking to inspect them from close up.

### 7.2. Limitations

As far as the limitations of the research are concerned, the main barrier is the primary data collection method, namely that the interviews were conducted in English, which is neither the native language of stakeholders, nor the researcher. Communicating thoughts and complex values on a different language (and between different cultures), as well as the analysis of these discourses may have resulted in certain misunderstandings and slips. Language as barrier also played a role in involving more interviewees, although data saturation has been reached, as mentioned in Section 4.5. Further, as discussed before, the results of the CDA were based on the researcher's own perceptions on Fairclough's (1992) framework that is to be vastly interpreted anyway. The analysis is based on solely the textual level of Fairclough's (1992) theoretical model, disregarding the discursive and social practices, thus possibly eliminating the examination of broader contexts of discourse. Moreover, Parrique's (2019) principles, as discussed, outlined the rules for a degrowth economy in a degrowing society. Although, they offered a clear set of analytical guidelines, their interpretation, or the decision on possible alignment were sometimes challenging to understand. Finally, given the researcher's background of economics and environment studies, there were potential to biases regarding the comprehension of stakeholder discourses.

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## Figures

Cover picture: Groene Bouwmaterialen, (n.d.),  
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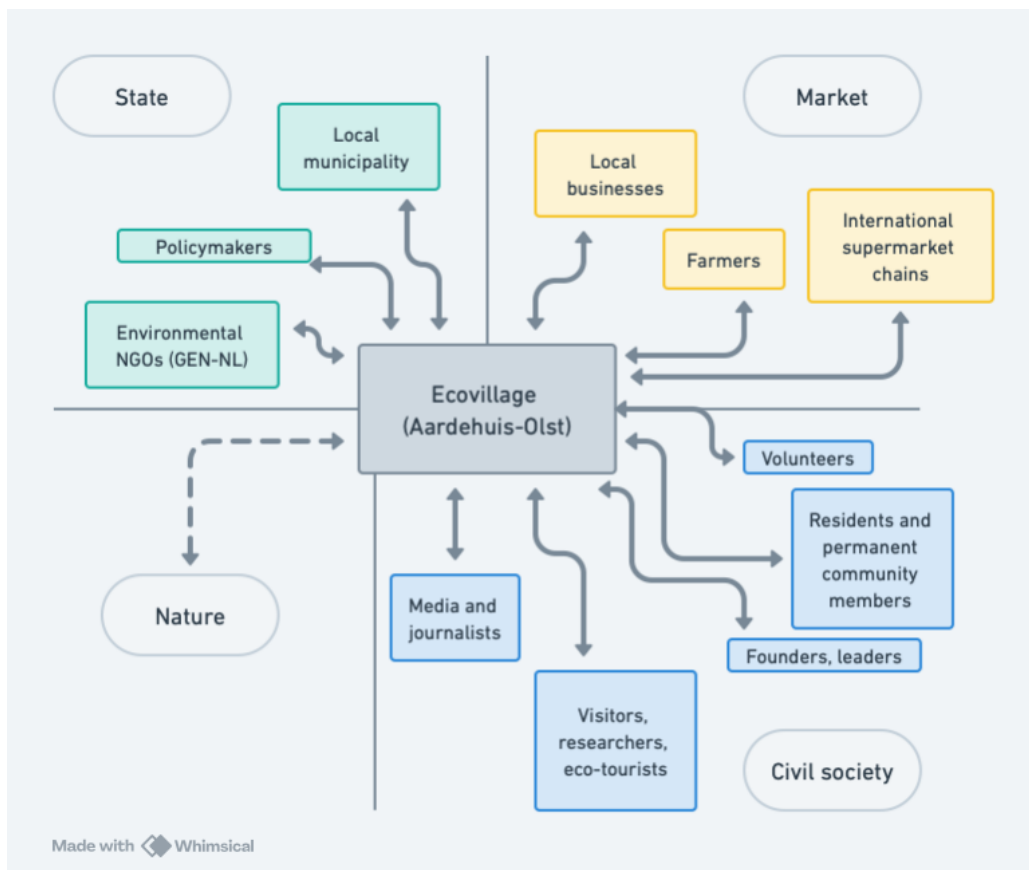
# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Statement on AI usage

During the writing of this Master’s thesis no Artificial Intelligence-generated content was included by the writer. The text was solely formulated and written by the researcher alone. Although generative AI was used occasionally at the very early, brainstorming stages of the research process, the writer never failed to critically and strictly evaluate the validity and reliability of these pieces of information.

