

**Reimagining Craft as Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways:  
A Community-based Participatory Exploration of Degrowth**

by

Tanya I. Pacholok

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Community Engagement

School of Public Health

University of Alberta

© Tanya I. Pacholok, 2023

## Abstract

From beekeeping to brewing, Alberta's craft food sector offers potential provisional pathways toward degrowth. While many sustainable development policies are fuelled by beliefs in ecological modernisation or green growth, degrowth scholars criticize these approaches as offering empty promises of "sustaining the unsustainable" while failing to question the underlying principles of endless growth causing environmental destruction in the first place (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2015). Degrowth scholarship is becoming increasingly prominent as a political, economic, and social movement, yet research on examples of real-existing degrowth in lived practice is limited (Brossman & Islar, 2019; Kallis et al., 2022). Craft food may offer sites for real-existing examples of reimagining a sustainable future and social imaginary beyond dominant modernist models of growth, hustle, and consumerist culture. The craft food sector has been emerging as part of a broader alternative, local food movement that seeks to increase food resilience and address the many complex issues of our current globalised agri-food system (IPCC, 2022). Thus, the current study explores how craft food communities in Alberta understand degrowth and what this can reveal about how real-existing degrowth might be lived out in practice. Using an empirical community-based participatory research approach, I conducted a mixed-method study involving semi-structured interviews, a focus group, photovoice, and cellphilm methods (Wang & Burris, 1997). Using thematic content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), I examined, analysed and organised participants' responses into themes. In addition to this, I created an [online community exhibit](#) (Password: Degrowth) showcasing participants' photovoice photographs, cellphilm, and quotes. This study's findings contribute to the notion that degrowth approaches offer not just insights into economics and policy shifts but cultural and ontological shifts (Kallis et al., 2022). In the context of a

transitioning “petro-state” province like Alberta becoming so dependent on resource economies, particularly fossil fuels, examining craft food as a site of living degrowth principles offers insightful information on new social imaginaries and approaches to policy in environmental sustainability.

## Preface

This thesis is an original work by Tanya Iryna Pacholok. The research project has received ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board under the study title: **“Pacholok Thesis: Reimagining Craft as Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways”**, **Pro00118270\_AME1** on April 26, 2022.

## Dedication

To the thinkers, doers and dreamers who have, do and continue to contribute to the polydisciplinary movements that inspire this work. In the midst of many crises and struggles, thank you for breaking trail to explore new ways of thinking, being, relating, and organising. In the words of one of my favourite queer poets, Andrea Gibson (n.d.):

So build yourself as beautiful as you want your world to be. Wrap yourself in light, then give yourself away with your heart, your brush, your march, your art, your poetry, your play. And for every day you paint the war, take a week and paint the beauty, the color, the shape of the landscape you're marching towards. Everyone knows what you're against; show them what you're for. (Gibson, n.d.)

May their words be a reminder for us to be courageous and imaginative, yet critical in our visions and actions.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the community of people who have contributed to this thesis and supported this journey. I would like to begin by thanking the inspiring, innovative work of the many participants whose work is discussed throughout the following pages. Thank you for your vulnerability and willingness to share yourselves in this project. Your creative imaginings and dedication to your crafts are truly inspiring and give me radical hope. I also thank so many others whose work, thoughts and ideas are interwoven implicitly throughout these pages in many ways.

I extend sincere gratitude to my incredible supervisory committee. Thank you to my research supervisor Dr. Kevin E. Jones for your insightful conversations, countless coffee chats, and patient guidance throughout this process. Heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Sara K. Dorow for your insightful feedback that has beautifully deepened this work. Thank you to Dr. Rob Aitken for your fresh perspective and expertise as an external examiner. I deeply admire, respect, and appreciate you all. An additional thank you to Dr. Mary Beckie, for your mentorship and support throughout my graduate studies; and to Dr. Natalie Loveless, who has also influenced this process and whose ways of investigating have opened me up to new worlds in research.

Thank you to my loved ones and community who have all supported me throughout this journey. On a personal front, an extra special thank you to a few folks: my parents, for the unequivocal foundation of secure love and countless forms of support from dances of joy to meals; my brother, for being my eleventh-hour thesis angel, forever cheerleader and dear friend; my grandparents and extended family, for rooting me in love and culture; my fellow Covites, Erika, Mitchell, Tucker, and Alex, for cultivating a home of curiosity, compassion, karaoke, and authenticity; my classmates, for all of the enriching discourse that has stretched my theory and praxis; the mycelials, for teaching me that radical networks and possibilities do exist; Tin and Shayda, for being a source of love, solidarity and deep friendship; Gray, for blowing love, light, and wind in my sails; Sarah, for modelling leaning in; many a friend, for chatting these ideas with me over the past couple years; and Con, for teaching me what liberating love is and being my beloved anchor from afar.

Thank you to migraines for teaching me the art of slowing down.

Thank you to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for funding and supporting this research.

I also want to acknowledge that this research was conducted in amiskwacîwâskahikan (colonially known as Edmonton) on Treaty 6 Territory, which is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others. It is a privilege to live, learn and unlearn on these lands.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	ii
<b>Preface</b>	iv
<b>Dedication</b>	v
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	vi
<b>Table of Contents</b>	vii
<b>Figures</b>	x
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	xi
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	xiii
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	1
Research Purposes and Objectives	3
Context	4
Defining “Local Craft”	7
Literature Review	9
Ecological Contradictions of Modern Capitalism	9
Limits to Growth, Ecological Modernisation, and Green Growth	11
Alternative Approaches: Degrowth and Craft	14
Key Aspects of Craft and Degrowth	24
Points of Tension and Critique	27
Positionality	30
Methodology and Community-based Approach	31
Study Population and Sampling Method	32
Data Gathering Strategies	33

Data Analysis	37
Chapter Outline	38
References	39
<b>Chapter Two: Living Degrowth in Alberta’s Craft Food Sector</b>	<b>48</b>
Introduction	49
Methods	54
Analysis	59
Conclusions	80
References	82
<b>Chapter Three: Defining Degrowth Together</b>	<b>88</b>
Introduction	88
Reflective Questions for Craft Businesses	98
<b>Chapter Four: Conclusion</b>	<b>100</b>
Summary of Findings	101
Doing Things Differently and Community Commitment	101
Daily Practices by Theme	102
Getting Messy and Participating	105
Significance of Findings	107
Areas for Future Research	107
Concluding Remarks	111
References	113



**Appendices**

Appendix A: Recruitment Script	118
Appendix B: Information Letter and Consent Form: Participants	120
Appendix C: Interview Guide	125
Appendix D: Focus Group Workshop	
128	
Appendix E: Photovoice Consent Forms	131
Appendix F: Participant Hand Out	133

## Figures

**Figure 1** - Brossman and Islar's (2020) five spheres of practice for living degrowth.

**Figure 2** - Community beekeepers tend to their rooftop beehives downtown (Participant 16).

**Figure 3** - From lawn to garden (Participant 3).

**Figure 4** - Sorting beets by hand on a small-scale, organic farm (Participant 14).

**Figure 5** - Concept map of degrowth words and phrases from all participants.

**Figure 6** - A screenshot of the online, password-protected website displaying community members' photovoice submissions.

## Glossary of Terms

**Cellphilm** - coined by Dockney and Tomaselli (2009), cellphilm combines the words cellphone and film, and is used to describe a participatory, arts-based research method. Through cellphilms, individuals and communities make short films to express their perspectives or experience in an accessible, aesthetic format (Macentee et al., 2016).

**Community-based research** - a participatory research approach driven by community needs, priorities, and desires. A community-based approach fosters reciprocity, mutual respect, trust, capacity building, ownership, and accountability (Mayan & Daum, 2015).

**Craft** - our definition of craft builds upon Jones et al.'s (2020) four dimensions: (1) engagement with and dependence on materiality, (2) forms of learning and adaptation, (3) localism and place-making, and (4) associated networks and governance arrangements. According to Jones et al. (2020), craft often tends to “signal a dissatisfaction with current economies, their products, and the effects of particular forms of economic development on people, places, and communities” (p. 15).

**Degrowth** - an interdisciplinary political, economic, and social movement that critiques the global capitalist system, particularly pursuits of endless economic growth and growth-centered logic (Kallis et al., 2015). While it is a complex, contested term, degrowth seeks to address systemic inequalities and injustices based on class, gender, race, and other social factors perpetuated by capitalist modernity. It often focuses on care, commons, community, and conviviality (Kallis et al., 2015).

**Photovoice** - a qualitative, visual method in community-based participatory research that allows participants to express their perspectives, insights, and understandings through photographs (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2003). The photos are often shared and later used

in collaborative discussions with other participants or the greater community.

### **List of Abbreviations**

**2SLGBTQIA+** - an acronym for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and additional sexual orientations and gender identities.

**ASBA** - Alberta Small Brewers Association

**CBPR** - Community-based participatory research

**EM** - Ecological modernisation

**IPCC** - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

## Chapter One: Introduction

In this thesis, I explore how Alberta's craft food sector offers opportunities to explore, apply and better understand concepts of degrowth. Despite the increasing urgency of governments and communities to focus on environmental concerns, both groups have largely avoided commitments to reduce their consumption and production. Fournier (2008) and other degrowth scholars have argued that "tensions between technology and ecology, economic growth and ecology, and competitive market and ecology" (p. 530) are often ringfenced and overlooked, offering governments "win-win" strategies without posing any risk to dominant development logics (Milne et al., 2006). While sustainability discourse often focuses on green economies (Schlosberg & Rinfret, 2008), smart cities (Kumar et al., 2022), and ecological modernisation (Fairbrother, 2016; Spaargaren & Mol, 1992), degrowth scholars criticize such discourse for failing to address the systemic issues, philosophies, and human behaviours underlying our current environmental crisis (Gaard, 2017; Benson & Craig, 2014; Molotch, 1976). Degrowth and transition discourses reject the neoliberal values of a hustling pace of life and unbridled economic growth, and propose pathways leading to innovative, participatory, community-based climate action solutions (Alexander, 2013; Escobar, 2010). To achieve significant environmental, climate, and social transitions, proponents of degrowth and transition advocate for profound cultural, economic, and political transformation of dominant institutions (Escobar, 2010). In addition, they argue a cultural shift in the daily practices of producers and consumers is also necessary (Alexander, 2013). According to Alexander (2013):

legal, political and economic structures will never reflect a post-growth ethics of macro-economic sufficiency until a post-consumerist ethics of micro-economic sufficiency is embraced and mainstreamed at the cultural level. (p. 287)

If anything resembling a degrowth society is to emerge, people must be willing to consume less, differently and better, while also prioritising practices of organising differently (Alexander, 2013; Kallis, 2018).

While scholars have applied degrowth principles in various industries, they need to be examined further in relation to the craft food sector. According to Brossman and Islar (2020), change must occur across multiple dimensions and scales among individuals, society, institutions, and systems. In this thesis, I explore how degrowth is understood and lived out in the craft food sector in Alberta.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports the globalised agri-food system is the largest greenhouse gas-emitting sector in the world (IPCC, 2019), and is also the largest cause of biodiversity loss, terrestrial ecosystem destruction, freshwater consumption, and waterway pollution (IPRES, 2019; Rockstrom et al., 2010). Many companies in this system have located their production in other countries, often with looser regulatory regimes than in their home jurisdictions, where they can externalize costs to make themselves more competitive in the global market (Mancini et al., 2023). Such externalized costs negatively impact: (1) the well-being of local communities; (2) the environment; and (3) the sustainability of local production systems. There is an urgent need to shift towards alternative, increasingly local, and participatory food system projects such as craft food to reduce the harm of these negative impacts.

As alternatives to the globalised and industrialised agri-food system, there has been a resurgence of local, small-scale or place-based alternatives such as craft food (Wittman et al., 2012). Craft food has received a lot of attention and interest from consumers and producers as a local production pathway that opens up possibilities for stakeholders to engage and

participate in the system. Craft food and related alternative food systems offer many benefits. Some of these benefits include increased trust and reciprocity among consumers and producers (Hinrichs, 2000), a shortened food supply chain (Renting, Marsden & Banks, 2003), and more authentic relationships between system participants (Wittman et al., 2012). Wittman et al. (2012) found that “authentic” relationships formed through direct marketing and relationships at farmers’ markets were critical to supporting alternative food systems where producers were selling “more than tomatoes—they are also selling their farm story, the taste, the experience” (p. 50). Such benefits are similar to and in alignment with various principles of degrowth theory and scholarship. Key principles of degrowth include voluntary simplicity, conviviality, autonomy, commons, care, and solidarity (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2015).

This introductory chapter will provide an overview of the research purpose and objectives, the context for the research, a literature review of key concepts and issues, and the methodology used. I will also discuss my positionality and reflect on how this has shaped the research.

### **Research Purpose and Objectives**

This study examines and explores some of the ways in which craft local food communities exhibit real-existing degrowth, and how craft food communities in Alberta live out degrowth. More specifically, the study:

1. explores a community-based understanding of degrowth within Alberta’s craft food sector, including opportunities, challenges and points of tension;
2. aims to better understand what an equitable and just vision of degrowth looks like for Alberta’s craft food community; and
3. explores how craft food producers understand and live out degrowth in their daily



lives through photovoice/cellphilm, interviews and focus group discussions.

Although degrowth may, at times, visualise society through an abstract or utopic lens, this study seeks to examine tangible degrowth being lived out in the context of Alberta. According to Eizenberg (2012), even in the face of pervasive neoliberal ideology and practices, “‘alternatives do exist’ and they pave the road to new politics and another possible world” (p. 765).

Recognizing that craft food and degrowth are not silver bullet solutions, in this thesis I collaboratively seek to understand the lived realities of participants, explore alternative politics, and envision new worlds. This work also discusses shifting our culture towards a more just society by moving away from growth-oriented philosophies and towards socio-ecological transformations rooted in degrowth.

### **Context**

This research focuses on the craft food sector within the province of Alberta situated in the Canadian Prairies. In recent years, Alberta has experienced a surge in craft food that offers entry points toward supporting localised, resilient, and sustainable food systems in a province experiencing high levels of food insecurity. According to a recent study, Alberta has the highest prevalence of household food insecurity in Canada (Tarasuk et al., 2022). In 2022, the prevalence of food insecurity in Alberta was 20.3%, meaning one in five Alberta households was food insecure (Tarasuk et al., 2022). Furthermore, household food insecurity is a racialized issue, as Indigenous populations face disproportionately higher vulnerability to food insecurity than non-Indigenous populations due to economic and social inequities (Lowitt et al., 2022; Skinner et al., 2020). Proponents of resilient food systems use a holistic approach to encompass the complexity of food systems, including social, economic, and biophysical processes while bolstering the capacities of such systems to account for uncertainty (Tendall et al., 2015).

Tendall (2015) defines food system resilience as the “capacity over time of a food system and its units at multiple levels, to produce sufficient, appropriate and accessible food to all, in the face of various and even unforeseen disturbances” (p. 17). To move towards more just and resilient food systems for all, people are exploring alternative approaches embedded in local, place-based production systems such as the craft food sector.

While food system reform is a complex task, approaching food system research with an emphasis on holistic, long-term perspectives while also encompassing aspects of justice, resilience, and participatory frameworks are being explored by various researchers and communities today. Ideas within degrowth encourage not only the reduction of consumption, production and improvement of efficiency in the use of resources but also alternative ways of organising. This involves shifting organisational schemes from capitalist logic to more locally embedded communitarian logic that focuses on reciprocity, commons, collective action and conviviality. These organisational dimensions of degrowth have been explored in sectors such as community-based tourism (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2020), and this study explores them in the Alberta craft food sector.

This study included participants from across Alberta, including rural areas and large metropolitan centres. Alberta is home to about 4.54 million people, most of whom are situated in Edmonton and Calgary, the capital city and largest city, respectively (Statistics Canada, 2022). Edmonton is “roughly three hundred miles south of the Athabasca oil sands, one of the greatest environmental blights on the planet, during what are undeniably petro-cultural end times” (Loveless, 2019, p. 16). In the previous year, Alberta’s population grew 2.2% annually, a significant increase from 2021-22 growth of 0.6% and the highest level since 2013-14 (Government of Alberta, 2022). With its growing population and uncertainty facing resource

economies, compounded by the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a push towards innovative approaches to economic transition and diversification in Alberta (Jones et al., 2020). Through their localised supply chains and “fertile material for studying industrial organisation, institutional change, and economic development”, craft food industries have created opportunities for economic diversification and pathways towards more resilient, secure and sustainable food systems (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2017, p. 6). This shift also extends to craft beverage industries; with recent changes in liquor regulation, Alberta is now home to 130 breweries, an increase from just 30 in 2015 (ASBA, 2022). The Alberta Small Brewers Association boasts “a rich beer culture because everyone is passionate and proud” (ASBA, 2022). From beer brewers to craft butchers, Alberta’s craft food and beverage market is booming with support from interested consumers (Avenue, 2020).

In the craft food sector, questions linger about how to scale up local food systems while maintaining their authenticity (Wittman et al., 2012) and how to bridge the divide between conventional and alternative food systems. While often imperfect, place-based food systems aim to “[get] more local food on more local plates” (Granzow & Beckie, 2019, p. 216). More broadly, public values are shifting with the resurgence of farmers’ markets, community gardens, and networks of small-scale producers serving various community sustainability functions (Wittman et al., 2012). From community gardens to craft brewing, entire communities and many individual consumers are rethinking their relationships to their food systems, getting more involved with alternates and increasing direct connection to their producers and food systems.

### **Defining “Local Craft”**

While this study focuses on what the Albertan craft food sector can contribute to degrowth, I recognize that there are varied understandings of what constitutes craft food. While

it is challenging to define craft food specifically, this study seeks to create a working definition and conceptualisation of craft food discussed in the literature review below. In Wittman et al.'s (2012) study, an Alberta government representative defined local as maintaining a production chain within Alberta, which included producers from Peace Country transporting their products hundreds of kilometres to the Calgary Farmers' Market. While they agreed that this did not qualify as a 100 km diet, which many be considered the "gold standard" for local diets, an Albertan food that is regionally focused holds a regional food system identity in Alberta (Wittman et al., 2012).

It is important to distinguish craft food from tactics of "craftwashing" (Howard, 2018). Craftwashing is used to refer to instances when large breweries (>6 million barrels per year) use deceptive marketing tactics to emulate small-scale craft breweries while simultaneously hiding their ownership or size from consumers (Howard, 2018). Not unique to the brewing industry, craftwashing tactics are also seen to market products made by large corporations like McDonalds' "artisan grilled chicken sandwich" or PepsiCo's "craft soda", each being sold by some of the largest, mass-produced fast food chains (Treager, 2007). Boasting higher quality food, drinks, atmosphere and experiences from "your neighbourhood gathering spot", the Local Public Eatery chain of restaurants is another example of a large business using the language of local craft food while sprawling multiple "neighbourhood" locations across Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Washington (Local Public Eatery, 2022). This "local neighbourhood" eatery that claims to be "creating unexpectedly memorable experiences for [their] people and for [their] neighbours" is owned by the JOEY Restaurant Group, a restaurant conglomerate with annual revenues exceeding \$280 million and 1528 employees (JOEY Restaurant Group, 2022). While there may be varying interpretations of craft, I do not seek to gatekeep the term; however,

it is important to be mindful and aware of what differentiates craft from trendy branding or marketing. In order to prevent craftwashing, some countries have instituted protective regulations specifying what constitutes local craft food products and systems.

I acknowledge that not all of the craft food sector aligns with principles of degrowth, nor does it need to, especially considering the variety of interpretations of what constitutes craft food. Furthermore, a craft food business does not need to be small-scale in order to be degrowth. Some of the exemplary anti-growth business models discussed in the literature such as Patagonia are large companies that still challenge conventional wisdom, and promote sufficiency-oriented consumption strategies and other degrowth principles (Labrague, 2017). However, this study focuses on businesses within the craft food sector that align with principles of degrowth, strive to live it in practice, and thus, this study seeks to better understand the implications of such an approach. In the following literature review, I further explore the conversations, tensions, and opportunities within craft and degrowth literature.

### **Literature Review**

In this literature review, I provide a foundation of current literature and discussion on degrowth, craft, and craft food. I examine the degrowth movement's origins, evolution, application across contexts, and overlapping movements. I also aim to build a conversation between craft, degrowth, and the broader field of environmental sociological discourse that scholars have identified as currently lacking.

## **Ecological Contradictions at the Heart of Modern Capitalism**

According to degrowth scholars, at the heart of modern capitalism, is an array of socioecological issues revealing that sustained economic growth is no longer feasible. While many countries have experienced socioeconomic “progress” and increased quality of life in the past three decades, these have been accompanied by significant concerns with increasing environmental degradation and pressures. Degrowth scholars argue that growth logic's social and ecological costs exceed its benefits (Kallis et al., 2020):

Widespread habitat destruction, the loss of biodiversity, chaotic shifts in global weather, the steady depletion of natural resources, growing income inequality, the debt-laden and crisis-prone global economy [...] all these things circled back to growth. (Ellwood, 2014, p. 8)

The mechanisms by which growth logics are able to continue often include production chains and accounting systems that externalise costs and shift damages onto other people, species, and future generations (Kallis et al., 2020; Lessenich, 2020). Externalisation of costs refers to the transfer of costs such as environmental damage and social impacts, usually from wealthy, highly “industrialized” countries to poorer, less “developed” regions of the world. In this way, “externalisation means exploiting the resources of others, passing on costs to them, appropriating the profits, and promoting self-interest while obstructing or even preventing the progress of others” (Lessenich, 2020, p. 22). Many companies in the agri-food system have located their production in other countries where they can externalise costs to increase profits and make themselves more competitive in the global market (Mancini, 2012). These externalised costs have negative impacts on the well-being of local communities who live there, the environment, and the sustainability of local production systems. In fact, Kallis et al. (2020) discuss how

exploitation is a vital ingredient for growth such as cheap and undervalued access to materials, workers, and energy.

According to Gaard (2017), the concept of “sustainable development”, introduced as a promise to the Global South of “catching up”, is an “illusory prospect ... since the affluence and technological sophistication of first world nations was created through the colonialist extraction of labour, environments, and other ‘natural resources’ from third world (*sic*) countries” (p. 4). Even the concept of quantifying one’s ecological impact or worldview, from a critical ecofeminist perspective, is problematic and limiting. Various scholars criticize conceptions of abundance, development and continuous growth on a planet with finite resources (Merchant, 1990). Ewing (2017) argues that we must instead critique the fundamental traits of the capitalist world-system. Degrowth scholars point out that expansionist modes of knowing and being are deeply ingrained and intertwined with expanding colonial, capitalist and fossil fuel economies (Kallis et al., 2020). Because of these ingrained worldviews and cultural narratives, many propositions towards addressing our current crises focus on greening growth and sustaining development rather than challenging these logics.