## Appendix 2

Stakeholder analysis for the Aardehuis-Olst ecovillage



## Appendix 3

Observation protocol for the complete village tour.

### **Observation Guide – Aardehuisen – 20.05.2025.**

**Observer name:** Benedek Bach

**Location:** Aardehuis-Olst, or Aardehuisen

**Weather conditions:** beautiful weather, sunny, slight breeze, 20+ Celsius

**Tour guide:** I-2, founder and representative of the village

**Duration:** 1 hour 40 minutes

#### **1. Infrastructure and building materials**

- What materials were used during the construction? Why are they special? Did they use local materials or not?
- Are the buildings specifically designed to be sustainable? (e.g.: usage of renewable energy and other alternative resources)
- Are there any interesting facts about the building process?

#### **2. Renewable energy sources used**

- What are the energy resources that are utilized? Are we talking about self-sufficiency when it comes to energy production?
- What are the advantages of being off grid?

#### **3. Food production**

- What food producing practices are in place?
- Is there a community garden? Food forest? How are these facilities being managed?
- Are the characteristics of permaculture or ecological farming applicable here?

- Do people keep animals also?

#### 4. Shared spaces, life within the community

- Are there any shared spaces, what are their functions and how well do they work?
- Are there frequent community events? Are these voluntary?

#### 5. Transportation and commuting

- How many vehicles are there? How much are they used? Are there community vehicles that are up for sharing?
- What alternative forms of transportation are in use?

#### 6. Sensory feelings

- Smells, how does being there feel like?
- What can be seen, heard?

#### 7. Other notes

## Appendix 4

CDA of exemplary quotes of the 7 analyzed degrowth principles.

Quotes – Sharing			
	“Yeah. Well, for us, the most valuable thing we share is knowledge, I think. There's always someone in our village. It's that knows the answer of our questions.” I-5	“But one thing that's that we started with, for instance is getting rid of many washing machines, for instance, there's eight or nine households that share two washing machines” I-2	“...when we moved just to the house, we ordered a new ladder like we needed a ladder. We ordered some tools and we just ordered them because we didn't have time. Directly we got like from a lot of neighbors. I mean, we have it all here. Why did you buy it?” I-5
<b>Grammar</b>	Emphasis on ‘we’ and ‘our’, it reflects collective action taking	‘We’ reappears strengthening mutuality	‘we’ here refers to the interviewee and his partner

			that the two of them took collective action
<b>Vocabulary</b>	'Valuable' and 'share' shows the underlying values; 'knowledge' is more technical term; 'There's always someone' mirrors the degrowth ideology of the power of the community	'Getting rid of' claims strong moral values of degrowth, opposing capitalism and accumulation of goods	Usage of words reflects the 'clash' of ownership, or overconsumption and having less
<b>Cohesion</b>	'Our' is repeated again	'but' supports the vocabulary and the opposition against mainstream thoughts on ownership	'because' links the subject's action to his reasoning
<b>Structure</b>	'Knowledge' is highlighted by being brought forward	'For instance' emerges twice as an illustration of a degrowth-related solution for having too much as a community	Structure also reflects the 'clash' of ownership, or overconsumption and
<b>Force</b>	The quote is a declaration using a slightly emotional tone, 'I think' assumes personal opinion	The example is a normative, but powerful statement	The interviewee explains his actions →← the community voice questions and challenges the decision 'Why did you buy it?' → can sound as astonishment from lack of awareness of common values
<b>Coherence</b>	Assumption that everyone in the community shares these values	'started with' and 'getting rid of' strongly imply shared intentions and even unspoken rules of degrowth	The purchase of a new ladder is in contrast to the shared, community value, the residents were surprised on the purchase
<b>Intertextuality</b>	Sharing knowledge is a common degrowth value in the village, aligns with Parrique (2019)	Sharing objects, facilities also represent themselves greatly and strongly demonstrates Parrique's (2019) views	Sharing as prevalent purpose is deeply implanted into the way of thinking and taking action alongside this degrowth principle