### **Limits to Growth, Ecological Modernisation and Green Growth**

Over the past few decades, there has been an ongoing debate between green growth and post-growth advocates about whether economic growth and environmental sustainability can coexist (Martinez-Alier, 2010). Various rejections of adopting limits to growth have come from economists, technological optimists and those who support ecological modernisation, green development, and sustainable development (Kish & Quilley, 2017). They often posit that through technological innovation, dematerialisation, and decoupling (of resource use from economic growth), material inputs can increase efficiency, allowing more tasks while

simultaneously using fewer resources (Kish & Quilley, 2017). One of the most established and elaborate discourses supporting these arguments is ecological modernisation (EM), which supports the idea of growth and “big” as necessary to achieve ecological efficiencies and ecological systems design (Mol et al., 2009). EM is a theoretical and conceptual framework which emerged in Western Europe in the 1970s. It emphasises industrial efficiency and technological developments to address ecological problems (Martin, 2008; Spaargaren & Mol, 1992). According to EM and Martin (2008):

an environmental problem proves politically less difficult to resolve if a marketable solution exists. In contrast, if a solution [...] requires an intervention in the established patterns of production, consumption, or transport, it is likely to meet resistance. (p. 557)

From this position, it is believed that we can reconcile the conflict between economic development and environmental destruction without compromising economic growth, modernity, or industrialisation (Schlosberg, 2008). Meanwhile, various scholars critique EM’s “productivist” orientation for disregarding human agency and citizen-consumer analysis within the production chain (De Souza et al., 2020). EM perspectives argue that since externalities are typically borne by nature, if they are quantified, priced, and held accountable in economic terms, then externalities will be regulated, managed and reduced (Fairebrother, 2016). However, degrowth scholars argue that rising energy expenditures, rebound effects, and cost-shifting are inevitable consequences of EM (Parrique, 2019).

Additionally, experts are uncertain about whether it is possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining economic growth measured through decoupling. The “conundrum of whether environmental issues can be tackled without jeopardizing economic growth remains



central to sustainable development debates today” (Blowfield & Murray, 2011, p. 59). The decoupling indicator is “the ratio of the percentage changes in resource use and the percentage changes in GDP” measuring correlation between resource use and economic growth. Relative decoupling refers to a higher rate of economic growth to resource use, while absolute decoupling refers to a decline in resource (fossil fuel) use while maintaining positive economic growth (Papież et al., 2022, p. 6671). Using regression analysis, individual countries or groups of countries can be given a coupling coefficient, which measures the strength and magnitude of the correlation between their economic growth and resource use. When this regression coefficient is not significantly different from zero, it is assumed that decoupling has been achieved. According to degrowth scholars, there is no empirical evidence of absolute, permanent global decoupling occurring today (Parrique et al., 2019). While some relative decoupling has occurred on national levels (Papież et al., 2022), absolute decoupling is often short-term, in specific locations and only relevant to certain resources and forms of impact (Parrique et al., 2019). Other reasons degrowth scholars are sceptical of sufficient future decoupling include rising energy expenditures, rebound effects (as efficiency improves, consumption and impact tend to increase), problem shifting and cost shifting. Degrowth scholars argue that sufficient decoupling cannot be achieved without limits on economic production and consumption; regardless of decoupling improvements, decoupling alone is not sufficient to address today’s environmental crises.

Despite the evidence against sufficient decoupling, various sustainability frameworks and policies continue to build upon beliefs in ecological modernisation and green growth, believing that decoupling environmental pressures from GDP could allow for continued economic growth. Even the United Nations’ (2015) *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs),

built on the Brundtland Commission's Report, have been criticised for not addressing the need to reduce consumption and production (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019). SDG Number Eight explicitly refers to and targets "Decent Work and Economic Growth" and full employment for all (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019). Throughout the years, this fuels the position that sustainable "development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43); however, much of conventional sustainability discourse settles for mere reformist change within the current technocratic, neo-capitalist global structure perpetuating dominant growth logics, which actually does compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Kallis et al. (2020) argue that at certain periods, including the mid-twentieth century, increased efficiency and focus on increased production resulted in an expanded middle class and greater income equality. However, since the 1980s, growth in national and international "pies" or production are resulting in increased disparity within and between countries (Kallis et al., 2020). For example, despite ten consecutive years of increased GDP in the United States, household income disparity between the richest and poorest in that nation is the largest it has been in fifty years (Kallis et al., 2020). Rather than addressing the endless growth and exploitation of natural resources, the EM perspective pacifies, justifies and excuses high, unsustainable production and consumption.

Moving beyond perspectives that attempt to disguise systems exploitative of nature and people, various scholars are calling for a more "artful sustainability with cultures of complexity" that challenges growth logic (Kagan, 2013, p. 2017). Though complex and not without its own critiques, degrowth theories attempt to address some of these questions by reducing the size of

the global economy, in particular by targeting affluent, over-consuming economies (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019).

### **Alternative Approaches: Degrowth and Craft**

In contrast to green growth and sustainable development approaches, the degrowth movement critiques the pursuit of economic growth, and calls for society to reduce its material and energy throughputs (Kallis, 2018). Rather, degrowth begins from the premise that global growth has reached its limits, as put forward by the *Limits to Growth Report* (Meadows et al., 1972) and empirical research documenting unsuccessful attempts at decoupling growth from resource use (Sekulova et al., 2013). Degrowth's origins are often traced back to economist Serge Latouche (2007), who put forth notions of a society based on “frugal abundance” and redefining wealth from material and monetary terms into those of holistic well-being. For Latouche (2007), degrowth requires reduced working time, consumption, and consumerism. It means not only consuming less, but differently. Furthermore, degrowth scholarship is associated with significant contributions from Georgescu-Roegen's (1971) *la décroissance économique socialement soutenable*, which calls for less production, but also challenges existing economic systems and the “entropic nature of the economic process” (p. 105). Georgescu-Roegen (1993) challenges various assumptions, such as the “circumdrome of the shaving machine”, which he describes as the irony of wanting:

to shave oneself faster so as to have more time to work on a machine that shaves faster  
so as to have more time to work on a machine that shaves still faster, and so on *ad  
infinitum*. (p. 105)

Here, he challenges an arbitrary framing of time and points out the self-perpetuating cycles of hustle culture fueled by industrialised notions of efficiency. Further, Georgescu-Roegen (1993)

criticised the exponential growth of crude oil production and fossil fuel dependency. He argues that our inability to address such issues is not a lack of knowledge but rather cultural barriers such as ingrained growth paradigms and extractivist thinking.

At its core, “degrowth denounces economic thinking and systems that see growth as the ultimate good” (Georgescu-Roegen, 1993, p. 531). Instead, degrowth encourages us to consider and value “goods” such as “justice, equality, democracy, human and ecosystem health, quality of life, [and] social relations” (Georgescu-Roegen, 1971, p. 531). Degrowth scholars, such as Kallis (2018), deconstruct the concept of value itself, moving beyond economic preoccupations about the utility, exchange, or production of goods (Kallis, 2018, p. 45-52), to address values in nature, or in care work, as two examples. Thus, in this thesis, I explore craft as degrowth in ways which address value beyond the qualities and values of craft products, to include values at the scale of community and local environments.

### ***Degrowth Across Contexts***

Although the term degrowth has gained much attention across Europe, it also draws on traditions and discourse in South America (Buen Vivir), India (Swaraj), South Africa (Ubuntu), Indigenous peoples across what is colonially known as Canada (e.g., the Anishinaabe concept of *mino-biimaadiziwin*; *Mino-pimatisiwin* in Cree), and other communities around the world that engage with similar discourse, philosophies, resistance, and social movements (Kallis et al., 2015). In the Global South, post-development has gained more momentum through the *Buen Vivir* and the *Rights of Nature* social movements (Escobar, 2010). *Buen Vivir* (living well) provides an alternative to development that has grown out of critiques and concerns for Indigenous struggles, peasants, Afrodescendants, environmentalists, women, and youth. Broadly, it offers an Indigenous ontology that prioritises ecological well-being and human

dignity above economic objectives. In this way, *Buen Vivir* and degrowth can be thought of as parallel endeavours for ecological and social justice (Teixera, 2021). Similar values to those of *Buen Vivir* are found in agroecological networks and other post-extractivist frameworks that move away from neoliberal extractivist models (Escobar, 2015; Teixera, 2021). Principles parallel to degrowth can also be found in slow living movements, voluntary simplicity, and other transition discourses that have emerged in various parts of the world (Alexander, 2015; Escobar, 2010; Martinez Alier et al., 2010).

Similar concepts and philosophies of *living well* are shared among various Indigenous communities across what is colonially known as Canada. Goodchild (2021) discusses the need for decolonised relational systems thinking that emphasises cross-cultural dialogue, spiritual connections, and a sacred understanding of well-being for all species. Anishinaabe *mino-biimaadiziwin* (mino-pimatisiwin) in traditional teaching means living a “good life” in Cree, “the realisation of healing, balance, and life-long learning” (Deer & Falkenberg, 2016, p. 2).

In addition to the above examples, Kallis et al. (2015) have identified other alliances with the degrowth movement, including economy of permanence (Corazza & Victus, 2015), feminist economics, and Ubuntu (Ramose, 1999). These movements advocate paradigmatic shifts in societal values and offer action-based pathways to move forward (Kallis et al., 2015).

### ***Recent Pathways to Degrowth***

Degrowth scholarship proposes specific pathways of individual action and systemic policy (Cosme, Santos & O’Neill, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019).

According to the recent UN-backed Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report on the current status of global biodiversity loss, “a key component of sustainable pathways is the evolution of global financial and economic systems to

build a global sustainable economy, steering away from the current, limited paradigm of economic growth” (Diaz et al., 2019, p. 10). Degrowth scholars critique frameworks that rely on metrics such as GNP and GDP and that only consider the production and sale of commodified goods and services as indicators of economic health, while ignoring justice, equality, equity, democracy, ecosystem health, quality of life, and human/nonhuman well-being (Fournier, 2008).

Cosme et al. (2017) observe three sets of proposed actions within degrowth academic literature: (1) reducing the environmental impact of human activities; (2) redistributing income and wealth both between and within countries; and (3) promoting the transition from materialistic to convivial, participatory societies and community (Cosme et al., 2017). For this study, I focus on the bottom-up approaches to degrowth as outlined by the third category-transition to a more convivial and participatory society; however, I also discuss other conceptualisations and proposals for context. Studies have shown well-being and quality of life do not correlate with growth or profits, but that they are more influenced by equality, democracy, and time prosperity (Kallis et al., 2015). Kallis et al. (2020) note that to “support pleasurable and meaningful lives in resilient societies and environments requires values and institutions that produce different kinds of persons and relations” (p. 5). While this is one approach to, and interpretation of, degrowth, various scholars across disciplines, backgrounds, and time periods have provided their own nuanced versions of it.

Proposals on moving towards sustainable degrowth vary from radical “exits” from current systems and shifts to non-monetary exchange economies such as eco-villages, rurban (rural-urban) squatting (Cattaneo & Gavalda, 2010) and subsistence farming, to proposals of organised, “local, inclusive democracies” (Fotopoulos, 2009, p. 108) or reformist, state-level policy change (Fournier, 2008). Kallis et al. (2020) outline various policy changes that support

reformist pathways that support the redistribution of work, resources, and wealth. Some of their policy suggestions include limits on salary ratios, wealth taxes, and universal services (Kallis et al., 2020). Other suggestions include the following:

- (1) carbon fees and dividend programs that generate shared ‘climate income’; (2) globally coordinated progressive taxes on wealth; and (3) progressive income taxes and standards on income disparity within organisations and companies. (Kallis et al., 2020, p. 77)

These proposals include strengthening local economies (re-localisation) through local currencies and breaking down banks and financial institutions (Kallis, 2011; Korten, 2008). Latouche (2009) suggests that funds collected from various redistributive taxations, environmental damages, or taxes on international capital movement could be put toward community education, health, common spaces, or public programs. All of these strategies for mobilizing change require many actors at multiple levels, including cultural and organisational structures.

**Degrowth Business Models.** Recently, degrowth scholars have directed attention towards how businesses can adopt degrowth models. Literature on the potential transformations of degrowth business emphasises the need to change how we produce and provide services, or what Nesterova (2022) refers to as a “business of deep transformations” (p. 106). For degrowth scholars, a deep transformation of business involves reframing businesses as “whole being[s]” to capture their multi-dimensionality, including: (1) the environment; (2) people and non-humans; and (3) deviation from profit maximisation imperatives (Nesterova, 2020). Elkington (1994) refers to this as the triple bottom line of profit, people, and the environment, which includes intentional deviation from profit maximisation and considers non-humans as agents.

Many business models “for sustainability” still fit within frameworks of neoclassical

economics, green growth, or ecological modernisation paradigms (Boons et al., 2013; Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018). Degrowth scholars often criticize limited social and environmental commitments for lacking meaningful action or challenges to the growth paradigm, such as greenwashing (misleading or unsubstantiated claims to sustainability commitments) and bluewashing (misleading or unsubstantiated claims to social commitments) practices (Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018). In connecting degrowth to business models, Khmara and Kronenberg (2018) outline seven criteria to operationalise the concept of degrowth in business activity. The seven criteria they outline are:

- (1) alternative understanding of business;
- (2) from business activity to activism and social movement;
- (3) collaborative value creation;
- (4) democratic governance;
- (5) corporate leaders' commitment to company values in personal life;
- (6) reduction of environmental impacts at all stages of product/service life-cycle; and
- (7) making products that last and are repairable. (Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018, p. 721)

Khmara and Kronenberg (2018) use the case study of Patagonia as an exemplary large, anti-growth company. Patagonia's astute awareness of the impacts of its supply chain, focus on longevity and repair of items, and anti-consumption campaigns, are a few aspects of its anti-growth model (Jermier & Forbes, 2016). In 2013, Patagonia's *Responsible Economy* campaign declared that "growth is a dead end" (MacKinnon, 2015). Moving away from "sustainability" to more regenerative mission statements, Patagonia collaborates with other companies and civil society organisations and "exists to challenge conventional wisdom and present a new style of responsible business" (Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018, p. 725). Gossen and Kropfeld (2022) describe Patagonia's marketing as sufficiency-oriented consumption strategies and activities in alignment with degrowth theory. In addition, Gossen & Kropfeld (2022) encourage



understanding consumption as a social practice. The concept of consumption as a social practice is similar to the concept of replacing the consumer as citizen, which I discuss later in this thesis.

### ***Living Degrowth in the Everyday***

According to Kallis et al. (2020), there is a required strong base of people for which degrowth is not just an abstract idea but also something they live in their everyday lives. Living degrowth in the everyday can be applied to various sectors, one of which is craft food. For example, craft food that is sold at direct agricultural markets not only provides an alternate market, it moves closer to the decommodification of food and “the defying of the standard market model altogether” (Hinrichs, 2000, p. 295). Direct producer-consumer relationships fostered by farmers’ markets allow for consumer education to take place, which helps consumers understand the values and costs associated with local foods. To better initiate a conversation between craft food and degrowth, we must clearly define and conceptualise “craft”.

**Conceptualising Craft as Degrowth.** “Craft” remains a contested term among its own communities, often defined by its “connection to the past through a respect for techniques and the sustenance of traditional methods of making... as well as its links to a focus on materials and the production process” (Luckman, 2015, p. 17). In this study, I build upon Jones et al.’s (2020) conception of craft as constituted by four dimensions: (1) engagement and dependence on materiality; (2) forms of learning and adaptation; (3) localism and place-making; and (4) associated networks and governance arrangements (Jones et al., 2020). According to Jones et al. (2020), craft tends to “signal a dissatisfaction with current economies, their products, and the effects of particular forms of economic development on people, places, and communities” (p. 910).

It is vital to note alternate and various discussions of craft as they relate to creativity,

innovation, and diversification of labour. These have long been explored throughout craft literature, from philosophies of labour inspired by Hegel and Marx, to more recent notions in urban scholarship of what it means to “live well” in late-capitalist societies (Florida, 2003; Sayers, 2007). Inspired by Florida (2003), much urban scholarship has embraced the potential of innovation economies, culture, and the creative class to stimulate new global economies (Scott, 2006). Within understandings of the creative city (Landry, 2000) and the creative class (Florida, 2002), globalisation, capitalism, and industrialisation are core components, and development policies become “about making places adaptive to global capitalism under this new guise, reinforcing their competitiveness” (Jones et al., 2020, p. 3). In contrast, craft sectors offer an alternative to these innovative and creative economies, “as a classical and situated livelihood, guided by guild traditions, and anchored to the physical and material” rooted in detailed, situated, and local knowledge connected to place and community (the craftsperson).

According to Sennett (2008), craft is “an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well” (p. 9). Sennett (2008) discusses a variety of craft sectors and domains, stating that:

Craftsmanship cuts a far wider swath than skilled manual labour; it serves the computer programmer, the doctor, and the artist; parenting improves when it is practiced as a skilled craft, as does citizenship. In all these domains, craftsmanship focuses on objective standards, on the thing itself. (p. 9)

However, academics have extended beyond Sennett’s (2008) definition and dedicated much literature to studying craft sectors. While traditional craft knowledge has been a means of connecting culture, language, and environmental knowledge among generations, there has been renewed interest in craft industries and craft sectors observed as a strategy for adaptation and community development (Ermilova, Terada & Kinoshita, 2018; Jones et al., 2020).

Furthermore, some definitions extend the skills of modern craft to encompass “holistic understanding, informal learning, intrinsic motivation, tacit knowledge, and problem-finding and problem-solving” (Thorlindsson et al., 2018, p. 115). In this way, craftwork extends into a wide range of domains, including academic work, political negotiation, and medicine (Dornan & Nestel, 2015).

**From Bees to Brews: Defining Craft Food.** While it may be challenging to identify a single definition of craft, it is helpful to identify shared traits, values, and characteristics in the craft food sector. In the brewing industry, craft breweries are usually referred to as those that produce less than six million barrels annually, and are independently owned rather than owned by a conglomerate (Rice, 2015). Craft brewing is usually distinguished from mass-produced beer made in large breweries that have been around for many years and “survived the consolidation process of the twentieth century” (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2019, p. 4). Over the past few decades, the craft beer industry has transformed the global brewing industry from the domination of a few global multinationals and the homogenisation of beer to a large variety of locally-based breweries, with different countries experiencing this change at different times (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2017). Some of the beginning years of the craft beer movement are thought to be 1965 in the United States, 1981 in the Netherlands, and 1980 in Australia (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2017). In Alberta, there has been a surge of craft breweries, particularly over the past seven years (ASBA, 2022). These craft beer movements share common criteria including local ownership, production process, scale, age and tradition (Garavaglia & Swinnen, 2017). Similar to the discussion of “craftwashing” in the previous section, there is an inauthenticity perceived when a “crafty” brewery deceptively cultivates the perception that it produces craft beer after it has been bought out by a large conglomerate.

Beyond the brewing industry, Treagar (2007) describes two main conceptualisations of craft food artisans: (1) emphasising cooperation and community involvement; and (2) prioritising lifestyle goals over growth. Treagar (2007) found that both lifestyle goals and commercial ambitions were driving factors for artisan food producers in the United Kingdom. Other associations include items being handmade, authentic, uncompromised, and true (Rice, 2016). Others reject words like authentic, and instead, refer to a “true” beer created by small and independent businesses (Cottone, 1986). A craft product in general is often defined as “something tailor-made and original, embodying the artisan’s skills and personality, and different from a standardised product, these traits might induce consumers to pay more” (Rice, 2016, p. 220)

Rennstam (2021) discussed the potential of craft as degrowth in the following aspects: (1) employment; (2) investment; and (3) consumption. In this framework, first, craft often involves slower, labour-intensive work that does not necessarily strive for efficiency through automation, which is “likely to be an important new attitude to work if we are to prosper in a non-growth society where new jobs cannot be created through increased production and consumption” (Rennstam, 2021, p. 10). Second, craft attracts investments due to genuine interest in the quality or usefulness of products, rather than simply revenue, which is important to supporting a degrowth society. Third, craft consumption is driven by genuine interest in product, quality, locality, production process, and connection to community (Rennstam, 2021). I now explore four other core components of degrowth that may be seen in craft, particularly when applying degrowth business model principles to craft food.

### **Key Aspects of Craft and Degrowth**

## *Slowness*

Slowness, as a countermovement to high-tech, fast-paced neoliberal structures and patriarchal, capitalist, and consumerist values, is an integral component of degrowth scholarship. The slow movement encompasses the capital “S”, Slow Food movement that began in the 1970s Italy, but dates back much earlier and across many contexts and thinkers (Alexander, 2009; Botta, 2016; Radstrom, 2011). Slow living has been defined as restructuring one’s life around meaning and fulfillment, coupled with a desire to increase one’s enjoyment and quality of life (Honore, 2005; Jalas, 2012). Often referred to as voluntary simplicity, slow principles reject notions of material abundance and capitalist, patriarchal norms that devalue both women and nature. Slow living principles and critical ecofeminists challenge the assumption that poverty is an absence of Western consumption habits, or that abundance is measured in terms of monetary income (Shiva, 2005). Further, Shiva (2005) critiques the standard definition of poverty, differentiating *poverty as subsistence* from *poverty as deprivation*. At its core, slow living asks the question:

If the material consumption of a fraction of humanity is already harming the planet, is there an alternative path that enables all of humanity to live more lightly upon the Earth while experiencing a higher quality of life? (Elgin, 2013, p. 72)

Based on the pursuit of increasing one’s quality of life through mindful connection to self, place, and nature, slowness can be related to feminist politics of pleasure-based embodied attunement and intimate knowing as driving forces to radical change (brown, 2019). Slowness can be viewed as striving to embody practices of knowing, skill sharing, and place-based ways of knowing, which can be seen with various craft practices (Alexander, 2009; Lamb, 2019). This study will

further explore how different relationships with time, pace and place emerge for participants as aspects of living degrowth.