Quotes – Commons			
	<p><b>“The other situation is aimed at maintaining the buildings and the grounds and everything that we own as a community. So we have working groups for the water maintenance, for the green stuff all around, for maintaining this community building and and some other aspects of that. So you're you're part of that. You are expected to</b></p>	<p><b>“So one thing we have established is a monthly gathering where we don't have an actual meeting with notes and an agenda and decision making. But we just sit down and share. (...) People cry sometimes and they can recognize themselves or their own pain, or their own struggles in what other people are sharing that they didn't know, that was of any</b></p>	<p><b>“Part of this is the way we make decision. I think maybe other people told you about social, procedure and deep democracy. (...) I think is a pity that especially in politics, democratic politics. Decision-making goes very. It's not only slow and not efficient, it's so it's inefficient bureaucracy (...) and</b></p>

	to join one of those working groups.” I-2	importance to other people. So it's very valuable.” I-6	what I saw here is actually it's amazing (...) you put a lot of, well, high educated hippies together making building a community.” I-7
<b>Grammar</b>	Numerous ‘we’ appears, strengthens the community spirit, both active and passive grammar	Active action taking of this initiation is clearly reflected	Powerful interpretation of community action of ‘high educated hippies’ shows their power against mainstream democracy
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Technical jargon as ‘water maintenance’; ‘own’ → claims strong responsibility over organizing the communal life; ‘community’ as value-based term	‘decision-making’ is technical term, but is contested that shows the importance of this informal, community initiative; ‘share’ and ‘hear’, ‘valuable’ define strong, philosophy-driven practices	Many ideology and technical-related words, e.g. ‘politics’; contrast, harsh critique: ‘deep democracy’ →← ‘inefficient bureaucracy’
<b>Cohesion</b>	-	‘but’ emphasizes the difference between formal and informal common habits	‘not only that’ is an enhancement of arguments
<b>Structure</b>	Listing of functions of groups, shows how well-organized the community is	-	Contrasting of degrowth and mainstream ideologies is reflected in structure
<b>Force</b>	‘You are expected to join’ indicates a firm commitment, or unspoken rule	Factual and descriptive tone, but turns into emotional: ‘cry’, ‘pain’, ‘struggle’ → true meaning of the initiative	Speaker strongly emphasizes and describes pros of collective decision-making and cons of the ruling political ideology with rigid adjectives
<b>Coherence</b>	‘You are expected...’ assumes on the researcher’s lack of knowledge	-	Assumption of the researcher’s knowledge
<b>Intertextuality</b>	Commons is also a deeply implanted degrowth value that is reflected in the formal decision-making and its structure	Informal conventions hold great value of organizing life by villagers; thus they constitute to degrowth	The quote paints a concise picture of the community advocating for more deep democracy and the abandonment of inefficient processes

Quotes – Gratuity		
<p>“And at the same time, as far as I know them, they have a very good and very nice atmosphere together. So I didn’t see any tensions in terms of, yeah, conflict or hidden conflict. They have a really nice community, I mean, although they don’t eat together every day, I mean still they have a sense of</p>	<p>“We all live here. We built this together. We grew together as a group and that to me feels like family so the connection to these people in this group. It has become way, way, way bigger, than I ever imagined.” I-6</p>	<p>“It’s it’s a mind thing. So it’s not that they need things that they value for things are at least different. So what they appreciate and what they value is on a different level. They have focused their shift and if they shift their focus to something else. So it’s not that they have, yes.</p>