### *Conviviality*

Conviviality, a core element of degrowth theory, has been defined as the ability of individuals and communities to interact creatively and autonomously with their environment and community to satisfy and fulfill various needs. According to Ilich (1973), an Austrian cultural critic, theologian and sociologist, conviviality is the opposite of industrial productivity, and refers to the “autonomous creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment” (p. 11). To him, fulfillment comes from being free of conditioned responses to demands put onto us by other people and human-created environments. It can, therefore, be regarded as an “individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, [offers] an intrinsic ethical value” (Illich, 1973, p. 11). Illich (1973) believed that in societies in which conviviality is below a certain threshold, its members’ needs cannot be effectively satisfied regardless of their industrial productivity. For Illich (1973), “industrial productivity at the expense of convivial effectiveness is a major factor in the amorphousness and meaninglessness that plague contemporary society” (p. 11). In a more convivial society, members feel more joy, as opposed to mere pleasure, have the capacity for creativity and:

What is fundamental to a convivial society is not the total absence of manipulative institutions and addictive goods and services, but the balance between those tools which create the specific demands they are specialized to satisfy and those complementary, enabling tools which foster self-realization. (Illich, 1973, p. 24)

Throughout this study, I explore how increased conviviality might emerge in the craft sector, how craftspeople are balancing the use of tools, resisting addicting goods and services, and

allowing convivial tools to foster self-realization. Various examples of informal training, collaborative learning, and experiential learning networks are often present in the craft sector, which may also increase conviviality.

### ***Open localisms***

Another core component of degrowth is open localism. Open localisms cherish local diversity, ecologies of knowledge, reducing the distance between consumers/producers, and also emphasise regionality, locality, and hyperlocality of supply chains and products. In degrowth scholarship, open localisms can also create open and inclusive communities, rather than closed ones. They share some similarities with the idea of commons such as common production, cooperative-type styles of organising, and sharing resources. Further, by maintaining as much local production and consumption as possible, community members enhance their relationships with one another, the environment, and their impacts. When there is an emphasis on nurturing open localism, there is often increased transparency, accountability, and ability to be attuned to a “responsible togetherness” that better allows for communities to meet the needs of all their members, not just those of a privileged few. This study further explores what open localisms mean for participants in the context of their communities.

### ***Replacing the Consumer as Citizen***

When the market becomes a space that calls upon consumers as citizens, a civil obligation and participation arises to replace the reduction of people as purely economic rational or *homo economicus*. Latouche (2003) compares markets in Africa to the Agora in Ancient Greece, which show a reinscribed exchange within social and political spheres, and encourage consumers to take on the role of citizens. Similarly, this study explores if the taproom or other craft marketplaces are settings that encourage such a reinscription of citizenship to take place

rather than just serving as places for commodity exchange.

Replacing the consumer as citizen is not simply an exercise of lifestyle change or individual choice, but can also include a refusal to identify as a consumer altogether (Fournier, 2008). Fournier (2008) and Ariès (2006) discuss this as “a political act that would be accompanied by collective demands to government and industries” or anti-consumption (p. 538). Relocalisation, local prioritisation of needs, and even “the creation of ‘small republics’ whereby all citizens are involved in the public affairs of their area” is a vision proposed (Fournier, 2008, p. 538). Therefore, how does the craft food industry redefine economic relations in political terms? How does re-localising collective engagement around the market affect the role of citizens as consumers and interests of communities beyond economic terms? Rather than calling for less or slower growth within capitalocentric logics, degrowth scholars call for reimagining both the system and the ways it does things entirely. This means “re-imagining economic relations, identities, activities in different terms; and it is to this end that the degrowth movement puts forward the notions of democracy and citizenship” (Fournier, 2008, p. 529)

### **Points of Tension and Critique**

Amidst all these opportunities for degrowth, Fournier (2008) urges us to be wary of parochialism and alerts us of degrowth’s potential limitations. Degrowth has been criticized for being ambiguous, poorly operationalised or “logically incomplete” (Khmara & Kronenberg, 2018; Tokic, 2012). Some argue that “carbon-intensive industries such as the fossil fuel industry have to degrow, but other industries such as the renewable energy sector should be allowed to grow” (Heinukurin, 2019, p. 4). If degrowth theories are adopted in a “green economy” or “post growth” model without actually challenging their underlying structures, then they fail to achieve their goal of *living with less differently* but instead just do *less of the*



*same*. Degrowth is said to “challenge orthodox economic thinking or ‘economism’ for ‘colonising our imagination’” (Latouche, 2005; Fournier, 2008, p. 529). In this way, the ideology of growth is itself the issue. It has become pervasive in a “system of representation that translates everything into a reified and autonomous economic reality inhabited by self-interested consumers” (Fournier, 2008, p. 529).

### ***Questions of Scale and Working Within the System***

Jarosz (2008) outlines how fragile and dynamic alternative food systems can be, and while they hold much potential, often such potential is limited by their context within the broader agri-food system. There has been a movement towards scaling up local food systems to transition them from a niche market to take on a more significant role in the conventional food system. Wittman et al., (2012) reflect on the challenges and benefits of scaling up local producer volumes. While “scaling up local producer volumes risks the dangers of ‘conventionalization,’ including potentially negative power disparities and environmental impacts in production and marketing” (Wittman et al., 2012, p. 37), operations that are too small limit the ability of local food to travel through direct sales outlets. Since direct sales outlets like farmers’ markets are integral to rebuilding local food systems and the survival of small- to medium-sized farming enterprises, weighing the risk and benefits of scale is important.

### ***Privilege and Inaccessibility of Craft: Craft for a Few***

Other limitations and tensions within the craft food discourse include the privilege and inaccessibility of the sector for some communities or socioeconomic brackets. One of the downfalls of alternative food systems like craft food is that it often requires higher prices not accessible to all consumers. Therefore, access to craft food is influenced by intersecting points of privilege, including location, class, gender, and other social factors. It has been noted there is a

tendency for craft business owners or crafters to be associated with “cool jobs” primarily occupied by middle-class, well-educated men, and therefore, requiring a certain status or cultural capital for access (Land et al. 2018; Ocejo, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed by Sennett (2011), words of creativity such as craft carry a class baggage that while fashionable for some, are just necessary for others. For example, while crafting is trendy for some, DIY mending is necessary for others.

This study seeks to challenge and deconstruct how inequalities and power structures permeate knowledge production and research (FADA, 2022; Gaard, 2007). Even within the realms of craft and degrowth, which seek to provide opportunity, empower community and challenge disparity, there are power dynamics and relations among gender, class, race, sexuality, and other social structures. Feminist degrowth and other movements seek “to deconstruct preserving epistemes such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism and inquire into transformative epistemes” to not only question growth-centric orders of knowledge, but also anthropo-, andro- and euro-centric orders of knowledge (Feldman, 2001, p. 343). Using a community-based participatory approach, we seek to examine these throughout the study.

### **Positionality**

My personal interest in community-based degrowth has stemmed from my background in interdisciplinary, engaged research and as someone who is interested in slow living, voluntary simplicity, and collective living. As a cis-gendered, bisexual, poly, white, third-generation Ukrainian settler living and (un)learning in amiskwaciwâskahikan (colonially known as Edmonton, Alberta), I am interested in the way in which alternative ways of living exist. According to Hall (1990), “you have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all” (p. 18). My initial interest in degrowth and slow living emerged from re-evaluating the pace

and priorities in my life while experiencing increasingly debilitating chronic, severe migraines and symptoms from an autoimmune disorder. Migraines have shaped the pace, flow, and way in which this thesis has been written and conducted. They have also grounded me and led me to explore ways of relating, thinking and exploring degrowth practices in my everyday life. Living in a collective household that participates in food rescue, waste reduction and anti-consumption, as well as being a part of online networks such as *Slow Edmonton*, *Degrowth Revolution*, and *Climate Justice Edmonton*, I have sought to involve myself in degrowth communities.

While I have developed relationships with the participants in this study, I am an outsider to the craft food communities. As I have moved through this research project, I was reflexively aware of the strengths and limitations that I hold as a researcher and an outsider. In an attempt to adopt a community-based approach that acknowledges the hierarchical, patriarchal, and colonial underpinnings of research perpetuated both implicitly and explicitly, I have sought to cultivate a co-creative approach with participants that is dialogical, participatory, and mutually beneficial.

### **Methodology and Community-based Approach**

As a community-based research project, this study involved collaboration with participants at various stages. While a community-based, arts-based participatory research approach may defy a tidy definition, its core elements include fostering reciprocity, mutual respect, trust, capacity building, ownership, and accountability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Finley, 2005; Searle, 2016). All participants took part in some or all of the following study stages: (1) a one-on-one interview; (2) an independent photovoice/cellphilm activity; and (3) a focus group. A dialogical aspect was present in all of the methods, which opened up possibilities for new negotiations, meanings and understandings to emerge. If participants took part in two or three stages, they received a \$50 honorarium. Participants were encouraged to

complete all stages; however, some only participated partially due to time constraints or other reasons. Five participants came to a focus group that took place in Calgary, Alberta, at one of the participant's cideries.

Often community-based projects have been used to create dialogue, deliberation and integrate knowledge (Finley, 2005; Searle, 2016). “‘How might the world be organized differently?’ is a question that matters urgently, and it is a question that art-particularly art attuned to human and more-than-human social justice-asks in generative and complex ways” (Loveless, p. 16). In the realm of climate science, there has been an emerging paradigm shift towards “truth” and productions of knowledge that recognize citizen expertise, alternative ways of knowing, Indigenous knowledge, and participatory frameworks (Conrad & Beck, 2015; Chilvers & Kearnes, 2020; Wildcat, 2009; Wynne, 1995). Ultimately, participatory approaches such as photovoice or participatory video-based methods offer unique forms of qualitative inquiry that provide a “radical, ethical, and revolutionary arts-based inquiry” (Finley, 2005, p. 681).

This participatory arts component was voluntary, and I gave the participants the choice of whether they wanted to conduct the photovoice or cellphilm activity. From the combination of photovoice and cellphilm videos created in this study, I created a [quilted online website exhibit](#) (Password: Degrowth) that incorporated both textual interview/focus group quotes and photovoice photographs (MacEntee et al., 2021). Two participants submitted cellphilm videos; however, they were pre-made social media videos relevant to the topic but not explicitly made for the sake of the study. In total, seven participants submitted photovoice photographs resulting in a total of 25 photographs and two participants submitted video submissions.

## **Study Population and Sampling Method**

For this thesis, I drew upon this previously collected interview data to recruit participants and used the previous findings to inform this original thesis work. In the previous study exploring craft and community development, my co-authors and I explored the resurgence of craft industries as a strategy for adaptation and community development (unpublished, 2020). This previous study investigated craft as a means of bridging innovation and creativity within local places, practices, and communities (Jones et al., 2020; Parkins et al., 2019; unpublished, 2020). My co-authors and I conducted semi-structured interviews with craftspeople throughout Alberta, explicitly focussing on three sectors/case studies: (1) craft brewing and distilling; (2) apiculture/beekeeping; and (3) craft meat/butchery. We analysed emergent themes to inform opportunities for future research and support for these sectors. From this study, I reached out and recruited a couple of participants for the current study.

For the current study, I exceeded my initial intention of recruiting eight participants, and recruited sixteen participants through active recruitment and snowball sampling. I drew participants from diverse craft food sectors, including, but not limited to: vegan cheese making (1), kombucha brewing (1), beer brewing, distilling (1), cider making (1), bone broth making (1), small-scale and organic farming (4), baking (3), beekeeping (1), and butchering (1). These craftspeople were interested in discussing degrowth concepts and to various extents were living these principles in their work. Since many of these participants are busy entrepreneurs, I sought to respect their time constraints and adapt to their schedules. I also sought out a range of participants from various sectors but also considered other social factors in order to understand diverse experiences. Beyond the honorarium, participants benefited by building a network at the focus group, receiving resources and the opportunity to share their experiences.

Participants ranged from holding businesses with fairly standard capitalist enterprises with a social conscience and co-operatives, to other alternative forms of paid/unpaid labour and business modeling. Some of the economic social practices of these businesses will be discussed, but most of my focus is on the cultural, social and community aspects of their work.

### **Data Gathering Strategies**

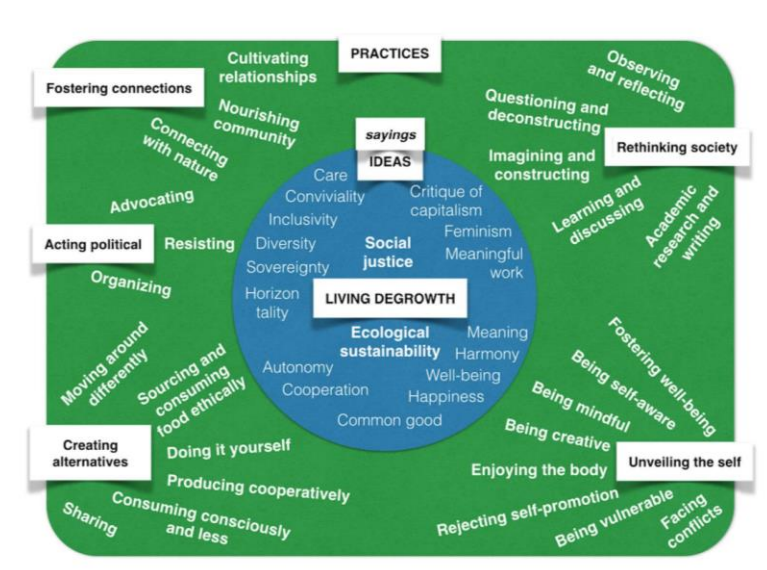
In the initial interview component, I established relationships with new participants, explained the arts-based component, and explored a shared understanding of degrowth concepts. The process, as outlined in the Interview Guide (Appendix C) consisted of: (1) consent and introduction; (2) exploratory questions, discussion, and collaborative definition of concepts of craft and degrowth; (3) discussion of participatory photovoice and/or of cellfilm methodology; and (4) a wrap-up. If they provided consent, the sessions were video recorded and later transcribed and coded.

### ***Interviews***

I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews over Zoom and four in person when the opportunity to visit the site of their business was available (farm, café, brewery, kitchen). Interviews lasted between 20-90 minutes and were all video-recorded. Regardless of their familiarity with degrowth, I introduced each participant to Brossmann and Islar's (2020) concept map of "living degrowth" in their interview (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Brossman and Islar's (2020) five spheres of practice for "living degrowth" (p. 927)*



This concept map describes degrowth in practice grouped into five spheres: (1) rethinking society, (2) acting political, (3) creating alternatives, (4) fostering connections, and (5) unveiling the self (Brossmann & Islar, 2020, p. 927). Within these spheres of practice, Brossman and Islar (2020) “conceptualise living degrowth as an endeavour that aims to transform current problems into imagined futures in multiple realms” (p. 917). I invited participants to respond with open-ended prompt questions: *What aspects or spheres do you resonate with or relate to? What does not resonate? How do you understand degrowth? Is it similar or different to these concepts? Do these concepts show up in your business or organisation?* Then follow-up questions were often used to clarify discussion points.

### ***Photovoice and cellphilm methodology***

I chose photovoice and cellphilm methodologies in order to explore lived experiences and “integrat[e] and embody different kinds of knowledge, values and perspectives” (Heras and Tabara, 2014, p. 389), similar to the way in which Brossman & Islar (2020) used performative

methods. Tuning into diverse ways of knowing allows for powerful self-reflective processes and also feeds into broader, collective reflection processes such as how participants think, connect, communicate beyond the interview process and in their broader communities. By accompanying photovoice, interviews and cellfilm methods with the interviews and focus group, I was able to collect a substantial amount of diverse data.

**Photovoice.** Researchers have applied photovoice across many contexts, including community assessment, public health, and environmental sustainability (Lozowy, 2013; Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1994; Zhan & Caravan, 1998). Photovoice contributes to a sense of community ownership and empowerment while exploring community issues through the perspective of those in the community, particularly marginalized voices (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Since there are many unique conceptions of craft food and degrowth among community members, I aimed to centre and amplify voices as directly as possible in the design of this study. The craft food narrative is considered to be revolutionary, artisanal and authentic, as described by Rice (2015), so I sought to adopt an approach that empowered participants to share their voices in their own unique and authentic way. Theoretically, photovoice combines Freire's (1970) "approach to critical education, feminist theory and participatory approach to documentary photography" (p. 181). By sharing and speaking from their own experiences, photovoice can help participants relate their own situations to root causes of social and historical patterns, while also potentially developing solutions and strategies for individual and collective change. Furthermore, the visual image of photographs can help individuals think critically about their lives and express what words alone cannot (Freire, 1970). According to feminist theory, "power accrues to those who have voice, set language, make history and participate in decisions" (Wang, 2003, p. 181), and thus, the use of photovoice with individuals within the



craft industry helped to explore degrowth principles through valuable community insights, knowledge and perspectives that otherwise might not have been prioritised or heard. Participants were encouraged to explore different composition methods, angles, shadows and points of view throughout the process (Wang, 2003). I encouraged them to explore what craft and degrowth meant to them, as well as the opportunities, tensions, and barriers that have arisen.

**Cellphilm.** Alternatively, I offered participants the opportunity to create cellphilm. Originally coined by Dockman and Connaselli (2009), cellphilm methodology is an evolving participatory visual research method combining the words *cellphone* and *film*. Participatory video-making is a form of community-based knowledge production, offering insights into deeper engagement with community, and allowing for representation from a community perspective (De Lange, 2012). Furthermore, the videos themselves, can be valuable in engaging dialogue and exploring particular topics that may aid actionable change through deeper understandings of community experiences (MacEntee et al., 2016).

Particularly throughout the context of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased use of mobile devices to record a variety of mundane experiences and even ignite social movements across nations all the while narrowing the gap of physical and social distance (MacEntee et al., 2021). Originally developed by Mitchell and De Lange (2013) with teachers and youth in South Africa, cellphilm method builds upon photovoice methodology by providing a rich means of visually representing and engaging participants on various topics. Since early iterations of cellphilm research, MacEntee et al. (2021) have developed what they refer to as *quilted* cellphilm in which “the metaphor of patchwork quilting – the process of using pieces of fabric to construct a design that can then be sewn together into a larger pattern – to help describe how this principle was enacted when working

with participants” (MacEntee et al., 2016, p. 1720). By integrating photos from the photovoice method discussed above, short cellphilm videos captured on mobile devices and textual quotes from interviews, a patchwork quilting method was adopted in the online password-protected website. Quotes from participants’ interviews were interwoven to explain and quilt together the images.

### ***Focus Group***

I conducted a focus group in Calgary, Alberta, in which five participants and two observers (my supervisor and I) gathered. The focus group allowed for a more collaborative reflection, relationship building and conversation in a group setting (MacEntee et al., 2021). The focus group was recorded, transcribed and coded; field notes were also taken during the process. The focus group (Appendix E) was a semi-structured, open-ended discussion that involved: (1) consent, introduction and check-in; (2) photo sharing; (3) open discussion; and (4) wrap-up, questions and feedback. We followed but also amended some guidelines by Kitzinger (1995) and Wang (2003) since not all participants brought photographs to the session. In the sharing portion, each participant had the opportunity to share their photovoice or cellphilm, or simply speak about their experience, motivations or reflections.

### **Data Analysis**

I transcribed interviews using Otter AI (a software program), checked for accuracy and later hand-coded them. I transcribed, coded and analyzed all data using thematic content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) where codes/themes derived from previous relevant studies were used and compared (Braun & Beckie, 2014; Lamb, 2015). I explored and identified themes, patterns and assumptions from the data (Lune & Berg, 2017). The data analysis process was iterative and coding evolved throughout the process. Various themes were initially identified in the

preliminary coding, followed by a secondary coding of focusing in on four broad themes that aligned but expanded upon the literature (Brossman & Islar, 2020; Fournier, 2008). There was often overlap between and among themes, and four interconnected themes are explored in this paper; within each of these four themes, many interconnected sub-themes are discussed.

Supplementary to this article, I have created a visual representation of the data by integrating text, photos, and cellphilms from participants using an online password-protected website (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wu et al., 1995). This online exhibit can be accessed here: [A community exploration of craft and degrowth](#) (Password: Degrowth).

### **Chapter Outline**

This thesis is organised into four chapters. This introductory Chapter One is followed by Chapter Two, which provides an analysis of the ideas and themes explored in the format of an academic paper. Chapter Two explores themes that emerged from the data as they relate to existing literature and research on degrowth. This is intended to become a publishable paper as a requirement for the thesis. Select photos are used in the paper, however, most of the photovoice photographs are explored in Chapter Three and in the online exhibit. Chapter Three presents an introduction and textual supplement to an online exhibit created out of the photographs and cellphilm videos from participants that is intended to be a public-facing community document. Chapter Three also synthesizes findings and mobilizes the data in a less conventional academic format through the online exhibit. Last, Chapter Four is a conclusion that ties together the sections and provides further reflections on future research directions.

## References

- ASBA, (2022). "The Local Story of Alberta Beer." *Alberta Beer*. Retrieved from alberta.beer on November 19, 2022.
- Alexander, S. (2013). Voluntary simplicity and the social reconstruction of law: Degrowth from the grassroots up. *Environmental Values*, 22(2), 287-308.
- Archibald, M. M., Ambagtsheer, R. C., & Casey, M. G. (2019). Using Zoom video conferencing for qualitative data collection: Perceptions and experiences of researchers and participants. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1-8.
- Attygalle, L. (2019). *Creating the Culture for Community Engagement*. Tamarack Institute.
- Banks, S., Armstrong, A., Carter, K., Graham, H., Hayward, P., Henry, A., Holland, T., Holmes, C., Lee, A., McNulty, A., Moore, N., Nayling, N., Stokoe, A., & Strachan, A. (2013). Everyday ethics in CBPR. *Contemporary Social Science*, 8(3), 263-277.
- Baron, N. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Beckie, M., & Connelly, S. (2016). The role of the social economy in scaling up alternative food initiatives. In M. Gismondi, S. Connelly, M. Beckie, S. Markey, and M. Roseland (Eds.), *Scaling up: the convergence of social economy and sustainability* (pp. 59-82). AU Press.
- Benson, M., & Craig, R. (2013). The end of sustainability. *Society and Natural Resources*, 7, 777-782.
- Blowfield, M., & Murray, A. (2014). *Corporate Responsibility*. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*.
- Botta, M. (2016). Evolution of slow living concept within the models of sustainable communities. *Futures*, 80, 3-16.

- Brossman, J., & Islar, M. (2020). Living degrowth? Investigating degrowth through performative methods. *Sustainability Science*, 3, 917-930.
- Cargo, M. & Mercer, S. L. (2008). The values and challenges of participatory research: Strengthening its practice. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29, 325-350.
- Cattaneo, C. & Gavaldà, M. (2010). The experience of rurban squats in Barcelona: What kind of degrowth? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 6, 581-589.
- Clancy, K. (2014). DIGGING DEEPER: Bringing a Systems Approach to Food Systems: Food System Governance. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 4(2), 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.042.012>
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation (2018). *Characterization and Management of Food Loss and Waste in North America - White Paper*. CEC-CCA-OCE. Retrieved from <http://www.cec.org/fw/food-waste-reports/>
- Cosme, I., Santos, R., & O'Neill, D. W. (2017). Assessing the degrowth discourse: A review and analysis of academic degrowth policy proposals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 149, 321-334.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century* (pp. xi-xxi; 3-30; 224-228). Sage Publications.
- Derr, V. & Simons, J. (2020) A review of photovoice applications in environment, sustainability, and conservation contexts: Is the method maintaining its emancipatory intents? *Environmental Education Research*, 26(3), 359-380.
- Dockney, J., & Tomaselli, K. G. (2009). Fit for the small(er) screen: Films, mobile TV and the new individual television experience. *Journal of African Cinema*, 1(1), 126–132.

- Eizenberg, E. (2012). Actually existing commons: Three moments of space of community gardens in New York City, *Antipode*, 44, 764-782.
- Escobar, A. (2010). Latin America at a Crossroads, *Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 1-65.
- Fairbrother, M. (2016). Trust and public support for environmental protection in diverse national contexts. *Sociological Science*, 3, 359-382.
- Florida, R. (2003). Cities and the creative class. *City & Community*, 2(1), 3-19.
- Fournier, V. (2008). Escaping from the economy: the politics of degrowth. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 11, 528-545.
- Gaard, G. (2017). *Critical Ecofeminism*. Lexington Books.
- Garavaglia, C., & Swinnen, G. (2017). "The Craft Beer Revolution: An International Perspective." *Choices*. Quarter 3. Available online:  
<http://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/theme-articles/global-craft-beer-renaissance/the-craft-beer-revolution-an-international-perspective>
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1971). *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0674257801.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1993). *Valuing the earth: Economics, energy and ethics* (Daly & Townsend, Ed.). MIT Press.
- Gibson, A. (n.d.). *Evolution*. Andrea Gibson! <https://ohandreaagibson.tumblr.com/evolution>
- Goodchild, M. (2021). Relational Systems Thinking: That's How Change is Going to Come, From Our Earth Mother. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, 1(1), 75–103.  
<https://doi.org/10.47061/jabsc.v1i1.57>
- Government of Alberta (2022). "Population statistics". Retrieved from  
<https://www.alberta.ca/population-statistics> on Nov 19, 2022.

- Granzow, M. C., & Beckie, M. A. (2019). Making place for local food: Reflections on institutional procurement and the Alberta Flavour Learning Lab. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9, 215–229.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 274-294.
- Hinrichs, C. Clare. (2000). Embeddedness and Local Food Systems: Notes on Two Types of Direct Agricultural Market. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16(3), 295–303.
- Howard, P. H. (2018). Craftwashing in the U.S. beer industry. *Beverages*, 4, 1-13.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288
- Ionciă, D., & Petrescu, E. (2016). Slow living and the green economy. *Journal of Philosophical Economics*, 9(2), 85–104.
- IPCC (2022). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781009325844.
- JOEY Restaurant Group (2022). “Revenue, Competitors, Alternatives”. growjo.com. Retrieved from the original on 25 February 2022.
- Jones, K.E., Van Assche, K., & Parkins, J. R. (2020). Reimagining craft for community development, *Local Environment*, 2, 1-13.
- Kallis, G., Demaria, F., & D’Alisa, G. (2015). *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. Routledge.
- Kallis, G. (2018). *Degrowth*. Agenda Publishing.

- Kallis, G., Varvarousis, A., & Petridis, P. (2022). Southern thought, islandness and real-existing degrowth in the Mediterranean. *World Development*, 157, 105957.
- Krugh, M. (2014). The joy in labour: The Politicization of craft from the arts and crafts movement in Etsy. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 44, 281-301.
- Kumar, A., Kapoor, N., Arora, H., & Kumar, A. (2022). Smart cities: A step toward sustainable development. *Smart Cities*, 1, 1-43.
- Labrague, M. (2017). Patagonia: A case study in the historical development of slow thinking. *Journal of Design History*, 30(2), 175–191.
- Latouche, S. (2007). Degrowth economics. *Le monde diplomatique*, Retrieved online from <https://www.jussempier.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/Degrowth%20economics,%20by%20Serge%20Latouche.pdf> on 19 Nov 2022.
- Local Public Eatery (2022). “Local Public Eatery.” Retrieved from localpubliceatery.com on 19 Nov 2022.
- Loveless, N. (2019). *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. Duke University Press.
- Lowitt, K., Slater, J., & Davidson, Z. (2022). Covid-19, a changing Canadian food-security landscape, and food movements. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 11(3), 87-99.
- Lozowy, A. J. (2013). *Icons of Oil: The photographer-researcher and collaborative practise*. [Thesis unpublished]. University of Alberta.
- Luckman, S. (2015). *Craft and Creative Economy*. Springer.



- Macentee, K., Burkholder, C. & Schwab-Cartas, J. (2016). *What's a Cellphilm? Integrating Mobile phone technology into participatory visual research and activism*. Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Mancini, L. Valente, A., Vignola, G. B., Mengual, E. S., & Sala, S. (2023). Social footprint of European food production and consumption. *Sustainable Production and Consumption*, 35, 287-299.
- Martin, J. (2008). Ecological modernisation: new perspectives. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 16, 557-565.
- Marx, K. (1867). *Capital: A critique of political economy. Volume 1, Part 1: The process of capitalist production*. New York, NY: Cosimo.
- Mayan, M. & Daum, C. H. (2015). Worth the risk? Muddle Relationships in Community-based Participatory Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(1), 69-76.
- Meadows, D. H., Meadows, D. L., Randers, L., & Behrens, W.W. III (1972), *The Limits to Growth*, Universe Books.
- Milne, M., Kearins, K., & Walton, S. (2006). Creating adventures in Wonderland: The Journey Metaphor and Environmental Sustainability. *Organization*, 13(6), 801-839.
- Mitchell, C., de Lange, N. & Moletsane, R. (2016). Me and my cellphone: Constructing change from the inside through cellphilm and participatory video in a rural community. *Area*, 48(4), 435-441.
- Molotch, H. (1976). The City as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place. *Journal of Sociology*, 82, 309-332.

- Nelson, P., Beckie, M. & Krogman, N. (2017). The “Locavore” Chef in Alberta: A Situated Social Practice Analysis. *Food Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 20(3), 1-22.
- Nykiforuk, C. I. J., Vallianatos, H., & Nieuwendyk, L. M. (2011). Photovoice as a method for revealing community perceptions of the built and social environment. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10(2), 103-124.
- Papież, M., Śmiech, S., Frodyma, K., & Borowiec, J. (2022). Decoupling is not enough - Evidence from fossil fuel use in over 130 countries. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 379(2), 134856.
- Radstrom, S. (2011). A Place-sustaining framework for local urban identity: An introduction and history of cittaslow. *International Journal of Italian Planning Practice*, 1(1), 90–113.
- Ramos, V. (1982). The concepts of ideology, hegemony, and organic intellectuals in Gramsci’s Marxism. *Theoretical Review*, 27, 1982.
- Renting, H., Marsden, T. & Banks, J. (2003). Understanding Alternative Food Networks: Exploring the Role of Short Food Supply Chains in Rural Development. *Environment and Planning*, 35(3), 393–411.
- Rice, J. (2015). Craft rhetoric. *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies*, 12(2), 218-222.
- Robra, B. & Heikkurinen, P. (2019). *Degrowth and the sustainable development goals*. Springer.
- Rockstrom, J. et al. (2010). Managing water in rainfed agriculture—The need for a paradigm shift. *Agricultural Water Management*, 97(4), 543-550.
- Ruiz-Ballesteros, E. (2020). Community-based tourism and degrowth. In Hall et al. (Eds.), *Degrowth and tourism: New Perspectives on tourism entrepreneurship, destinations and policy*. Routledge.

- Sayers, S. (2007). The concept of labor: Marx and his critics. *Science and Society*, 71, 421-454.
- Schlosberg, D., & Rinfret, S. (2008). Ecological Modernization, *American Style. Environmental Politics*, 17, 254-275. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09644010801936206>
- Sekulova, F., Kallis, G., Rodríguez-Labajos, & Schneider, F. (2013). Degrowth: from theory to practice, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 38, 1-6.
- Sennett, R. (2006). *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Sennett, R. (2008). *The Craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Skinner, K., Neufeld, H., Murray, E., Hajto, S., Andrews, L., & Garrett, A. (2020). Sharing Indigenous foods through stories and recipes. *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*, 82, 11-15.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic*. Northeastern University Press.
- Spaargaren, G., & Mol, A. P. J. (1992). Sociology, environment, and modernity: Ecological modernization as a theory of social change, *Society & Natural Resources*, 5(4), 323-344.
- Statistics Canada (2022). "Census of Population." *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm> on Nov 19, 2022.
- Tarasuk V., Li, T., & Fafard St-Germain, A. A. (2022). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021*. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>
- Tendall, D. M., Joerin, J., Kopainsky, B., Edwards, P., Shreck, A., Le, Q. B., Kruetli, P., Grant, M., & Six, J. (2015). Food system resilience: Defining the concept. *Global Food Security*, 6, 17–23.

- Wang, C. C. (2003). Using photovoice as a participatory assessment and issue selection tool: A case study with the homeless in Ann Arbor. In *Community Based Participatory Research for Health*, ed. M Minkler, N Wallerstein, pp. 179–200. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. (1994). Empowerment through photonovella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly*, 21, 171-186.
- Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior*, 24, 369-387.
- Wittman, H., Beckie, M., & Hergesheimer, C. (2012). Linking Local Food Systems and the Social Economy? Future Roles for Farmers' Markets in Alberta and British Columbia. *Rural Sociology*, 77(1), 36-81.
- Wu, K. Y. Burris, M., Li, V., Wang, Y., Zhan, W. T., & Xiang, Y. P. (Eds). (1995). *Visual voices: 100 photographs of village China by the women of Yunnan Province*. Yunann People's Publishing House.

## Chapter 2: Living Degrowth in Alberta's Craft Food Sector

### Abstract

Craft food communities offer potential provisional pathways toward degrowth. While degrowth scholarship is becoming increasingly prominent as a political, economic and social movement, research on examples of real-existing degrowth in lived practice is limited (Brossman & Islar, 2019; Kallis et al., 2022). Degrowth is understood as an interdisciplinary movement that provides radical propositions for system change to fundamental causes of ongoing environmental and social crises (Cosme, Santos & O'Neill, 2017; Escobar, 2015; Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019; Martinez Alier et al., 2010). The current study explores how degrowth is understood by craft food communities in Alberta, and what this can reveal about how real-existing degrowth might be lived in practice. Can craft food contribute to counter-narratives to growth-centered logics or green growth in environmental sustainability? In response, I explore how communities understand the challenges of their current systems and are working towards more equitable systems within the craft sector in Alberta. Using an empirical community-based participatory research approach, I conducted a mixed-method study involving semi-structured interviews, a focus group, photovoice and cellphilm methods. Using thematic content analysis, four themes emerged from the data: (1) slowness, (2) conviviality, (3) repoliticizing the economy, and (4) open localisms. This study contributes to the notion that degrowth approaches do not just offer insights into economics and policy shifts, but cultural and ontological shifts (Kallis et al., 2022). In the context of a province like Alberta currently in an energy "transition to a society after oil" (Petrocultures Research Group, 2016), the examination of craft food as a site of living degrowth principles offers insightful information on new social imaginaries, cultural identities, social systems and community-based approaches to food justice and resilience.

Keywords: *degrowth, craft food, community-based research, photovoice, participatory action, conviviality*

## **Introduction**

The Prairie region in what is known as Canada is the northern branch of the Great Plains of North America, one of the most altered ecozones in the world and the least protected (Gautier et al., 2003). What was once an immense and biodiverse grassland ecosystem populated by many Indigenous peoples, is now predominantly characterized by industrialised, large-scale, export-oriented crop and livestock farming operations. The industrialisation of our agri-food systems over the past 150 years has evolved into a complex globalised system highly reliant on fossil fuels and manufactured inputs to increase productivity. In the midst of globalised and industrialised food systems, local and alternative food systems are pathways to addressing various social, economic, environmental, and health-related issues associated with our agri-food systems. There has been a resurgence in place-based, small-scale approaches in Alberta's food systems from farmers' markets to community gardens (Wittman et al., 2012). Craft food is an aspect of the place-based, alternative food system movement emerging as innovative local production pathways. Alternative food systems like craft food offer many benefits, including higher trust and reciprocity (Hinrichs, 2000), a shortened food supply chain (Renting, Marsden & Banks, 2003) and opportunities for real-existing examples of degrowth.

In this paper, I explore how Alberta's craft food sector offers opportunities to explore and better understand concepts of degrowth. Despite urgent environmental concerns coming to the forefront of many government agendas and community interests, commitments to reduce consumption and production have largely been avoided. Fournier (2008) and other degrowth

scholars have argued that “tensions between technology and ecology, economic growth and ecology, and competitive market and ecology” (p. 530) are often ringfenced and overlooked, offering governments “win-win” strategies without posing any risk to dominant development logics (Milne et al., 2006). While sustainability discourse often focuses on green economies (Schlosberg, 2008), smart cities (Kumar et al., 2022), and ecological modernisation (Fairbrother, 2016; Spaargaren & Mol, 1992), degrowth scholars criticise such discourse for failing to address the systemic issues, philosophies and human behaviours underlying our current environmental crisis (Gaard, 2017; Benson & Craig, 2014; Molotch, 1976).

Supplementary to this article, I have created a visual representation of the data by integrating text and photographs from participants using an online password-protected website (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wu et al., 1995). Quotes from participants’ interviews were interwoven with photovoice photographs in an online exhibit that can be accessed here: [A community exploration of craft and degrowth](#) (Password: Degrowth). In the following sections, I will briefly introduce relevant literature on degrowth and craft food systems, while also initiating a conversation between them.

### **History and Overview of Degrowth**

Degrowth can be traced back to the economist Latouche (1940) who put forth notions of a society based on “frugal abundance” and redefined wealth away from material and monetary terms instead towards a focus on environmental, social and community well-being. Georgescu-Roegen’s (1993) *la décroissance économique socialement soutenable* called for less production and consumption, challenging existing systems and the “entropic nature of the economic process” (p. 105). Georgescu-Roegen (1993) challenged various assumptions such as the “circumdrome of the shaving machine”, which he describes as the irony of wanting:

to shave oneself faster so as to have more time to work on a machine that shaves faster so as to have more time to work on a machine that shaves still faster, and so on *ad infinitum*.  
(p. 105)

Here, he challenges an arbitrary framing of time and points out the self-perpetuating cycles of hustle culture fueled by industrialised notions of efficiency. Further, Georgescu-Roegen (1993) criticised the exponential growth of crude oil production and fossil fuel dependency. He argues that our inability to address such issues is not a lack of knowledge but rather cultural barriers such as ingrained paradigms of growth and extractivist thinking. According to Georgescu-Roegen (1993), “degrowth denounces economic thinking and systems that see growth as the ultimate good” (p. 531). It alternately offers “other ‘goods’: justice, equality, democracy, human and ecosystems’ health, quality of life, social relations” as essential values for a resilient and sustainable future (p. 531). Thus, I explore craft as degrowth in ways which address value beyond the qualities and values of craft products to include value at the scale of community and local environments.

### **The Problem with Ecological Modernisation and Green Growth**

For many degrowth scholars, for growth to be “green” or “sustainable” is an oxymoron (Latouche, 1940; Gaard, 2007). According to Gaard (2017), the concept of “sustainable development”, introduced as a promise to the Global South of “catching up”, is an “illusory prospect ... since the affluence and technological sophistication of first world nations was created through the colonialist extraction of labor, environments, and other ‘natural resources’ from third world countries” (p. 4). Despite many of these critiques, various sustainability frameworks and policies continue to build upon beliefs in ecological modernisation. Even the



most recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations (2015) built on the Brundtland Commission's Report, have been criticized for not sufficiently addressing the need to reduce consumption and production (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019). The “conundrum of whether environmental issues can be tackled without jeopardizing economic growth remains central to sustainable development debates today” (Blowfield and Murray 2011, p. 59). SDG Number Eight explicitly refers to sustainable economic growth and full employment for all (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019). Therefore, much of conventional sustainability discourse settles for mere reformist change within current technocratic, neo-capitalist global structure perpetuating dominant growth logics by arguing that “development [can] meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43).

Moving beyond perspectives that attempt to disguise the exploitative systems of nature and people, various scholars are calling for a more “artful sustainability with cultures of complexity” (Kagan, 2013, p. 2017) that challenges growth logics. Sustainable development approaches have favoured green consumerism while compromising and overlooking social justice concerns (Bacon, 2019). Gaard (2017) asks “what is to be sustained, by whom, for whom?” Though complex, and not without its own critiques, degrowth theories attempt to address some of these questions by reducing the size of the global economy, in particular targeting affluent, over-consuming economies (Robra & Heikkurinen, 2019).

### **Why Pair Craft and Degrowth?**

Craft is often seen as a counterpoint to mass-production in a highly consumptive and industrialised world, and shares core principles with degrowth literature (Rennstam, 2021). Rennstam (2021) discussed the potential of craft as degrowth in the following components: (1)

employment; (2) investment; and (3) consumption. First, craft often involves slower, labour-intensive work that does not necessarily strive for efficiency through automation:

This is likely to be an important new attitude to work if we are to prosper in a non-growth society where new jobs cannot be created through increased production and consumption.

(p. 10)

Second, attracting investments due to genuine interest in the quality or usefulness of products, rather than simply revenue, is important to supporting a non-growth society. Third, consumption is driven by genuine interest in a product, its quality, the locality in which it is produced, and its connection to community.

For the purpose of this study, our understanding of craft builds upon Jones et al.'s (2020) four dimensions that when together present constitute a craft activity: (1) engagement with, and dependence on materiality, (2) forms of learning and adaptation, (3) localism and place making, and (4) associated networks and governance arrangements. This allows for a flexible, adaptable definition of craft that can be utilized across sectors and works well within the craft food sector discussions. According to Jones et al. (2020), craft often tends to “signal a dissatisfaction with current economies, their products, and the effects of particular forms of economic development on people, places and communities” (p. 15). The consumer-citizen desiring to engage in “a more ethical and morally responsible” interaction can be seen within craft food sector interactions (Featherstone, 2009). Especially in an age that is dominated by low-cost, mass-produced items that are made often under exploited labour in lower-income nations, craft items and craft practise offer an ethical alternative (Luckman, 2015). The ability to know your producer, where and how your product was made at least allow for the possibility of more ethical decision-making; this includes goods that are ethically sourced, ethically made and ethically distributed. Some of the

other benefits of craft industries discussed in the literature on community development include: bringing people together in public spaces, creating a sense of identity and place within region, locality and hyperlocality, and increasing the psychosocial well-being and support of individuals within a community (Argent, 2018; Jones et al., 2020; Lamertz et al., 2016; Luckman, 2015). In this study, I sought to expand upon the above existing research and build a conversation around craft food and degrowth.

### **Objective**

This study examined how craft food sectors in Alberta live out degrowth, and thus, contribute to cultural and ontological shifts in alternative imaginaries. More specifically, the study objectives were to:

1. explore a community-based understanding of degrowth within the craft food sector in Alberta, including opportunities, challenges and points of tension;
2. better understand what an equitable, inclusive and just vision of degrowth looks like within the craft community; and
3. create a space to explore how communities are living out degrowth in their everyday lives through arts-based method and dialogue.

### **Methods**

I adopted a collaborative, inductive and iterative process that involved participants at various points of the process. All participants took part in some or all of the following stages: (1) one-on-one interview; (2) independent photovoice/cellphilm activity; and (3) focus group. Since living degrowth defies a tidy definition, an arts-based, iterative, community-based approach allowed for flexibility and exploration of participants' perspectives outside of a conventional academic structure.

A community-based approach emphasises fostering reciprocity, mutual respect, trust, capacity building, ownership and accountability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Finley, 2005; Searle, 2016). More specifically, the photovoice/cellphilm component allowed participants to document their perceptions, experiences and understandings (Hutcheson, 2006; Pink, 2008; Sakamoto et al., 2015). In this way, the methodology compliments many of the principles of the degrowth craft food movement I engaged with.

### **Study Population and Sampling Method**

This project drew upon established relationships and participants from a previous study I took part in that explored craft and community development (Jones et al., 2021; Van Assche et al., unpublished). I recruited some participants for the current study from this pool. Additional participants were actively recruited, snowball sampled and found through internet searches.

I recruited sixteen participants from diverse craft food sectors: vegan cheese making (1), kombucha brewing (1), beer brewing (2), distilling (1), cider making (1), bone broth making (1), small-scale organic farming (4), baking (3), beekeeping (1), and butchering (1). Seeking a range of participants from various craft sectors was important, as well as acknowledging different experiences due to diverse gender, sexuality, race, ability and other social factors. Participants' businesses ranged from fairly standard capitalist enterprises with a social conscience, to co-operatives, to other alternative forms of paid labour, modelling or volunteer-run systems. The non-economic social, community and cultural practises of these businesses will be the focus of my analysis; however, economic aspects are also discussed.

All participants took part in some or all of the following study stages: (1) one-on-one interviews; (2) a photovoice/cellphilm activity; and (3) a focus group amongst diverse producers. If participants completed all three stages, they received a \$50 honorarium. Participants were

encouraged to take part in all stages; however, of the sixteen participants, six participants were only able to participate in the interview portion due to time constraints, or other reasons. Ten participants took part in the photovoice, cellphilm and/or focus group.