	<b>community and support. Mutual support.” I-1</b>		<b>They've gained more friendship, for instance.” I-10</b>
<b>Grammar</b>	The speaker refers to the Aardehuis community, who possess strong agency	Again, the community takes active agency and responsibility on a group level	-
<b>Vocabulary</b>	'mutual', 'community', 'support' reflects collective embeddedness of <i>Gratuity</i> in values + social norms →← opposed by 'tension', 'conflict' as negative words; 'very nice atmosphere' has emotional tone	'we' appears 3 times, in addition 'group', 'connection' and 'family' words mirror a coherent, powerful bond	Words with strong value of ideology: 'mindset', 'friendship', 'value'
<b>Cohesion</b>	'although' echoes contradiction to something that may be missing	Repetition as connector	Repetition of 'things' foreshadows something intangible and hard to explain
<b>Structure</b>	Switching from positive traits of <i>Gratuity</i> to negative ones that get refuted afterwards	Listing of values they developed together strengthens the sense of <i>Gratuity</i>	'Shift' 'different level' and 'focus' identifies a transition that needs to take place for people to live like this community
<b>Force</b>	Terms with adjectives, like 'very good and very nice' imply awe, respect and acceptance	Example of solid and cohesive family; 'way, way, way...' is almost an exaggeration → builds emotional credibility to the value	Neutral narrative description and example giving
<b>Coherence</b>	-	Implicit meaning of the quote	Dogmatic beliefs are assumed
<b>Intertextuality</b>	Appearance of the mutual support, non-existence of conflicts (or efficient resolution of them) asserted	Discourses contain the dedication to moving beyond materialism as ideology; instead community spirit and belonging are emphasized and the influence of people on each other's growth	Stable representation from an outsider's point of view (external discourse), referring to the mindset shift that is necessary for the viability of a degrowth community

Quotes – Relational Goods				
	Collective	Individual	Nature	Happiness and well-being
	“That it also is easier to adapt your lifestyle if you are surrounded by people who have similar outlook or have a similar lifestyle.” I-3	“So it's a learning path also to look at yourself. And developing personal growth in dealing with diversity and dealing with people who have different	“What I was thinking about which I think is very important. In the philosophy of degrowth, I think we need to observe nature more if you	“They've made deliberate choices about how they want to structure their lives, and that sense of intentionality seems to bring them

		<b>lifestyles and attitudes and backgrounds.” I-1</b>	<b>understand the, how to say, abundance of nature, which you may be even more understand being Hungarian.” I-7</b>	<b>satisfaction. Their lifestyle may differ from the mainstream, but it reflects their values and priorities. That, in itself, can be a powerful source of well-being” I-9</b>
<b>Grammar</b>	‘ <i>people</i> ’ act actively, but the individual is passive (whose lifestyle adapts to others’)	-	‘ <i>we need</i> ’ indicates that connection to nature should be the norm, but the opinion is personal: ‘ <i>I think</i> ’	The residents are passive actors from this outsider’s point of view
<b>Vocabulary</b>	‘ <i>similar</i> ’ repeated, that mirrors like-mindedness and strength of collective relations; ‘ <i>adopt</i> ’ → transformativeness of relations	‘ <i>developing</i> ’, ‘ <i>growth</i> ’, ‘ <i>learning path</i> ’ indicate the ways and steps toward acquiring degrowth mindset	‘ <i>very important</i> ’ to highlight arguments; ‘ <i>abundancy</i> ’ positively evaluates nature	Many technical terms and value-related expressions
<b>Cohesion</b>	-	Casual cohesion, ‘ <i>so</i> ’ implies explanation of the value	Subordinate sentence clauses	Explanatory and listing with ‘ <i>and</i> ’; ‘ <i>but</i> ’ opposes mainstream lifestyle
<b>Structure</b>	Repetition to emphasize importance	Statement is structured to represent the inner transformation of ecovillagers	Structure follows the Idea → explanation → social benefit flow	Clear support of claims and connections between well-being and residents’ ‘ <i>deliberate choices</i> ’ + values
<b>Force</b>	The quote is a generalization	‘ <i>to look at yourself</i> ’ is a suggestion towards something that is essential to degrowth	Normative and more	Conscious choice of adjectives ‘ <i>powerful</i> ’ claims respect and transformative value of Aardehuisen
<b>Coherence</b>	Speaker assumes listeners limited knowledge	Speaker assumes listeners limited knowledge	Speaker assumes shared knowledge with researcher	Speaker assumes listeners knowledge
<b>Intertextuality</b>	The quote aligns well with the broader traits of the degrowth movement	Living in small communities nourish individual growth that contributes to well-being	The speaker clearly refers to ‘ <i>the philosophy of degrowth</i> ’ which assumes some proficiency on the concept	Referral and interlinking the degrowth ideology, residents’ mindset and well-being

Quotes – Voluntary simplicity			
	“In terms of energy, water purification, and also sewage, that's all included within well the	“...sometimes I sit on on the terrace in some feeling like like some kind of a mafioso. Just feeling rich, let's put it	“...if you're not confronted with it or are in need, or you have less and be creative to reduce things.