## **Data Gathering Strategies**

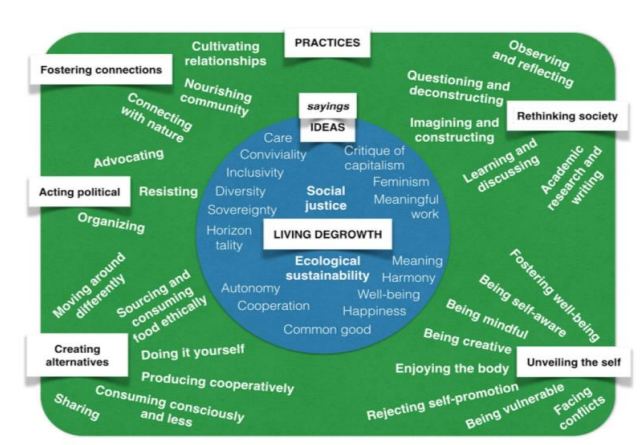
### ***Semi-Structured Interviews***

I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to establish a relationship with new participants and to explore a shared understanding of what living degrowth meant to them. Interviews were conducted over Zoom, or in-person when the opportunity to visit the site of business was available. Sites visited included a farm, café, brewery, cidery, and distillery. Interviews lasted between 20-90 minutes, were video-recorded, transcribed using Otter AI and then checked for accuracy.

Each participant was introduced to Brossmann and Islar's (2020) concept map of "living degrowth" shown below (Figure 1). According to Brossman and Islar (2020), these guiding aims, values, principles and ideas can be "used to comprehend, justify and orient the practices of living degrowth" (Brossman & Islar, 2020, p. 927). They served as guidelines for participants but also allowed participants the flexibility and space to come up with their own ideas about degrowth and share more open-endedly. The concept map (Figure 1) describes degrowth in practice grouped in five spheres: (1) rethinking society; (2) acting political; (3) creating alternatives; (4) fostering connections; and (5) unveiling the self (Brossmann & Islar, 2020, p. 927):

**Figure 1**

*Brossman and Islar's (2020) five spheres of practice for "living degrowth" (p. 927)*



Participants were presented with this concept map, and prompted with the following open-ended questions: *What aspects do you or your business resonate with? What does not resonate? How do you understand degrowth? Is it similar to or different from these concepts? How do these concepts show up in your business or organisation?* Various follow-up questions were used to clarify responses and to prompt further discussion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### ***Arts-based Component***

Participatory methodologies that adopt methods such as photovoice and cellphilm offer unique forms of qualitative inquiry that provide a “radical, ethical, and revolutionary arts-based inquiry” (Finley, 2005, p. 681). I chose photovoice and cellphilm methodologies in order to allow for the “integrat[ion] and embod[iment] of different kinds of knowledge, values and perspectives” (Heras & Tabara, 2014, p. 389). Tuning into diverse ways of knowing allowed for powerful self-reflective processes and, in turn, fed into broader, collective reflections.

For the activity, I invited participants to take 2-4 photographs or short videos on their cellphones that represented their perspectives and lived experiences of degrowth. Participants were given a handout guide with tips for taking photos/videos, reflective question prompts and

instructions (Appendix F). They were encouraged to take photographs or videos that reflected their experience, understanding, questions or practices of “living degrowth” in their everyday lives, business practice and community. The photovoice and cellphilm components were voluntary. Seven participants submitted photovoice and two participants submitted cellphilms. Others participated only in the interview or focus group components.

### ***Focus group***

I conducted a focus group in Calgary at a participant’s cidery in which five participants and two facilitator-observers (my supervisor and I) gathered to share and discuss experiences. During the focus group, photographs and videos were shared, and a semi-structured discussion took place. The focus group allowed for a collaborative reflection (Kitzinger, 1995; MacEntee et al., 2021). The focus group was recorded, transcribed and coded; field notes were also taken during the process.

The focus group (Appendix E) was a semi-structured, open-ended discussion that involved: (1) consent, introduction and check-in; (2) photo sharing; (3) discussion; (4) wrap-up, questions and feedback (Kitzinger, 1995; Wang, 2003). Each participant had the opportunity to share their photovoice or cellphilm. A co-created space of imagination, exploration and reflection was encouraged in which complex, nuanced answers could emerge. We sought individual and collaborative perceptions of degrowth that emerged from both individual interviews and a collaborative focus group.

### **Data Analysis and Data Mobilization**

I transcribed, coded and analyzed all data using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) where themes derived from previous relevant studies were used and compared with a specific focus on Fournier (2008) and Kallis et al. (2022), but also others (Braun &

Beckie, 2014; Lamb, 2015). I explored and identified themes, patterns and assumptions from the data (Lune & Berg, 2017). The data analysis process was iterative and the coding evolved through the process. While many themes were initially identified, four overarching themes were focused on (Brossman & Islar, 2020; Fournier, 2008). There was often overlap between and among themes, and within each of these four themes, interconnected sub-themes were identified.

### **Analysis**

Throughout the interviews and focus group, a multi-faceted understanding of degrowth emerged among participants that aligned and expanded upon existing literature (Escobar, 2011; Alexander, 2012; Kallis et al., 2020). Rather than the pursuit of endless growth, a focus on community well-being and community narratives emerged in discussions and was expressed by participants. There were a variety of emotional, social and even spiritual elements of their craft discussed, and a common mention of “passion and love for what they do” (Participant 9). Rather than focusing on their business to “grow, grow, grow”, there was a desire to maintain a “small-batch mentality” (Participant 12) and “do more, connect more and do more unique things” (Participant 10). In alignment with literature on degrowth, there was a focus on producing and consuming less, but also organising *differently* and *alternatively*, which often emphasised community well-being and care. A chocolateria and café owner (Participant 4) discussed the importance of community building, hosting community events, cultural sharing and maintaining a community hub for collaborations with local artists and artisans. She stated that they were cultivating some sort of “beautiful, alternative community...And you know, I think my business partners and I don’t want to be rich. We just want to have enough” (Participant 4). Similar to this quote, there was a common discussion of a shift towards meaningful fulfilment and deeply “thinking about one’s real needs” and community needs rather than just profit and growth



(Brossman & Islar, 2019, p. 925). One of the participants, a community activist, organiser and beekeeper, reflects on these “broader philosophical questions” saying, “We’re being called to have to think of ourselves as like a whole being in a different way, our total wellness. What is a life worthy of living?” (Participant 16).

In order to delve into these questions further, I explored four main themes of living degrowth that emerged within the data similar to, but expanding upon, those outlined by Fournier (2008) and others (Kallis et al., 2020): (1) slowness, (2) conviviality, (3) repoliticization of the economy, and (4) open localisms.

### **Slowness**

One of the immediate aspects of degrowth that emerged in discussions with participants was the aspect of slowing down and defying what Fournier (2008) refers to as the “tyranny of growth” (p. 529) or hustle culture inherent to modern capitalism. Slowness is often inherent to craft and artisanal work, and many scholars discuss this in contrast to fast consumption in a post-industrial hyper-capitalist society, which also allows for deeper connections to community and self (Steigler, 2011). Here, we refer to slowness as encompassing purposeful slowing down, similar to Voluntary Simplicity, Slow Living, Buen Vivir, and alternate ways of relating with time and pace of life (Alexander, 2009; Alvarez-Ramirez, 2010; Honoré, 2005). Many participants articulated the practice and benefits of slowing down in various aspects of life, including slow parenting (Participant 2), slow food (Participants 3, 10, 12, 14, 15) and even trying to slow broader systems. Participant 7 expressed having an intentionally slower business plan, which affected her decisions concerning investors:

When you invest in someone like me... you’re investing in a social entrepreneurial venture, rather than a capitalist gain venture or your typical capitalist, patriarchal growth

model. I think that's part of that slowness and slowing down systems... I need people who are completely aligned with my values and mindset. This isn't about exponential growth. (Participant 7)

The benefits of practising slowness were discussed in terms of allowing for higher quality or product, life and an increased connection to one's community.

### ***Slowness for Quality of Product, Life and Pleasure***

Slowness and slow living have been defined as restructuring one's life around meaning and fulfilment coupled with a desire to increase one's enjoyment and quality of life (Honoré, 2005; Jalas, 2012). Resulting from intentional slow process, participants often discussed an enhanced quality of product and pleasure. Participant 4 discussed the importance of "good chocolate" and loving "how much pleasure it can give you" (Participant 4). Similarly, Participant 14, who runs a co-operative in rural Alberta described the quality of her local, free-range backyard chicken eggs compared to store-bought. For her, the ability to come home to chickens in her yard, personally learn their personalities, and experience better quality egg yolks was a major contrast to industrialised agriculture:

You will visually see it if you juxtapose one of our eggs and crack the egg that you buy in a store. I'm not disparaging the eggs that you buy in the store. But you will see our egg yolks are very rich as compared to pale. (Participant 14)

Similarly, a bakeshop owner noted that slowing down and not taking "shortcuts" allowed him to focus on the "best quality of product that he could possibly achieve and everything else was secondary to that" (Participant 9).

### ***Slowness for Connection and Community***

Participants discussed the importance of slowness not only for quality and pleasure, but also for deeper connection with community and self. Although craft has been criticised for being a niche, middle class, consumer-oriented space, it can also provide openings in community development and connection (Jones et al., 2021). Craft can serve “as a classical and situated livelihood, guided by guild traditions, and anchored to the physical and material” using detailed, situated, local knowledge connected to place and community (Jones et al., 2021, p. 3).

Participant 9, a baker, noted slowness in connection to place, culture and community saying:

It is just like baking, you can't really hurry it along. And in a similar way, you can't hurry along the growth of culture and community. It just takes time and you just got to be there.  
(Participant 9)

By prioritising intentional slowness, participants expressed connecting with a place-based identity, historic tradition, cultural strengths and a more relaxed pace of life (Semmens & Freeman, 2012). For example, one participant discussed her connection with Edmonton as a city and culture:

But [Edmonton] has been such a hustle place. People come down to hustle, to work ...14 hour days and I really do hope that can change. We could become a slow place here. I see Edmonton as the Austin of Alberta. We are cool. We have lots of gay people. It's a good time. (Participant 16)

This feeling of connection with a place-based identity arose in various conversations with participants including a distiller who discussed his product as “representing time and space in a liquid form” (Participant 1). This participant was in the process of transforming a large heritage building into a new distillery location, and described how his community story was deeply intertwined with his process, product and company. He says:

[We] look at who visits us, why they visit us, and then how we can represent this time and place in Alberta. We then essentially tell that story so that when they go home, they have that connection to that experience they had. (Participant 1)

Rather than focusing on accumulation and growth, slowness fosters embodied practices of knowing, skill-sharing and place-based ways of knowing (Alexander, 2009; Lamb, 2019). In the figure below, volunteer beekeepers practice beekeeping on rooftops of a bustling downtown Alberta city. Juxtaposed against the city's high-rise towers, these community members are peacefully tending to bees and intimately participating in their local food systems.

## Figure 2

*Volunteer beekeepers tend to their bees on rooftops of downtown Edmonton.*



There is a slowness, sense of joy and contentment, and deeper attunement to sensory experiences when one is engaging in a hands-on daily practice like craft. This sensory attunement relates to what was described by another beekeeper in our previous study (unpublished, 2020) as an embodied way of knowing, and “after a while, you just know and you can smell when the bees are sick” (Participant 4, 2020).

Another participant, a craft butcher, described “slow parenting” and getting his children involved in his craft emphasising an intimate connection to place (Participant 2). To him, “putting [their] feet in the dirt to understand and be exposed to ecological sustainability from the context of watching the land out our window, watching land and wildlife and how it responds to ecological change” was imperative (Participant 2). In conclusion, participants revealed that integrating slowness did not only mean slow pace but also a different relationship with time, intentional connection with place, self, one’s food system, and surrounding environment (Mountz et al., 2015).

### **Conviviality**

Conviviality is a term often referred to as the “art” of living together (Caillé, 2004). It allows us to cultivate care and compassion, but also challenge each other in relationship processes (Caillé, 2014). According to Caillé (2004):

By convivialism, we mean a mode of living together (con-vivere) that values human relationships and cooperation and enables us to challenge one another without resorting to mutual slaughter and in a way that ensures consideration for others and for nature. (p. 24)

In this way, within degrowth scholarship, understandings of conviviality often focus on Illich’s (1973, 1978) description of joyful, intentionally simple living, the localisation of production systems, and critiques of overconsumption and development (Caillé, 2014; Illich, 1973). Illich, an Austrian philosopher, theologian and cultural critic known initially for his critique of mass education, later became known for his critique on elite, technocratic societies and the need for the reconquest of knowledge for the average citizen. Illich’s (1973) *Tools for Conviviality* was a strong foundation for Gorz’s work, a father of degrowth scholarship. Illich’s (1973) notion of

rediscovering the value of conviviality and “joyful sobriety and liberating austerity” can be achieved if people learn to rely on each other and a sort of “society-wide inversion of present industrial consciousness” (p. 21).

***Challenging Reliance from Technocratic Solutions; Convivial Tools and Technology***

Participants often recognized the importance of mechanizing certain processes but maintaining traditional, hands-on processes as well. One participant, a bakeshop owner, discussed the value in maintaining many baking processes by hand (Participant 10). Meanwhile, when certain actions like “squeezing piping bags all day” were leading to carpal tunnel syndrome and could be done by a machine instead, they would switch to mechanisation (Participant 10). He says:

There’s a really beautiful marriage that can be achieved between using mechanisation and automation to reduce the drudgery and wearing, grinding work on people, but to free them to be able to use their creativity and try to come up with interesting things and use that artistic side. Even when it comes to fairly standardized industrial processes.

(Participant 10)

This “marriage” of mechanisation and automation in order to free up creative time, but still maintain efficiency was discussed in a way that allows small-scale businesses to keep up in a competitive field. Similar to Marxist concepts of work/life balance, degrowth and conviviality advocate for more fulfillment through meaningful engagement, relationship with self, others, recreation and nature (Honoré, 2005). Furthermore, when mundane work can be mechanised, Marx suggests that the remaining work can be more fulfilling and “the distinction between work and leisure is erased... [as] people exercise and enjoy their creativity in ever-new ways” (Wolff, 2002). Similarly, some participants discussed allowing employees more agency and creative decision-making power within their work:

If it's all top-down management, you're overlooking a lot of really good ideas. We can have very talented staff members, from somebody who sweeps the floor and it's gonna bring us some idea or insight that we're not going to get from just a suit sitting in an office somewhere. (Participant 1)

Employee empowerment, engagement and meaningful relations could be identified as aspects of a degrowth convivialism. Counter to the traditional employee-manager relationship where an employee comes to work, provides a limited service and is paid a fixed wage without any agency or creativity, there was often discussion of more flexibility for structures and non-hierarchical dynamics.

### ***The Art of Living and Engaging Together***

Participants discussed the importance of increasing their community's resilience through direct involvement and fun engagement as much as possible. Participant 16 expressed the need for a curiously engaged resilience, in saying that, "We have to be resilient....Yeah, everybody has to eat so we kind of pique their curiosity in that way. I do think fun is important to keeping people engaged" (Participant 16). This participant refers to fun as an integral part of keeping people engaged whether it be beekeeping, baking or weeding one's garden plot.

The tension between competition and cooperation is often discussed among scholars discussing convivialism. Conviviality does not always need to be a positive friendliness, but a generative force of interaction, solution-seeking and relationship building (Caillé, 2014). Similarly, these critically reflexive questions about how to improve one's community, and being present within it were described, especially in an often disconnected, "numbed out" world were also discussed by Participant 2.

### ***Intergenerational and Intercultural Visions***

The politics of conviviality have been defined as “the struggle for an equitable distribution of the liberty to generate use-values” that prioritise the freedom and empowerment of all communities and individuals, especially those who are marginalized (Illich, 1978). More recently, the term has been used to emphasise how to live with difference in everyday encounters in the context of structural inequities (Hemer et al., 2022), access to public spaces and the potential of convivial tools to be emancipatory, democratic and responsive to direct human needs (Illich, 1973).

Participants expressed visions of convivial present and future, which involved intergenerational components and changes all “essentially seeking to create social and economic futures”. Participant 16 shared that she is contemplating questions such as, “What is going to take up the next space?” or “radical ideas of what could be our greatest fantasies?” with regards to ecological justice and resilience both in her personal life and with her communities. Within this, multiple participants brought up the intergenerational and intercultural aspect of learning, unlearning, growing and participating together in food systems. They discussed how we have often lost touch with certain skills due to circumstance, or generational gaps such as understanding the available food in our own front yards:

They might be multiple, multiple generation urban dwellers, and they don’t have the knowledge or the skill set to be able to deal with that excess yard waste. (Participant 8)

This participant shared how initially in their cider business, a group of friends and neighbours got together and started to harvest fruit from trees and neighbours’ yards “anticipating the windfall that was coming from a small [neighbourhood] orchard”. In doing that, they “started to understand the amount of food that’s grown within [their] neighbourhood, and where it could be grown as well” (Participant 8). From that, they planted a community orchard, a number of



community gardens and are now offering food education programs in addition to making cider from unharvested locally collected fruit.

Similar to the way in which some participants were engaging community members in fruit harvesting and processing, other participants discussed cultivating more convivial, participatory food systems through converting front lawns to gardens, or community garden plots:

So 2%, at least in this Western world anyway feeds the other 98%. And to me, that's ridiculous. We all eat. So we all need to make food, even if we're only making 20% of our food. I would ideally like 60 or 70% of our food. If everybody got in with a pitchfork one day doing something, whether it's gardening or milking, making cheese or processing, then we would have less need for industrial systems to do much. Better health because more by hands instead of machines. (Participant 15)

This participant notes wanting to increase the proportion of growing one's own food locally and personally, which has been found to exhibit social, interpersonal and environmental benefits.

While there can be barriers to growing one's own food, especially in urban settings, there has been an increased interest and resurgence of this. Autio et al. (2013) found that when people self-processed and self-produced foods, such as growing, hunting and gathering, they experienced a higher level of appreciation for their food, and considered it to be the most "authentic" local food. Shown below is a participant's photo of converting their front lawn to a food-producing garden (Figure 3).

### **Figure 3**

*From lawn to garden (Participant 3)*



The lawn-to-garden movement is not only an opportunity to combat food insecurity and increase one's access to locally grown food, but also is considered a resistance to the "vast expanse of forever-green American lawn, [which] is not only the most resource intensive agricultural crop in the world, but also an obscene icon to our arrogant privilege and total alienation from a life in harmony with nature" (Green Anarchy, 2000, p. 1). Further, it is an example of a convivial practice among community members in their place-based food systems.

### **Repoliticizing the economy**

Degrowth scholars often refer to the need for reduced production and consumption in an intentional and democratic fashion. For many participants, organising into collective action, or orienting one's business in a particular way, was considered "political". Acting politically in degrowth might be as overt as oppositional activism (Demaria et al., 2013) or civil disobedience (Renou, 2015); however, as Brossman and Islar (2015) point out, acting politically within degrowth can be a lot more nuanced. These processes are thought to be "crucial for transforming the contents and processes of decision-making, i.e. the collective social-political space(s) at different levels" (Brossman & Islar, 2020, p. 923). Further, what is considered to be "real" or "true" food is embedded in personal and shared local histories that are associated closely with

craft and artisan food systems (Autio et al., 2013). This shifts the role of the consumer to citizen whose role within the food system is as an active agent who considers more factors than affordability or price, but also ethics, authenticity, sustainability, and even the shared social histories of their food.

### ***Role of Consumer as Citizen***

Many participants discussed the importance of educating consumers and empowering *consumers as citizens* by emphasising engagement practise and ethical consumption as a form of everyday politics (Fournier, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2018). Kennedy et al. (2018) describe the non-traditional political engagement in ideals of pleasurable, convivial and pragmatic engagement in eat-local initiatives as a form of everyday politics where consumers are seen as the ideal agents of change. Defining “ethical consumption” in the local food realm is complex, yet it has received a lot of attention in recent literature (Ricci et al., 2016). Since many large-scale industrial food system structures result in worker exploitation, greater divide in income, and externalized costs on nature and workers, participants discussed striving towards more ethical consumption and production through direct relationships with their producers and networks to increase transparency and accountability:

Transparency is letting people know where the ingredients come from and explaining...you should pay for this and just enjoy a smaller amount than gorging yourself on a cheap garbage chocolate bar that’s complicit in horrible human abuses.

(Participant 9)

This sort of transparency with their sources helps to reduce what Plumwood (2002) refers to as illusions of “remoteness” that allow for the continuation of resource and labour extraction from other species, environments and different parts of the world, perpetuating increasingly complex

and challenging environmental and social issues of our time (Plumwood, 2002). Disconnected consumerism often denigrates nature, other species or marginalized communities throughout a hidden externalisation process (Gaard, 2017). Through connection, citizens can minimize remoteness and wasted externalities (p. 72). *Technological remoteness* refers to the way in which well-being can be preserved in places of prominence and privilege, while *spatial remoteness* refers to disconnect between people and places (Gaard, 2017).

In the photograph below, a farm worker sorts beets by hand which will be sold at the local farmers' market where consumers have personal relationships with their producers such as Participant 14.

#### **Figure 4**

*Sorting beets by hand (Participant 14)*



Participant 14 also discusses how “involvement in the production process will help the growth of a person’s internal world and people will appreciate life and food, but also live a bit better” (Participant 14).

Cultivating active citizenship around food sourcing, such as encouraging consumers as citizens to consider the products they are buying, where they come from, and who is making

them was emphasised. This increase in one's awareness of sourcing was described as integral to telling the local, community narrative of the product from "farm to glass", which may also enhance the consumer's experience:

If you want a decent beverage, you can walk into a pub just about anywhere on Earth. But why do you care about what we're doing? It's really to showcase from farm all the way to glass there, what we're doing, how it might be different, how it's an experience, and to really tell that story. (Participant 1)

This participant emphasises that the community story and experience will differ from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and fosters hyperlocal experiences of brewing and distilling. One craft brewer/distiller will be different from the next "five hours south of us" or even the next block over (Participant 1). There is not only a regional identity of Alberta craft beer, but a narrative story embedded in regionality, locality and even hyperlocality (individual neighbourhoods). This specificity seems to help to cultivate a sense of belonging and place-based identity referred to above.

### ***Empowering the Worker as Citizen***

In a similar way, participants discussed empowering their employees to take more active, creative roles within the workplace and not only replacing *consumer as citizen*, but also *worker as citizen*. This is a concept that was previously missing in Browman and Isler's (2020) concept map. Participant 2 notes that "there could be a point number five for a complimentary comment that really speaks to me about replacing workers as human beings".

These ideas are thought to not only benefit and humanize each worker and thus, increase well-being of the community in a degrowth manner, but also introduce a quality of care ethic. Notions of "liberating the workforce" extend to those traditionally marginalized within systems

such as “young moms” or other marginalized communities (Participant 2, 6). One participant discussed setting up a ten dollar a day daycare system for his workers who were mothers or parents (Participant 2). Another participant discussed creating beekeeping workshops more accessible for BIPOC folks who currently are underrepresented in craft beekeeping in Alberta (Participant 16). Similarly, another participant discussed his commitment to hiring local workers in order to avoid “breaking up families” and the worker exploitations that often occur as a result of Alberta’s Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) (Participant 14).

While many participants discussed the repoliticization of the economy, and thus, empowering consumers and workers, frustration was also expressed. Participant 10 expressed feeling “both the power and powerlessness of politics as well” during various initiatives over the years. Another participant expressed exasperation that “people don’t care to know their producers... they think of food as a thing you have to eat, not the connection to the people that produce your food” (Participant 6). He observed that since the COVID-19 pandemic the relationships among consumers and producers had diminished by:

watching how they interact at the farmers’ markets, compared to like three years ago...  
now people are so set in their ways. They go there to get one thing and they leave.  
(Participant 6)

Despite these challenges, tensions and imperfections, many participants emphasised striving towards engaging citizenship and democratic choice of consumers and workers in their sector.

### ***Privilege and Responsibility***

While many participants recognised the benefits of craft and degrowth, they often described the privilege that accompanied living more slowly, intentionally and as “good” ecological citizens. Often due to time or resource constraints, they recognised that not everyone

could make such choices:

And I know that for most of the world, in densely populated areas and urban areas, they might not be able to line all that up. Because I feel kind of in a position of privilege, right? Because we have that kind of space. (Participant 5)

While they recognised the privilege, many participants acknowledged the responsibility they held and the desire to not be complicit in their systems. In this way, some participants discussed how much of a “scam” growth logics or “profit-worshipping” culture were that allowed for the illusion of cheap products through hidden, externalized costs (Participant 2).

### ***Equitable Models and Systems***

Many participants expressed the view that large-scale corporate structures exploit certain subsets of the population, and only benefit a few. This has caused many of them to be critically reflexive of how to create more “equitable models” particularly within certain industries:

There is definitely a huge question over how to create these equitable models that challenge traditional exploitative corporate structures. How does a society boost the capabilities of these equitable structures to combat the current climate of inequity, often only progressed by those in inequitable positions themselves? (Participant 7)

The lack of gender equity, intersectionality and inclusivity in Alberta’s craft brewing industry was discussed (Participant 7). As a female brewer “coming into this big boys’ club”, she describes being “on the fringes of the system, but still in the system” within an industry that is “completely unaware of the barriers to access” perpetuating harm and abuse. Her female-run, cooperative employee-owned brewery emphasises building a model that fields who they work with and maintains high accountability in their processes:

Typically you’d had to fit within a certain narrative, lean into their systems and tolerate

things that you shouldn't have to tolerate...and that is the driving force behind what it is that I do. We are the only all women, queer-founded and operated brewing company in Alberta. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 explains that there are other female-owned and operated brewing companies, but they are often backed or partnered by male partners or intergenerational wealth. Her intersectional challenges are an integral component of her approach, yet something that she says:

Is not something that you do [in the beer industry]. You don't reveal yourself, you don't reveal your political motives, you don't reveal your sexuality. Or most more often than not, you don't have to if you're cis-, hetero-. The world already accommodates for you. So that's part of the unveiling of the self. (Participant 7)

Participant 7 explored assumptions around "femininity" and intersecting oppressions within the system. She discussed initiatives and collaborations with organisations in which proceeds of her beers would be donated or in support of various causes.

While some other participants discussed "not wanting to get too political" or remaining "apolitical", many participants discussed political identity, privilege and the intersectionality within their systems. Participants, particularly those from marginalized communities, discussed the challenges and importance of making space, recognising the politicality of business and repoliticising the economy. As discussed by Fournier (2008), degrowth is not only about consuming and producing less, but also about "providing a critique of the economy and its colonising effect, and pointing to escape routes" and repoliticising the economy in order to create more equitable systems for all (p. 541).

### **Open Localisms**

A "responsible togetherness" that is adaptive to changes and needs of the entire



community is thought to be vital in transforming the relationships of humans, their communities and nature. Open localisms refer to alternative social relations and economic organisation that emphasise locality, transparency, relationships and sustainability.

Many participants spoke about open localisms, or various benefits of relocalising the economy by embedding one's business within one's specific communities or neighbourhoods:

We were both born [in Edmonton], and had a lot of connections in the community and understood the culture really well...The goal was to find a walkable community and to insert ourselves into that community and stay there for the long-term. It wasn't to start a business, pump it up and sell it immediately. (Participant 10)

This participant, a bakeshop owner goes on to discuss how their community connection allowed for relationship building, loyal customer bases over the years and what he later refers to as a sort of "unfolding of community" around their business. By reducing the distance between consumers and producers, an open localism often fosters an intimate, integrated sense of community belonging:

Customers were coming on dates to the bake shop, and then get married, and now they have kids and the kids are coming to the bake shop, and I'm seeing this sort of slow unfolding of the community building around us. (Participant 10)

This community building is similar to what Brossman and Islar (2020) refer to as the fundamental element of the sphere of "cultivating interpersonal relationships". It is not only about having relationships but important to note how you build relationships, the quality of the relations and the quality of interactions. This is encompassed in what they refer to as an "attitude of care" that encompasses empathy, appreciation, deep listening. According to Brossman and Islar's findings (2020), it is impossible to have degrowth without a community support.

### *Cafes, Breweries and Markets*

In this way, community engagement and participation was often a key component of developing one's craft business beyond just serving a product, but creating public spaces for gathering, engagement and more. Participant 10 says, "I think you have to be engaged with the public, otherwise what's the point, right? I guess, people just want to make money and move away somewhere nice... but I don't really see it that way".

Lewis and Vodeb (2021) argue that "cafe culture and eating in social spaces has become a complex reflexive set of social practises, linked to questions of where food comes from, who prepares it and how, and what the act of hospitality itself might say about our broader social relations" (p. 66). According to Lewis and Vodeb (2021), the capitalist models of pleasure addicted to fat- and sugar-saturated food are embedded in "a 'drug-like' model of habituated use, in the bourgeois taste cultures of Global Brooklyn", which come into productive tension with other modes of pleasure such as a mindfulness, reflexivity and care (p. 66). Similar to the agora, the craft café, taproom, butcher shop or farmers' market now become spaces for public engagement, care and citizenship. Participant 10 touches on this saying, "Honestly, the one thing that makes Edmonton beautiful is that there is a thriving community of people who earnestly want the community to grow and become a better place to live". Similarly, a craft butcher describes sharing the "brutal", yet "kind community act" of animal slaughter with customers and even his young daughter in order to develop intimate understandings of food practice and consumption. He contrasts this process to "people buying meat at Walmart [who] couldn't tell you the breed of cow they are buying. [Whereas,] I can tell you the story of the guy's daughter when she fell through ice when ice fishing of the thing you are eating" (Participant 2).

In this way, a sense of community connection, identity and deep care emerge whether in

the bakeshop, butchershop, taproom or café. Arcand (2017), an Alberta roaster and café owner, blogs about the need for cafés to re-emerge as spaces in society that allow people to gather and commiserate outside of the home in order to “fulfill the more intangible aspects of civil society”. According to him, café culture is being replaced for “lifestyle affirming consumer experiences for a select group of individually minded people in society”, which can also be the case when craft becomes a niche, privileged market. However, in certain degrowth craftfood spaces, we can see examples where diverse viewpoints, politics and communities are coming together in convivial, open localisms.

### ***Innovative Waste Pathways***

Another aspect of open localisms was the ability to adapt quickly, be flexible and understand the impact of your business in various ways due to more direct relationships with surrounding systems and awareness of supply chains. One participant stated that, “being a small company [means] you have a flexibility on the ground. Whereas a really large company has a really tied in to dedicated yearlong supply chains” (Participant 10). In this way, circular economies, innovative waste pathways and an increased awareness of impacts were discussed. One participant described the impact of directly participating in one’s food system and having an intimate relationship with the land:

Living in partnership with the land, stewarding some land and some livestock makes you a lot more aware of inputs and outputs than we would have been otherwise both in food and just in ecology. (Participant 2)

This participant expressed feeling like part of the “food web”, which also ties into his “finance web”, which is otherwise often disconnected in the modern capitalist system (Participant 2). The after-life of products after use and the cost of disposal of waste products have not historically

been considered in the prices placed on them. Since many producers and consumers are able to avoid the burden or even knowledge of waste disposal, this participant, a butcher with a finance background, describes “what a scam it is” (Participant 2). Part of his practice involves educating his customers about how to use every part of the animal they have brought for him to butcher, which he describe as being “part of a production system that has ethics at its core instead of worshipping just profit” (Participant 2).

Some participants had specific innovative waste reduction strategies that were only possible because of open localisms. For example, innovative waste streams in the production of honey for a distiller in Calgary (Participant 1) or a cidery using mostly culled fruit in their ciders (Participant 7):

We’re taking those waste streams, and we’re repurposing them into essentially a stream of value added to the product. We can turn a waste stream from a honey farm into a fermented spirit at the end of the day. And Alberta, being one of the larger honey exporters in the world, that’s something that we’re really interested in showcasing is that relationship with the other farmers that are associated with agri-processors here.

(Participant 1)

### ***Collaborative Networks and Transparency***

Open localisms also include an effective way of collaborating among and between networks of craftspeople. Participants expressed open communication, willingness to collaborate and transparency among craft producers counter to the conventional competitive nature of business that is often assumed. For example, rather than hiding “trade secrets”, participants discussed sharing techniques with each other or releasing recipe books as a form of accountability (Participant 10). One participant noted:

I don't believe in standing behind secrets [...] we have our process, technique, ingredients, and recipes—it's very much just us in the recipe book. And I'm part of this community [...] Ultimately, the net result is a vibrant, thriving community that inspires people to do better. I've always seen that as a momentum thing. (Participant 9)

This openness and transparency revealed an emphasis on the trust that quality, relationships and community support would be able to sustain their business rather than hiding proprietary information.

All of these components of open localisms were thought to maintain a sustainable business model and practice that was healthy for their business, community of employees and customers. This often incorporated a care ethic that extended to having hard conversations “traditional businesses aren't meant to enter into” (Participant 7). For instance, while the craft sector in Alberta has significantly grown in the past four years and has been applauded for encouraging conscientious consumerism, participants still noted a lack of diversity and inclusion within the sector. Therefore, what does an inclusive definition of craft-oriented degrowth and participation look like? While craft-oriented degrowth may be accessible for some, how is it not for others? These conversations continue to happen, and further research is needed to delve deeper.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, I found that actually-existing degrowth in the craft food sector was more than scaling back, staying small-scale or countering growth logics. Rather, it often involved “doing things differently” and a broader sense of commitment to community, new ways of relating and organising together. Throughout the interviews, participants discussed various concepts that could be understood through the following themes of degrowth: (1) slowness, (2)

conviviality, (3) repoliticisation of the economy, and (4) open localisms (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2020). Living degrowth is not necessarily a cohesive model, but rather a framework to inspire innovation, navigate tensions and create more equitable systems with community. According to Haraway (2016), “what is needed is action and thinking that does not fit within dominant capitalist cultures [...] on the ground collectives capable of new practices of imagination, resistance, revolt, repair, and mourning and living and dying well” (p. 51).

Examples of this seemed to be found in craft communities aligned with degrowth, not just in abstract ideas, but as living practices in their everyday. By sharing and speaking from their own experience, participants were able to relate and reflect on their own situations, while also potentially developing solutions and strategies for individual and collective change. Furthermore, visual images of photographs and film helped individuals think critically about their lives and express what words alone cannot (Freire, 1970).

In the context of today’s pervasive uncertainty in resource economies, further compounded by long-term socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, there has been an increased need for innovative approaches to economic transition and diversification in Alberta (Jones et al., 2020). Degrowth is not meant “as a monolithic alternative to the existing capitalist set-up” but a “matrix of alternatives which re-opens space for creativity by raising the heavy blanket of economic totalitarianism” (Latouche, 2010, p. 520). This study supports the existence of living and exploring degrowth ideas as potential transformation pathways in the craft food sector in Alberta and beyond.

## References

- Alberta Small Brewers Association (2022). "The Local Story of Alberta Beer." *Alberta Beer*. Retrieved from alberta.beer on November 19, 2022.
- Alexander, S. (2013). Voluntary Simplicity and the Social Reconstruction of Law: Degrowth from the Grassroots Up. *Environmental Values*, 22(2), 287-308.
- Beckie, M., & Connelly, S. (2016). The role of the social economy in scaling up alternative food initiatives. In M. Gismondi, S. Connelly, M. Beckie, S. Markey, and M. Roseland (Eds.), *Scaling up: the convergence of social economy and sustainability* (pp. 59-82). AU Press.
- Benson, M. & Craig, R. (2013). The end of sustainability. *Society and Natural Resources*, 7, 777-782.
- Botta, M. (2016). Evolution of slow living concept within the models of sustainable communities. *Futures*, 80, 3–16.
- Brossman, J. & Islar, M. (2020). Living degrowth? Investigating degrowth through performative methods. *Sustainability Science*, 3, 917-930.
- Cargo, M. & Mercer, S. L. (2008). The values and challenges of participatory research: Strengthening its practice. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29, 325-350.
- Cattaneo, C. & Gavaldà, M. (2010). The experience of rurban squats in Barcelona: What kind of degrowth? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 6, 581-589.
- Commission for Environmental Cooperation (2018). *Characterization and Management of Food Loss and Waste in North America - White Paper*. CEC-CCA-OCE. Retrieved from <http://www.cec.org/fw/food-waste-reports/>

- Cosme, I., Santos, R., & O'Neill, D. W. (2017). Assessing the degrowth discourse: A review and analysis of academic degrowth policy proposals. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 149, 321-334.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century (pp. xi-xxi; 3-30; 224-228). Sage Publications.
- Derr, V. & Simons, J. (2020) A review of photovoice applications in environment, sustainability, and conservation contexts: Is the method maintaining its emancipatory intents? *Environmental Education Research*, 26(3), 359-380.
- Dockney, J., & Tomaselli, K. G. (2009). Fit for the small(er) screen: Films, mobile TV and the new individual television experience. *Journal of African Cinema*, 1(1), 126–132.
- Eizenberg, E. (2011). Actually existing commons: Three moments of space of community gardens in New York City, *Antipode*, 44, 764-782.
- Escobar, A. (2010). Latin America at a Crossroads, *Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 1-65.
- Fairbrother, M. (2016). Trust and public support for environmental protection in diverse national contexts. *Sociological Science*, 3, 359-382.
- Florida, R. (2003). Cities and the creative class. *City & Community*, 2(1), 3-19.
- Fournier, V. (2008). Escaping from the economy: the politics of degrowth. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 11, 528-545.
- Gaard, G. (2017). *Critical Ecofeminism*. Lexington Books.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1971). *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. ISBN 978-0674257801.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1993). Valuing the earth: Economics, energy and ethics (Daly & Townsend, Ed.). MIT Press.



- Goodchild, M. (2021). Relational Systems Thinking: That’s How Change is Going to Come, From Our Earth Mother. *Journal of Awareness-Based Systems Change*, 1(1), 75–103.  
<https://doi.org/10.47061/jabsc.v1i1.57>
- Government of Alberta (2022). “Population statistics”. Retrieved from  
<https://www.alberta.ca/population-statistics> on Nov 19, 2022.
- Granzow, M. C., & Beckie, M. A. (2019). Making place for local food: Reflections on institutional procurement and the Alberta Flavour Learning Lab. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9, 215–229.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 274–294.
- Hinrichs, C. Clare. (2000). Embeddedness and Local Food Systems: Notes on Two Types of Direct Agricultural Market. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 16(3), 295–303.
- Howard, P. H. (2018). Craftwashing in the U.S. beer industry. *Beverages*, 4, 1-13.
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288
- Ionciă, D., & Petrescu, E. (2016). Slow living and the green economy. *Journal of Philosophical Economics*, 9(2), 85–104.
- IPCC (2022). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge University Press.  
 doi:10.1017/9781009325844.
- Jones, K.E., Van Assche, K., & Parkins, J. R. (2020). Reimagining craft for community development, *Local Environment*, 2, 1-13.

- Kallis, G., Demaria, F., & D'Alisa, G. (2015). *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. Routledge.
- Kallis, G., Varvarousis, A., & Petridis, P. (2022). Southern thought, islandness and real-existing degrowth in the Mediterranean. *World Development*, 157, 105957.
- Krugh, M. (2014). The joy in labour: The Politicization of craft from the arts and crafts movement in Etsy. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 44, 281-301.
- Kumar, A., Kapoor, N., Arora, H., & Kumar, A. (2022). Smart cities: A step toward sustainable development. *Smart Cities*, 1, 1-43.
- Labrague, M. (2017). Patagonia: A case study in the historical development of slow thinking. *Journal of Design History*, 30(2), 175–191.
- Latouche, S. (2007). Degrowth economics. *Le monde diplomatique*, Retrieved online from <https://www.jussempier.org/Resources/Economic%20Data/Resources/Degrowth%20economics,%20by%20Serge%20Latouche.pdf> on 19 Nov 2022.
- Loveless, N. (2019). *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation*. Duke University Press.
- Luckman, S. (2015). *Craft and Creative Economy*. Springer.
- Macentee, K., Burkholder, C. & Schwab-Cartas, J. (2016). *What's a Cellphilm? Integrating Mobile phone technology into participatory visual research and activism*. Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- Martin, J. (2008). Ecological modernisation: new perspectives. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 16, 557-565.
- Mayan, M. & Daum, C. H. (2015). Worth the risk? Muddle Relationships in Community-based Participatory Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(1), 69-76.

- Milne, M., Kearins, K., & Walton, S. (2006). Creating adventures in Wonderland: The Journey Metaphor and Environmental Sustainability. *Organization, 13*(6), 801-839.
- Mitchell, C., de Lange, N. & Moletsane, R. (2016). Me and my cellphone: Constructing change from the inside through cellfilms and participatory video in a rural community. *Area, 48*(4), 435-441.
- Nelson, P., Beckie, M. & Krogman, N. (2017). The “Locavore” Chef in Alberta: A Situated Social Practice Analysis. *Food Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 20*(3), 1-22.
- Ramos, V. (1982). The concepts of ideology, hegemony, and organic intellectuals in Gramsci’s Marxism. *Theoretical Review, 27*, 1982.
- Sayers, S. (2007). The concept of labor: Marx and his critics. *Science and Society, 71*, 421-454.
- Schlosberg, D., & Rinfret, S. (2008). Ecological Modernization, *American Style. Environmental Politics, 17*, 254-275. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09644010801936206>
- Statistics Canada (2022). “Census of Population.” *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm> on Nov 19, 2022.
- Tarasuk V, Li T, & Fafard St-Germain, AA. (2022). *Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021*. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>
- Tendall, D. M., Joerin, J., Kopainsky, B., Edwards, P., Shreck, A., Le, Q. B., Kruetli, P., Grant, M., & Six, J. (2015). Food system resilience: Defining the concept. *Global Food Security, 6*, 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2015.08.00>
- Wang, C. C. & Burris, M. (1994). Empowerment through photonovella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*, 171-186.

Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior, 24*, 369-387.

Wittman, H., Beckie, M., & Hergesheimer, C. (2012). Linking Local Food Systems and the Social Economy? Future Roles for Farmers' Markets in Alberta and British Columbia. *Rural Sociology, 77*(1), 36-81.

## Chapter 3: Defining Degrowth Together

### Introduction

Degrowth generally refers to the need to create social and economic futures that provide alternatives to the growth logics of consumerism and mass production. Degrowth is a multifaceted framework discussed by scholars across many disciplines. Some elements of degrowth include an emphasis on the quality and experience of production, slowing down systems of production, connecting local communities to ethical consumption, and connecting networks of local producers (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2020). However, in practice, degrowth defies a tidy definition, and there is no straightforward roadmap to achieving it. Instead, we might think of degrowth as offering a language for together figuring out what a sustainable and just future involves in ways that challenge the business-as-usual model.

In the following document, we explore the layered possibilities of degrowth in the craft food sector. The material presented is drawn from a series of research conversations with craft food producers across Alberta. All participants were seeking to establish progressive ways of working and interacting with their communities. This research is part of a community-engaged, participatory research process involving interviews, photovoice, cellphilm, and focus groups. These research processes allowed participants to explore their craft values and practices with a language of degrowth. The following section discusses the perspectives and experiences shared during these processes. Participants were able to relate and reflect on their situations, while also potentially developing solutions and strategies for individual and collective change.

When thinking about these questions and the layered possibilities of degrowth, many words, themes, ideas, questions and concepts came up in our interview and focus group conversations. Figure 5 shown below is a word map displaying many of them.

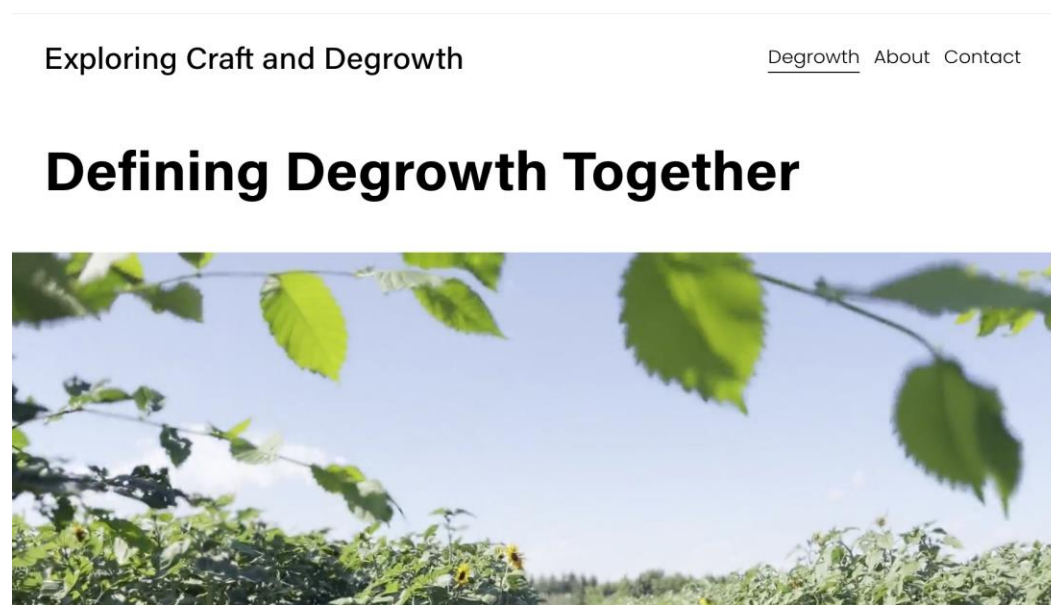


You can explore the photographs, cellphilms, and various quotes from participants in an online exhibit showcasing their reflections and discussions. This exhibit is inspired by the metaphor of “patchwork quilting” based on early cellphilms research, which relates it to “the process of using pieces of fabric to construct a design that can then be sewn together into a larger pattern” to then visualise how these concepts and principles exist individually and in relation to a greater whole (McEntee et al., 2015).