	the small maintenance fee we pay to to the association which is to share that for us it's I think also 45 EUR per month. So that's actually what our house costs." I-2	that way because the fun thing is, if you look at our income compared to the average income in the Netherlands, we are way below the poverty line. And it's it's fun to notice that. Yeah, we don't have lack of anything." I-2	If it doesn't come in your notice it's hard to to think about it by yourself. Like I never buy clothes. Only in maybe a second hand store." I-4
<b>Grammar</b>	Speaker takes agency	'we' refers to the speaker but also to the community	Speaker generalizes → all-round responsibility
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Technical words, like 'sewage'	'feeling rich', 'fun' mirrors the enjoyment of simplicity	'have less', 'reduce' illustrate values
<b>Cohesion</b>	'so' as connector, followed by factual explanation	'fun', 'rich' and 'poverty line' are key phrases	'like' → exemplifying collective principle
<b>Structure</b>	Listing of facilities, where Aardehuisen reached simplicity and being off-grid	Discourse is based on a comparison: average Dutch income →← 'below poverty line'	Problem statement → sympathy/pity (?) with mainstream → personal example to highlight purpose
<b>Force</b>	Neutral description, as if living like this was the most evident form of living	Statement is fun and factual → it gives the true power of the discourse by mimicking the mainstream	Voice shows empathy, but offers alternative solution
<b>Coherence</b>	Speaker assumes listeners limited knowledge	-	Shared knowledge not assumed 'you'
<b>Intertextuality</b>	Simplicity in Aardehuisen comes with reduced living costs – internal discourse	The comparison and the metaphor imply the benefit of degrowth lifestyle (simplicity) compared to the mainstream society – external discourse	The ideologies of voluntary simplicity and consumer society – external discourse

Quotes – Value sovereignty			
	"...degrowth principles are somehow ingrained in our deeper longing for balance in harmony, living in in harmony with life and the planet, in our systems." I-2	"Yeah, we've been thinking about thinking along these lines for so long that I forget how other people are on a different level of consuming or environmental footprint. It's not that we are very, very slight consumers, but we've been reducing over the past 20 years compared to other people in this country." I-3	"For example, they, they value togetherness and. More than financial wealth and or the pursuit of financial. So it's, it's their. Their mindset is different." I-10
<b>Grammar</b>	'principles' are in passive tense; 'our' refers to the community being responsible for this unplanned integration	'we' refers to mainstream society, but also to the community; 'I' stands for personal activity	External stakeholder of Aardehuisen describes resident discourses
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Using 'degrowth' unveils alignment of values: 'harmony', 'life', 'planet'	Socio-ecological related terms, like 'consuming', 'reducing', 'environmental footprint'	'togetherness', 'mindset' →← 'financial wealth', clashing of ideologies

<b>Cohesion</b>	Cohesion is achieved by listing of intrinsic motives	Cohesion unfolds through contrasting ideologies	Cohesion unfolds through contrasting ideologies
<b>Structure</b>	-	Value sovereignty of Aardehuisen →← growing Dutch consumption levels	Contrasting and explanation gives structure to the discourse
<b>Force</b>	Description	Critique of mainstream economic paradigm → activist language; evaluation of Aardehuisen degrowth practices	Descriptive critique of materialistic principles as norms
<b>Coherence</b>	Shared ideology on degrowth between interviewer and his subject is given	Generalization, speaker involves interviewer and society into the discourse	No assumption of shared beliefs between speaker and interviewer
<b>Intertextuality</b>	The extrinsic discourse of degrowth is being referred to, highlighting the represented mission and vision of Aardehuisen	Another external discourse is brought in, namely overconsumption and society still living with enormous environmental footprint	Reference to mainstream, consumption-based discourses and dogmas