This online exhibit offers a window into the experiences, perceptions, and understandings of degrowth as understood by Alberta’s craft food sector: [A community exploration of craft and degrowth](#) (Password: Degrowth). The figure below shows a screenshot of the first website page from which you can scroll through and explore (Figure 6).

### Figure 6

*A screenshot of the online, password-protected website displaying community members’ photovoice submissions.*



## **From Bees to Brews: How is Degrowth Understood and Lived in Practice by Alberta's Craft Food Community?**

You sip a fresh, bubbling cider crafted from rescued apples left unharvested from your neighbours' fruit trees. You glimpse rooftop community beekeeping initiatives in downtown city cores buzzing with students and community volunteers mindfully tending to bees against backdrops of skyscraper buildings. You smell hand-crafted batches of bread and sweets from your neighbourhood baker you know by name, and that you have been frequenting since your first date with your partner ten years ago. Community members of the local farmer-owned co-ope gather to help convert front yards' manicured lawns to vibrant, food-producing gardens. These are some of the many examples to paint a picture of everyday practices of craft and degrowth that participants shared.

I invite you to engage with the following sections as windows into ideas, insights, and imaginaries of degrowth put forth by various craftspeople in Alberta's craft food community. I encourage you to peruse the quotations, explore the photographs and allow them to ignite your own reflections about your own role(s) and participation within your local, place-based food systems. Craft and degrowth do not offer silver bullet solutions; however, they provide openings and alternate ways of being with, relating to, and organising our current systems.

### ***Challenging Growth Logics***

It can be challenging to put together a tidy definition of what living degrowth means (Kallis et al., 2022). A common starting point for many of the craftspeople that I spoke with was the desire to stay small-scale, locally rooted, and to challenge endless growth logics:

- “There are entrepreneurs that want to just grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, and that want to be able to, you know, franchise or whatever. I'm definitely not of this



- [mindset]. I don't want to get any, any bigger than I am, you know? I want to be able to do more and connect more and do more unique things. But I don't want to grow the business beyond what it is now." (Educator and Baker)
- "I don't want to grow anymore, at least not too much than we already are [...] Once you get above a certain scale, at least for me, it removes a lot of the enjoyment, a lot of the interest and passion from it, you know? Then it just becomes a number crunching, organising game." (Bakeshop Owner)
  - "I don't want to be a huge plant. Because I think once you get big, you stop focusing on the quality of something and it just turns into quantity. You're just pushing product out the door, because you have more staff and, of course. We'd like to have more staff at some point. But I still think the small batch mentality is what we like." (Bone Brothmaker)
  - "The concept of a finite planet and the kind of the end of consumerism and the end of fast." (Butcher)
  - "Some beautiful, alternative community we're creating. And you know, I think my business partners and I don't want to be rich. We just want to have enough. But we are not thinking profit [...] as long as we can survive and have a happy face." (Café and Chocolateria Owner)

While there was agreement that no perfect size or scale existed, many craftspeople reflected on what was "enough" for them. There was often a tension between sustaining one's business or figuring out what was "enough". This involved "feeling quite awkward sometimes because we do need to be a business and get customers to become that business." Nonetheless, craftspeople pursued social change and impact goals at the "local, real rooted level".

- “We’re like a very small, big company. But like a really big small company, we’re in this kind of peculiar gray area in between those two worlds.” (Bakeshop Owner)

Many participants discussed similar versions of these “gray areas.” Ideal scale of business ranged for a variety of reasons. One reason involved being able to maintain focus on the passion or interest. For some, purposefully resisting a certain threshold of growth allowed the preservation of passion and commitment to the community. Many craftspeople expressed the desire to move away from “transactional relationships” in different ways. Instead, some of their focuses were to connect communities with their food systems and “heal their communities” (Bone Broth Maker).

### ***The Costs of Modern Capitalism: Challenging from Within***

Many of the community members spoke about the hidden costs and exploitative nature of modern capitalism (Lessenich, 2020). Externalization of costs refers to the transfer of costs such as environmental damage, social impacts, and other costs, usually from “rich”, highly industrialised countries to countries or people in poorer, less “developed” regions of the world (Lessenich, 2020):

In this sense, externalization means exploiting the resources of others, passing on costs to them, appropriating the profits, and promoting self-interest while obstructing or even preventing the progress of others. (Lessenich, 2020, p. 22)

Community members expressed feeling a responsibility to make a difference and challenge the current systems rather than be complicit within them:

- “I need[ed] to start [a business] that actually [was] going to make a difference, and not just be another kind of a capitalist model where for me to win, somebody else has to lose. So that consumption thinking. I’m not an extraction company, where I just

- take something from here, and I consume it, and then I make a product, there's a bunch of waste that goes along. We're creating a company with a primary focus on making the planet better. That's our overall purpose. And the way that we're planning on doing that was through the reduction of food waste." (Cider Maker)
- "There is an inherent kind of tension. I mean, these are fast-paced times even amongst COVID [...] Why did I do this? Why did I expand? [...] The way we source and why it's important to us and why we see value and why it makes a difference for our customers." (Baker and Educator)
  - "To help build a better working model, and sort of expand the experiment to include more doers and more re-thinkers [...] there's a carrot and a stick. I think that maybe the carrot of a slightly less comfortable, less convenient lifestyle wasn't enough. We were losing to the convenience of 'frappier' lattes and someone else preparing everything for us in our lives. But the stick came along and hit people over the head with COVID and environmental catastrophe, which is very evident." (Butcher)
  - "The frustration of having complained about the capitalist system my whole life growing up and through school, and then now becoming part of it, and sort of being very complicit in the system." (Baker)

### ***Investing in Community Well-Being***

Other elements integral to degrowth are an emphasis on deep transformation and care towards fellow humans, non-humans, and nature (Nesterova, 2022). Degrowth scholars challenge the attitude of "having it all and wanting more." This mindset is often referred to as the root cultural narrative that creates complicity in global wealth disparity (Lessenich, 2020). Community members described working towards more just, inclusive, and equitable systems:

- “It is about investing in other people investing in our local economy, creating equitable systems, such as hybrid cooperatives models where we open up opportunities for other people who potentially haven’t had the opportunity to open up for them. We will create more of a model that has a slower growth model, but at the end of the day, hopefully much more sustainable.” (Brewer)
- “And that’s been a model that I’ve always had to, in the past abide by. And it has resulted in harm and abuse. That’s not something that we want to perpetuate. So we have high accountability, not just of ourselves, but we hold our accounts to a standard and even if they don’t have processes in place, as long as there’s a willingness to have conversations and try to build that over time and bring them into that conversation, then that’s always a plus for us [...] But it’s generally cis-hetero men that own and operate the businesses and are the decision-makers.” (Brewer)
- “So you’ve had to fit in with a certain narrative, lean into their systems and tolerate things that you shouldn’t have to tolerate. I should never have had to tolerate.” (Brewer)

Recognizing that they all operated within neoliberal, modern capitalist systems, participants discussed ways to challenge their systems from within (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2020).

Equitable systems to participants meant creating access for people of all gender, sexuality, racialization, and other marginalization that restricted access to opportunities within the systems.

In conclusion, degrowth for participants meant scaling back growth and profits, redefining success and prosperity beyond “number crunching games” that result in externalized costs and oppressive systems. It also cultivates more equitable systems, fostering hard conversations and breaking down systemic barriers.

### *Growth in a Different Way*

While it was important to develop a shared language to facilitate and deepen the concepts, even the prefix “de” within “degrowth” was often met with resistance by participants who felt that it was limiting and had negative connotations.

- “Okay, first impression, the word de- kind of sets me off because it’s like, oh, it hints to degenerative. When I think it would be more like, figuring out how to grow differently. But I don’t know what that could be coded as? Intimate growth maybe?” (Beekeeper)
- “We are farmers. We grow things. We don’t degrow things. [laughs]” (Organic, small-scale farmer)
- “But for me, it’s always been about bringing people together and connecting them with producers and connecting them with our local food community in a true and valuable way; in a way that is attainable and they will hopefully bring it to the to their home kitchens, and teach their kids and teach their families and friends.” (Baker)

A community beekeeper identified immediate resistance to the word that “set them off”.

Instead, this participant put forth the idea that reconceptualised the notion of growth itself. They explored it as a non-linear, curved, forested type growth, or “an intimate growth” that might offer alternate imaginaries. When unpacked further, a different understanding of growth itself emerged, that revealed pursuing an alternative to something. This included alternatives to capitalism, to hustle culture, to a fast pace of being on the “hamster wheel”, but also an alternative to what our conception of “growth” meant itself (Small-scale farmer). Alternative concepts of linear growth and the expectation of constant growth were offered:

“It doesn’t have to be like that. Actual growth is peaks and valleys, it goes back and forth

more cyclical. It can't always be going that way, that's a high last rotation for all of us."

(Beekeeper)

What if we reconceptualised growth and degrowth to include this notion of a forested or non-linear growth described above? Through conversations, ideas for new conceptions of growth itself, and new possibilities of care, learning, and unlearning emerged. Moving beyond an oversimplified binary of fast/slow, or growth/degrowth might be helpful in exploring alternatives, degrowth lived practices, and creative possibilities. Since the use of binary categorization of concepts is limiting (Butler, 1973), this community-based definition of degrowth is a multi-faceted set of principles and values beyond binaries that can be adapted to various craft sectors or small businesses. Degrowth also alternately offers "other 'goods': justice, equality, democracy, human and ecosystems' health, quality of life, social relations" as essential values for a resilient and sustainable future (p. 531). Further exploring value at the scale of community and local environments is needed.

### **Reflective Questions for Craft Businesses Wanting to Integrate or Practice Degrowth**

In this section, I present some reflective questions for any business wanting to reflect, inspire or ponder how degrowth might align or be cultivated in their business. What are some questions we might ask ourselves if we want to follow a degrowth pathway in our business or organisation? As explored above, community-based degrowth offers insights, openings, and possibilities for alternate ways of doing things, and connecting with community. Based on conversations and photographs taken exploring degrowth, we put forth some questions for others interested in excavating their own understanding of degrowth.

#### 1. Defining Degrowth

- a. What assumptions do I currently hold about business models or practice?

- b. What does degrowth mean to us?
- c. What are our degrowth values?
- d. How do we practice these values? In the everyday? In the organisation of your business? In your relationships?

## 2. Redefining Success, Value, and Well-being

- a. How does my craft business measure success, value, and well-being?
  - i. What other goods or values do we consider? (e.g., justice, equality, democracy, human and ecosystems' health, quality of life, social relations as essential to a resilient and sustainable future?)
- b. How can we quantitatively or qualitatively measure this? Do we need to?
- c. How can we communicate this with our communities?

## 3. Challenging Growth Logics

- a. What does growth or degrowth mean to me? Is it always linear?
- b. What does growth mean to me beyond scale and size?
- c. What limits are, boundaries and goals do I hold?
- d. How do I want my craft business to develop or grow?

## 4. Equity, Barriers, and Access

- a. What does an equitable and just system look like to us?
- b. Who holds decision-making power, agency, and participatory control? (i.e., from the board, management, workers, and consumers)
- c. How do we remove barriers and improve access?
- d. How do we continue to make these systems more equitable, inclusive and just?

## 5. Open Localisms

- a. How are we connected to our locally-based economy?
- b. How can we reimagine our roles as citizens, consumers, and producers?
- c. How are all community members utilizing their knowledge, expertise, and creativity to contribute to our systems?
- d. How are we reducing our environmental impacts at all stages of the product/service life cycle?

### **Thank you**

Thank you to all who contributed to these meaningful and inspiring conversations exploring degrowth. Thank you to our readers for taking the time to explore these ideas with us as well. If you are interested in further discussing, providing feedback or comments, please get in touch with Tanya at [tipachol@ualberta.ca](mailto:tipachol@ualberta.ca). I look forward to continuing this conversation.



## Chapter 4: Conclusion

This research explored how Alberta's local craft food communities understand degrowth theoretically and live out its principles in practice. While much literature exists on degrowth, there is a need to explore lived realities and what Kallis et al. (2022) refer to as “real-existing degrowth” (p. 1). There is currently a lack of research examining real-existing degrowth in various sectors which could serve as an inspiration for more innovative degrowth practice and counter-narratives in mainstream, growth-centered sustainability discourses (Fournier, 2008; Alexander, 2015). The craft food sector offers unique opportunities. Through semi-structured interviews, photovoice, cellphilm, and a focus group, we explored shared language, vocabulary, and ways of addressing the twin imperatives of growth and development which contribute to our current socioecological crises (Kallis et al., 2020). More specifically, the objectives of this study were to: (1) explore a community-based understanding of degrowth within the craft food sector in Alberta, including opportunities, challenges and points of tension; (2) better understand what an equitable and just vision of degrowth looks like within the craft community; and (3) to create a space to explore how communities are living out degrowth in their everyday lives through arts-based methods and dialogue.

In the context of today's pervasive uncertainty in resource economies, further compounded by long-term socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, there have been various discussions of alternate, innovative approaches to economic transition and diversification in Alberta (Jones et al., 2020). Haraway (2016) asserts that “what is needed is action and thinking that does not fit within dominant capitalist cultures [...] on the ground collectives are capable of new practices of imagination, resistance, revolt, repair, and mourning and living and dying well” (p. 51). While understandings of degrowth can be diverse and contested, change can be seen

across multiple dimensions and scales among individuals, society, institutions and systems.

Kallis et al. (2020) state that “strategy starts with supporting community economies that nourish the grassroots and strengthen identities and common sense for the long game of building and sustaining low-impact worlds” (p. 88). From this study, we found unique, interesting examples of community networks, economies and ideas for sustaining long-term, low-impact worlds. In this chapter, I will outline the key findings, the significance of the research, and future areas of study.

### **Summary of Findings**

While degrowth is not a blueprint for a specific lifestyle, the decision to live and organise differently from the dominant growth paradigm is a choice that can be seen in daily practices in some of Alberta’s craft food sector. From neighbourhood ciders and buzzing rooftop community beehives, to hand-crafted small-batch baking from the favourite neighbourhood baker who holds community relationships with families for fifteen years, the participants of this study demonstrated examples of degrowth in lived practice. The following findings provide snapshots and inspiration for how degrowth can exist in practice for the broader craft food sector and be extended into sectors beyond. Participants demonstrated that having the willingness to try out new possibilities and “get their hands in the dirt to get messy” (Participant 7) despite the challenges and complexity, that new visions centered around building community rather than profit could exist. Further, degrowth is inherently a collective approach and an active practice of choosing to live and organise differently in community.

### **Doing Things Differently and a Community Commitment**

Rather than prioritising growth, profit and individualistic roots that operate on externalized costs and “hidden transfers from nature and unpaid work” (Gaard, 2017, p. 181),

participants in this study demonstrated ways in which the craft food sector is seeking pathways for a just sustainability and community focus. Throughout the study, I found that real-existing degrowth in Alberta's craft food sector was more than scaling back, staying small-scale or countering growth logics. Instead, it often involved "doing things differently" and a broader sense of commitment to one's community, new ways of relating, organising and being together.

Participants discussed the narratives and themes of: (1) slowness, (2) conviviality, (3) repoliticisation of economy, and (4) open localisms (Fournier, 2008; Kallis et al., 2020).

### **Daily Practices by Theme**

Within these themes, everyday practices of degrowth were plentiful. Slowness contributed to being able to prioritise quality, connections of community, and mindfulness of process. Slowness also often involved a paradigmatic reorganisation of values that countered hustle culture and urged participants to reflect on what was valuable or important to them. Many participants discussed taking the time to create products that they were more intimately involved with as in baking by hand, or hand-picking fruit from their local neighbourhoods to make cider. While often this resulted in a higher quality product than mass-produced, it also did not need to. The intimate connection and attunement to the slow process became a part of connecting with their craft, community, environment and sense of self.

Often even their approach to eating, consuming and coming together around food involved slowness. The practice of coming to the table and eating together without the use of cellphones or other distractions was another example of slowing down to appreciate the relationships, products and process. Last, the practice of slow production such as wanting to increase participation of people in their food systems and community gardens with "#Morepitchforks" (Participant 15) was an example of the emphasis on participation, but

particularly traditional, slower processes.

Second, conviviality within one's craft and craft community was a key element that emerged in many practices. Conviviality was explored as feeling more joy and fulfilment with one's work, as well as a closer affinity to, and meaning derived from work. Employers discussed wanting this for their employees but also as craftspeople themselves. Conviviality helped to foster more creative, autonomous communities that were growing a greater proportion of their own food whether it was in their front yard, community garden, or on a small-scale farm. An extension of this type of involvement also seemed to help to redefine well-being and success beyond monetary terms. One example of this was "feeling connected within nature" rather than above it or disconnected, and getting involved such as converting one's front lawn into a garden. Many participants described the need to stay "engaged in a fun way" in order to make the convivial nature sustaining for the long-term as well.

Third, a repoliticisation of the sector and empowering consumers as citizens, both in markets and in their purchasing power, allows for increased transparency, ethical considerations and overall, more environmentally and socially sustainable practice. Participant 1, a distiller, noted how tours allowed their community to see how their products were produced with Alberta ingredients and with this, the importance of:

Meeting the artist, meeting the master brewer, meeting the master distiller[...]. There is great French stuff on the shelf but if you don't know the story, why are you reaching for that bottle? (Participant 1)

Many of the craft producers in this study discussed locally sourcing their ingredients, having small supply chains and then distributing locally such as taking part in farmers' markets in spaces for those who "make, bake, or grow" foods produced locally in the region (Wittman et al.,

2012, p. 38). Thus, farmers' or craft markets were described as spaces to help foster relationships among rural and urban communities (Jarosz, 2008), but also spaces with locally and democratically determined rules, which starkly contrasts other for-profit, conventional, large scale, industrialised food systems (Wittman et al., 2012). These spaces fostered relationships among producers and consumers. The increase of an ethics of care surrounding community was present, as well as an association with community identity around their craft, and often led to consumers being willing to spend higher prices on products that they felt were more ethically made and sourced. As expressed by Participant 1, this notion of "crafting connections and distilling memories" with a local Albertan identity was a strong selling feature of their products and brought the community together (Participant 1).

Fourth, open localisms create networks of craftspeople and consumers that were, in turn, more conscientious, integrated and also innovative with their waste pathways. Many brewers, for example, described partnerships, collaborations and networks of sharing ingredients, training and knowledge as integral to their craft practice. "Collaborating with chocolatiers, [coffee roasters], universities with research projects, artists, musicians" were a few of the examples noted by one of the distiller participants (Participant 1). Rather than competing with each other, there was commonly a collaborative approach. A brewer even described sharing tips, training opportunities or extra ingredients that might have gone to waste. There was a mentality of "the better your products are [...] the better the overall industry is going to be" (Participant 1) counter to the commonly assumed competitive nature of business. Participants described various connected pathways of waste reduction that were able to occur because they were more intimately connected with their processes and supply chains, including harvesting from their own backyards to sourcing ingredients from other waste products within the local agri-food

system.

Studies have shown the benefits of ecoliteracy and food literacy, as well as the importance of increased participation in their food systems (Lampert et al., 2021). Lampert et al. (2021) found that community gardens not only were an affordable way of promoting physical and mental well-being for people, but also supportive for urban environments in achieving public health gains and environmental sustainability. Another participant shared that when their community members had community garden plots, it was easy to forget about the weeds that would quickly accumulate if they did not spend time out on the land. This emphasised the importance of maintaining a close connection to the plots in order to avoid “forgetting about the weeds” while also feeling joy in the process. “When they haven’t seen their weeds for weeks, they don’t realize how bad they are. Right? And you’re not living happy with your food when you’re not connected with it intimately” (Participant 15). The immediacy of being on the land and establishing relationships was common among many participants, such as describing the importance of “getting our feet dirty” (Participant 2) or “playing in the dirt” (Participant 7) in order to establish a deeper relationship with the land and the changes that occurred with it.

In conclusion, multiple unique and multifaceted everyday practices of degrowth were found throughout the study which related to the four themes of: (1) slowness; (2) conviviality; (3) repoliticising the economy; and (4) supporting open localisms. While many participants identified with concepts and ideas of degrowth, there was often tension, resistance and difficulty with meeting its ideals. “Balance and control” is a term we used to describe the difficulty of achieving one’s ideals and as well as existing within the modern capitalist system. Nonetheless, there was a desire to support micro-experiments in getting messy and striving towards them.

### **Getting Messy and Participating**

In the context of today's pervasive uncertainty in resource economies, further compounded by long-term socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19, there has been an increased need for innovative approaches to economic transition and diversification in Alberta (Jones et al., 2020). The craft food movement in Alberta can be viewed as part of a broader movement that has sought to adopt more socially and ethically aware models. With that said, as identified by Brossman and Islar (2020), individuals often experienced or felt contradictions based on tensions when trying to implement degrowth practices at personal and societal levels. While all of the participants in this study differed immensely, they seemed to share a common ethical disposition or value set. This value set included a motivation and interest in “doing things differently”, serving community in a socially responsible manner, and challenging the model of “profit first” above all else. In the words of Participant 2 (craft butcher), “I’m not a profiteer that needs to satisfy my shareholders around the world. It’s not a commercial act. It’s a kindness act. It’s a community act”.