Quotes – Value sovereignty			
	“...degrowth principles are somehow ingrained in our deeper longing for balance in harmony, living in in harmony with life and the planet, in our systems.” I-2	“Yeah, we’ve been thinking about thinking along these lines for so long that I forget how other people are on a different level of consuming or environmental footprint. It’s not that we are very, very slight consumers, but we’ve been reducing over the past 20 years compared to other people in this country.” I-3	“For example, they, they value togetherness and. More than financial wealth and or the pursuit of financial. So it’s, it’s their. Their mindset is different.” I-10
<b>Grammar</b>	<i>‘principles’</i> are in passive tense; <i>‘our’</i> refers to the community being responsible for this unplanned integration	<i>‘we’</i> refers to mainstream society, but also to the community; <i>‘I’</i> stands for personal activity	External stakeholder of Aardehuisen describes resident discourses
<b>Vocabulary</b>	Using <i>‘degrowth’</i> unveils alignment of values: <i>‘harmony’</i> , <i>‘life’</i> , <i>‘planet’</i>	Socio-ecological related terms, like <i>‘consuming’</i> , <i>‘reducing’</i> , <i>‘environmental footprint’</i>	<i>‘togetherness’</i> , <i>‘mindset’</i> →← <i>‘financial wealth’</i> , clashing of ideologies
<b>Cohesion</b>	Cohesion is achieved by listing of intrinsic motives	Cohesion unfolds through contrasting ideologies	Cohesion unfolds through contrasting ideologies
<b>Structure</b>	-	Value sovereignty of Aardehuisen →← growing Dutch consumption levels	Contrasting and explanation gives structure to the discourse
<b>Force</b>	Description	Critique of mainstream economic paradigm → activist language; evaluation of Aardehuisen degrowth practices	Descriptive critique of materialistic principles as norms
<b>Coherence</b>	Shared ideology on degrowth between interviewer and his subject is given	Generalization, speaker involves interviewer and society into the discourse	No assumption of shared beliefs between speaker and interviewer

<b>Intertextuality</b>	The extrinsic discourse of degrowth is being referred to, highlighting the represented mission and vision of Aardehuisen	Another external discourse is brought in, namely overconsumption and society still living with enormous environmental footprint	Reference to mainstream, consumption-based discourses and dogmas
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Quotes – Sustainability			
	Sustainability	Alternative resource/technology	Building materials
	<b>“I personally feel that the change is not well, indirectly is coming from consumerism, but we need instant measures now to fix this system, you know, like I'm very happy to no longer use plastic straws in newspaper straws (...) but I think 80-90% of plastic pollution in the oceans is from fishery. I'm happy to return my glass bottles (...), but this is not what this is the small scale.”</b> I-3	<b>“...we don't strive for self sufficiency in food production, we do strive for that in as for for energy production. And right now on the car park, we have a carport with which supports 230 something solar panels. And we have a neighborhood battery store now. It'll be the first neighborhood battery in the municipality. And probably in the wider area as well.”</b> I-2	<b>“The whole principle of an earthship is that you find local materials and use them. So it's all in the essence of the dialogue.”</b> I-10
<b>Grammar</b>	Personal opinion, still it warns and urges society to take action + puts the responsibility on the global, polluting industries	Active language ('we') anticipates collective responsibility of the community's decision on utilizing alternative solutions	-
<b>Vocabulary</b>	' <i>consumerism</i> ' as value-based term; technical sustainability-focused language: ' <i>plastic straws</i> ', ' <i>pollution</i> ', ' <i>fishery</i> '	Technical, value-based language unveils knowledge within the field: ' <i>self-sufficiency</i> ', ' <i>energy production</i> ', ' <i>solar panels</i> '	Main philosophy of sourcing: ' <i>local materials</i> '
<b>Cohesion</b>	-	' <i>and</i> ' as connector contributes to the explanatory flow of the discourse	' <i>so</i> ' connects earthship definition to principle
<b>Structure</b>	Commercial pollution is opposed to small-scale, individual solutions and contributions	Promotes, how Aardehuisen experiments with alternative technologies to reduce their environmental footprint	-
<b>Force</b>	' <i>we need instant measures now</i> ' is a strong, emotional call to tackle mainstream ideologies	Descriptive tone, although the last two sentences are praises of their pioneer achievement	The tone is factual used for description

<b>Coherence</b>	Lots of personalized language of individual values	-	Shared knowledge between interviewer and its subject is not assumed
<b>Intertextuality</b>	External discourse is brought in by the data on fishery to support claims	-	Derives from an external discourse, which is the core characteristics of the earthship houses and their ecological relevance