Participants shared an interest in the principles of degrowth and exploring how these played out in their business, even if they are operating in neoliberal, capitalist systems and engaging in primarily commercial affairs. This offers what Gibson-Graham might refer to as the “politics of the possible” or what Lewis and Vodeb (2021) refer to as an emergent postcapitalist café culture.

### **Significance of Findings**

This study contributes to the literature by initiating, deepening, and expanding the conversation around degrowth and craft food systems both in academic literature and among communities. The findings contribute to shifting cultural narratives and opening up possibilities of change by people directly working towards more resilient food systems. In the context of a

province like Alberta at a time of potential transition to less carbon-intensive energy systems and industries, we are at a moment of “radical indeterminacy[...] in which we might activate the potential obscured by business-as-usual [...] this moment is the transition to a society after oil” (Petrocultures Research Group, 2016). Alberta is in a time of transformation from a cultural identity, political economy and social system having been predominantly powered by fossil fuels. “An energy transition adequate to the challenges of climate change demands of us the complete reinvention of the daily-lived reality” (Wilson, 2018, p. 393). As we navigate this energy transition, Wilson (2018) urges us to move beyond technical or economic solutions, and explore social and cultural transformations.

Living degrowth is not necessarily a cohesive model, but rather a framework to inspire innovation, navigate tensions, and create more equitable systems with community. By sharing and speaking from their own experiences, participants were able to relate and reflect on their own situations, while also developing solutions and strategies for individual and collective change, think critically about their lives and express what words alone could not (Freire, 1970).

### **Areas for Future Research**

Further research is needed in order to better understand the potential of craft food and degrowth particularly from an economic perspective. Further analysis and investigation of alternative organisational and economic structures within the craft food sector would be valuable. Further, perhaps research can be conducted in order to reveal how to best balance degrowth values and maintain financial sustainability within current systems. Tools examining and measuring social impact and other measures might be valuable to explore within the realm of craft and degrowth as alternatives. While doing so, it is important to avoid what some scholars refer to as a limited capitalocentric lens that limits our ability to imagine alternatives.



### *Moving Beyond Capitalocentric Possibilities*

There is a limitation within some of this study in that many possibilities discussed only exist within a predominantly capitalocentric lens. While some cooperative structures, aspects of sharing economy or alternative systems were discussed by participants, overall the participants were confined within neoliberal, capitalist systems. While they often sought to push boundaries within their systems, I acknowledge that we are still perceiving these within a capitalocentric lens that limits imaginaries. Gibson-Graham (2014) and other social change economic scholars have pointed out that continuing to base our understandings and interpretations through a lens of capitalocentric theories of economic reorganisation is limiting. Moving away from a “sociology of absences” (de Sousa Santos, 2001) to a “politics of the possible” (Gibson-Graham, 2014) is to examine real-existing degrowth that moves beyond current neoliberal capitalism into new social imaginaries. What does a system “marked by broader economies and relations of care” look like (p. 64)? Drucker (1994) conceptualised postcapitalist society as “centered around knowledge and service workers” while other conceptions can include a variety of participatory and shared models of economics, such as Belk’s (2007) emphasis on “care-based familiar exchanges [as] a robust, ethical and sustainable alternative to capitalist models based on commodity exchange” (Lewis & Vodeb, 2021, p. 64). Gibson-Graham’s (2006) “politics of the possible” beyond the capitalocentric lenses were considered throughout the study; however, further research and ideas beyond them are needed.

Capitalism has a historical reliance on undervalued unpaid labour, often historically social reproductive and domestic labour taken on by women (Lewis & Vodeb, 2021). Lewis and Vodeb (2021) argue there has: “been a shift in feminine modes of care once seen as primarily sites of business and paid service, and in particular into café spaces” (p. 69). It has revalued care

as *work* and as wage labour, but also as “ethicalization and politicalization of consumerism that has occurred in many capitalist democracies around the world” (p. 69). While a feminist degrowth offers some possibilities, to redefine care work within capitalocentric terms merely reinforces the need to interpret all sociality and culture in capitalocentric terms. Furthermore, we must also be careful not to explore alternate possibilities within lenses that undertheorize the intersecting issues of race, culture, gender, sexuality, ability and other marginalized groups.

### ***Integral Ingredients Towards a Transformation for all***

Within discussion of transformation, sustainability or community, it is important to reflect on who the “we” is within the conversation. A homogenized “we” within transition and transformational discourse, can neglect to centre the voices of those who are most affected by the climate crisis. These power relations intertwine with intersecting social inequities. If we are to talk about transformation, how are existing power relations and inequalities taken into account?

I acknowledge that while I tried to address these questions within this study, some are left unanswered. For instance, decolonial feminist scholars point out the negative impacts on the Global Majority by proposed pathways of degrowth, and ask if degrowth proposals are once again “‘setting the global agenda’, thereby reproducing long-standing asymmetries that they seek to address?” (Dengler & Seebacher, 2010, p. 246). The resurgence of craft is a complex phenomenon in terms of cultural location, class, gender, and other intersecting points of privilege. Within the craft literature, it has been noted there is a tendency for craft to be associated with “cool jobs” primarily occupied by middle-class, well-educated men, and therefore, requires a certain status or cultural capital for access (Land et al., 2018; Oejo, 2017). Furthermore, as discussed by Sennett (2011) words of creativity carry a “class baggage” that

while fashionable for some, DIY mending and crafting is necessary for others. Even Patagonia, the exemplary anti-growth company discussed earlier in this study, has been critiqued for its “elite niche market” reflected in the nickname that can be found online “Patagucci” (Jermier & Forbes, 2016, p. 1010).

While the craft food sector can celebrate encouraging conscientious consumerism, sustainable, innovative connections to local economy and commodity chains, participants expressed a lack of diversity and inclusion within the sector, and an absence of certain communities. Some participants in the study referred to the importance of achieving more equitable and just systems that removed systemic barriers for marginalized groups to participate. In the United States, a study found that 88 percent of brewery owners are white while in non-brewing production roles only 7 percent of staff were Hispanic and only 3.5 percent Black (Baker, 2019). The lack of diversity in Alberta’s brewing industry is becoming more of a conversation (CBC, 2022). Participant 7 described her challenges and “doors that she has broken down” as a female brewer, and further research could be conducted to explore this further. Further, exploring how the brewing industry in Alberta is working towards change in these directions should be explored such as interviewing the Hop Forward or the Pink Boots Society. According to a recent callout for conference submissions by FADA (2022):

Who are the ‘winners and losers’? Who remains invisible? A transformation that acts for capital interests instead of being oriented towards use values and needs washes away the revolutionary potential of the concept of transformation to fundamentally reshape society. (FADA, 2022, unknown)

Thus, how does transformation for all appear and not just for a few? How do we continue to pursue degrowth and equitable systems change without it serving only a privileged few?

Nonetheless, for those that recognize their privilege and desire to challenge current systems and create more equitable systems, how do we continue this work? While craft-oriented degrowth may be accessible for some, how are is it not for others? As discussed by Fournier (2008), degrowth is not only about consuming and producing less, but also about “providing a critique of the economy and its colonizing effect, and pointing to escape routes” (p. 541).

### **Concluding Remarks**

According to Latouche (2004), “degrowth is not a concrete project but a keyword” to create possibilities in a society where the “tyranny of [progressivist growth economics] has made imaginative thinking outside the box impossible” (p. 1). Further, degrowth is not meant “as a monolithic alternative to the existing capitalist set-up” but a “matrix of alternatives which re-opens space for creativity by raising the heavy blanket of economic totalitarianism” (Latouche, 2010, p. 520). To degrowth scholars, development leads to more poverty, ecological modernisation leads to rebound effects, and green growth perpetuates our addiction to consumption and endless growth. In order to create new possibilities, Latouche (2004) and other degrowth advocates urge for a “collective and comprehensive detoxification programme” (p. 5). The pursuit of degrowth can contribute to a “post-consumerist ethics of micro-economic sufficiency” at the cultural level in order to facilitate big picture systems change such as legal, political and economic structural changes (p. 287).

In accordance with social change theory, it takes twenty-five percent of a population to catalyze social change (Noonam, 2018). Various pathways and policies towards further sustainable degrowth can be supported and explored through community-based research that amplifies what communities are already living and practicing. We can find inspiration and hope in Alberta’s craft food sector in their animated imaginaries, commitments and practices of

degrowth in everyday life. I would like to end with some words from one of my participants, a small-scale, organic farmer:

In the back of our minds, we try to aim for that perfection. But you know, there's no such thing. In an organic system, things will not be perfect. You can see our cabbage is missing some areas. Some are eaten by worms, a butterfly[...] It would be nice to have it perfect, but that's not the reality. So maybe there's the key. Degrowth means that you know, we have to struggle, but we have to be grateful. (Participant 14)

This quote serves as a reminder that while degrowth may, at times, seem to adopt abstract or utopic visualisations of society, much can be learned and applied from these case studies.

Perhaps by offering messy, nuanced and sometimes “less-than-perfect” micro-experiments by communities trying to do things differently, they pave the way to new pathways and imaginaries (Eizenberg, 2011). They provide us with insights towards new ways of growing similar to the image of the mycelial, forested, intimate growth described by another participant. After all, even in the face of pervasive neoliberal ideology and practices, alternatives do exist, many of which we have not even imagined yet.

## References

- Alexander, S. (2013). Voluntary Simplicity and the Social Reconstruction of Law: Degrowth from the Grassroots Up. *Environmental Values*, 22(2), 287-308.
- Anderson, T. (1998). Aesthetics as critical inquiry. *Art Education*, 51(5), 49-55.
- Baker, J. (2019). “Brewers Association Releases Brewery Employee Diversity Data for the First Time”. *Craft.beer.com*.
- Botta, M. (2016). Evolution of slow living concept within the models of sustainable communities. *Futures*, 80, 3–16.
- Broadway, M. (2015). Implementing the slow life in southwest Ireland: A case study of Clonakilty and local food. *Geographical Review*, 105(2), 216–234.
- Cargo, M. & Mercer, S. L. (2008). The values and challenges of participatory research: Strengthening its practice. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 29, 325-350.
- Clancy, K. (2014). DIGGING DEEPER: Bringing a Systems Approach to Food Systems: Food System Governance. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 4(2), 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.042.012>
- Derr, V. & Simons, J. (2020) A review of photovoice applications in environment, sustainability, and conservation contexts: Is the method maintaining its emancipatory intents?, *Environmental Education Research*, 26(3), 359-380.
- Dockney, J., & Tomaselli, K. G. (2009). Fit for the small(er) screen: Films, mobile TV and the new individual television experience. *Journal of African Cinema*, 1(1), 126–132.
- Dornan, T. & Nestel, D. (2015). Talking, Touching, and Cutting: The Craft of Medicine. *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 6, 35-48.
- Escobar, A. (2010). Latin America at a Crossroads, *Cultural Studies*, 24(1), 1-65.

- Eizenberg, E. (2011). Actually existing commons: Three moments of space of community gardens in New York City, *Antipode*, 44, 764-782.
- Fournier, V. (2008). Escaping from the economy: the politics of degrowth. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 11, 528-545.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.
- Georgescu-Roegen, N. (1993). *Valuing the earth: Economics, energy and ethics*. (Daly & Townsend, Ed.) MIT Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *A postcapitalist politics*. University Press.
- Heron, J. & Reason, P. (1997). A participatory inquiry paradigm. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3, 274-294.
- Honore, C. (2013, October 3). #YEG: He shoots, he scores. Edify Magazine.  
<https://edifyedmonton.com/active/sports-recreation/yeg-he-shoots-he-scores/>
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288
- Ionciã, D., & Petrescu, E. (2016). Slow living and the green economy. *Journal of Philosophical Economics*, 9(2), 85–104.
- Jalas, M. (2012). Debating the proper pace of life: sustainable consumption policy processes at national and municipal levels. *Environmental Politics*, 21(3), 369–386.
- Jones, K.E., Van Assche, K., & Parkins, J. R. (2021). Reimagining craft for community development, *Local Environment*, 2, 1-13.
- Kallis, G., Demaria, F., & D’Alisa, G. (2015). *Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era*. Routledge.
- Kallis, G., Kostakis, V., Lange, S., Muraca, B., Paulson, S., & Schmelzer, M. (2018). Research

- on degrowth. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 43, 291–316.
- <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-102017-025941>
- Kallis, G., Varvarousis, A., & Petridis, P. (2022). Southern thought, islandness and real-existing degrowth in the Mediterranean. *World Development*, 157, 105957.
- Labrague, M. (2017). Patagonia: A case study in the historical development of slow thinking. *Journal of Design History*, 30(2), 175–191.
- Lamb, D. (2019). Taking it day-by-day: An exploratory study of adult perspectives on slow living in an urban setting. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 22, 463-483.
- Leavy, P. (2015). *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Lewis, T. & Vodeb, O. (2021). Melbourne: Care, ethics and social enterprise meets ‘global’ café culture in *Global Brooklyn*, p. 58-73. Bloomsburg Academic.
- Lozowy, A. J. (2013). *Icons of Oil: The photographer-researcher and collaborative practise*. [Thesis unpublished]. University of Alberta.
- McDonald, S., Oates, C. J., Young, C. W., & Hwang, K. (2006). Toward sustainable consumption: researching voluntary simplifiers. *Psychology and Marketing*, 23(6), 515-534.
- Noonam, D. (2018). The 25% Revolution—How Big Does a Minority Have to Be to Reshape Society? *The Scientific American*. Retrieved from <https://www.scientificamerican.com/> on 19 November 2022.
- Nykiforuk, C. I. J., Vallianatos, H., & Nieuwendyk, L. M. (2011). Photovoice as a method for revealing community perceptions of the built and social environment. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 10(2), 103-124.



- Park, E., & Kim., S. (2015). The potential of cittaslow for sustainable tourism development: Enhancing local community's empowerment. *Tourism Planning and Development, 13*, (3), 351–369.
- Pink, S. (2007). Sensing cittaslow: Slow living and the constitution of the sensory city. *Senses and Society, 2*(1), 59–77.
- Ramos, V. (1982). The concepts of ideology, hegemony, and organic intellectuals in Gramsci's Marxism. *Theoretical Review, 27*, March-April 1982.
- Sayers, S. (2007). The concept of labor: Marx and his critics. *Science and Society, 71*, 421-454.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic*. Northeastern University Press.
- Wang, C. C. (2003). *Using photovoice as a participatory assessment and issue selection tool: A case study with the homeless in Ann Arbor*. In Community Based Participatory Research for Health, ed. M Minkler, N Wallerstein, pp. 179–200. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Tarasuk V, Li T, & Fafard St-Germain, A. A. (2022). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>
- Tendall, D. M., Joerin, J., Kopainsky, B., Edwards, P., Shreck, A., Le, Q. B., Kruetli, P., Grant, M., & Six, J. (2015). Food system resilience: Defining the concept. *Global Food Security, 6*, 17–23.
- Wang, C. C. & Burris, M. (1994). Empowerment through photonovella: Portraits of participation. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*, 171-186.
- Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education and Behavior, 24*, 369-387.
- Wilson, S. (2018). Energy imaginaries: Feminist and decolonial futures. *Materialism and the*

*Critique of Energy*, 31, 5-20.

Wu, K. Y. Burris, M., Li, V., Wang, Y., Zhan, W. T., Xiang, Y.P, et al. (Eds). (1995). *Visual voices: 100 photographs of village China by the women of Yunnan Province*. Yunann People's Publishing House.

## Appendix A

### RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Pacholok Thesis: Reimagining Craft as Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways

**Title:** Reimagining Craft as Degrowth and Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways

**Recruitment Script for Email, Telephone and Online Conversations**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am contacting you on behalf of a research project at the University of Alberta in Community Engagement and the School of Public Health. We are conducting research on **craft** communities as potential pathways toward **degrowth** and sustainable community development in Alberta.

Degrowth is an increasingly prominent movement that focuses on less growth, less consumption and slower production particularly in high-income countries.

This study explores how **craft food sectors** are reimagining a sustainable future beyond dominant models of growth.

We invite you to participate in a **research** study that consists of three components:

- 1) One-on-one interview and introduction to the project (20 minutes over Zoom);
- 2) Photovoice activity that involves taking photographs, or videos, of your experiences and perspectives as a craftsperson in Alberta (on your own time);
- 3) Follow-up discussion in a small focus group setting sharing your photographs and reflections with other participants (75 minutes over Zoom).

Due to safety concerns of COVID-19, all interviews and follow-up conversations will likely be conducted online (i.e. Zoom, Skype, or Google), or over the phone. They will be recorded and transcribed. All information will remain confidential. Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions or withdraw from the study up to one week after your participation in any component of the study.

If you would like more information or have any questions before deciding, please don't hesitate to contact us. You will receive a \$50.00 honorarium for your participation at the end of the study.

If you would like to participate in the research, please call or send an email to Tanya Pacholok (details below).

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Tanya Iryna Pacholok (she/her)

E: [tipachol@ualberta.ca](mailto:tipachol@ualberta.ca)

T: 780-504-5709

## Appendix B

### INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM: Participants

**Title:** Reimagining Craft as Degrowth and Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Kevin E. Jones

Associate Professor

Resource Economics and Environmental

Sociology, ALES

University of Alberta

kjones4@alberta.ca

**Principle Investigator:**

Tanya Pacholok (she/her)

Master of Arts

Community Engagement, SPH

University of Alberta

tipachol@ualberta.ca

### Background

Craft communities might offer pathways toward “degrowth”. Degrowth refers to the need to create social and economic futures which provide alternatives to the growth logics of consumerism. Some elements of degrowth include: an emphasis on the quality and experience of production; slowing down systems of production; connecting local communities to consumption; and, connecting networks of local producers. This study explores how micro-experiments, or examples of degrowth, can be found in craft food communities in Alberta.

We are reaching out to you as a **craftsperson in Alberta** who might be interested to share your experience and discuss these ideas.

Before you make a decision, one of the researchers will go over this form with you. You can ask questions. We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

### **Purpose**

In the context of today's uncertainty in resource economies, made worse by the impacts of COVID-19, there have been discussions of alternate approaches to economic change and diversification in Alberta (Jones et al., 2020). Many believe that crises offer opportunities for making transitions towards degrowth (Klitgaard, 2013).

What are the experiences, opportunities and barriers to degrowth in craft communities? By exploring our experiences and understandings of degrowth, this study seeks to build connections and networks of degrowth and the local craft food sector. Furthermore, this study is interested in how craft and degrowth relate within a broader movement of progressive change and shifts into building more equitable, just, sustainable and resilient communities.

### **Study Procedures**

This study will involve a three part process:

1. One-on-one interviews and introduction to the project (20 minutes over Zoom);
2. Research activities where participants take photographs or videos on the cellphones of their everyday experiences and perspectives as craft producers;
3. A focus group in which participants come together to share, discuss and reflect upon their photographs and insights (75 minutes over Zoom).

A public display of the photographs, videos and findings will be shared with the wider public if the participants choose.

**Voluntary Participation**

You are under no obligation to take part in this study. The participation is completely voluntary. You can refuse to answer questions or drop out at any time throughout the study. Even if you agree to be in the study you can change your mind and withdraw at any time before (by contacting Dr. Jones) or during the study. Your participation will be used in informing a research report, further research grants, presentations, academic papers and the online exhibit of findings. Once material is published, we are unable to remove information that you have provided.

**Confidentiality & Anonymity**

We will remove names and identifiers from all transcribed interviews. Participants will not be identified in any published or disseminated work resulting from this research. We will not share interviews, or personal contact information, outside of the research team. If you choose to participate in the focus group, we cannot maintain your anonymity with other participants, and the option will be given to participants to have their names included alongside their photographs and videos in an on-line exhibition.

**Data to be collected includes:**

We will record and transcribe responses from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. We will also keep written notes, based on our conversations.

**Data use and storage:**

We will record interviews on a laptop computer using a digital recorder, or by using online meeting software such as Zoom, Skype or Google Meets. Interview and focus group recordings and transcripts will be secured on the University network and be protected by password. Interview data will be stored for a minimum of five years. Hard copies will not be produced. All physical notes and transcripts will be kept anonymous. Anonymized data may be shared amongst members of the research team through the University of Alberta's Google cloud. Interview material may be used to inform subsequent research in the same area.

**Benefits and Risks**

You will receive an honorarium of \$50.00 for your participation in this study. Benefits include having your voice heard and building a community network within the craft and degrowth community. Indirectly, this research aims to build a network of community partners and a program of community-based research to address opportunities for community development and advancement of craft economies. This research will contribute to knowledge about craft and degrowth in Alberta, and in doing so identify community-based approaches to sustainability and engaged communities in Alberta.

To the best of our knowledge, this study does not include risks beyond those experienced in daily life. Interviews will be conducted online (i.e. Zoom, Skype or Google Meets), or over the telephone as a consequence of Covid-19. There is a risk that the interview participant will be identified in the research based on the mention of data relating to the organisation within which they work. That is, anonymity cannot be guaranteed, although interviewees will not be mentioned by name in the study.

**Contact Information**

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Tanya Pacholok at [tipachol@ualberta.ca](mailto:tipachol@ualberta.ca) or 780-504-5709, or Dr. Kevin Jones at [kjones4@ualberta.ca](mailto:kjones4@ualberta.ca) or 780-910-2878.

The plan for this study has been reviewed by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. If you have questions about your rights or how research should be conducted, you can call (780) 492-2615. This office is independent of the researchers.



**Consent Statement**

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study

---

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature

---

Date

---

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

## Appendix C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

**Title:** Reimagining Craft as Degrowth and Alternate Sustainable Community Pathways

This is an interview guide for conducting semi-structured interview conversations with people working in selected ‘craft’ sectors in Alberta. The following framework identifies themes for the interview process, introduces the photovoice method.

#### Pre-interview checklist

- Introduction to research team and project
- Walk through consent form
- If consent is given, begin recording

#### **Interview conversation:**

##### Part One: Introduction and Understanding of Degrowth

*The aim of this portion is to allow the participant to introduce themselves, their craft and their understanding of ‘craft’ and ‘degrowth’.*

1. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself and your background in \_\_\_\_\_ (their particular craft).
2. What does craft mean to you? What does degrowth mean to you?
3. What is your understanding of degrowth?
4. What are the connections, synergies and potential existing examples of degrowth in your everyday experiences of craft?

## Part Two: Cellphilm and Photovoice Introduction

*The aim of this portion is to explain the cellphilm methodology and prepare them for the cellphilm section of the study. Give them and go through the worksheet (Appendix G)*

1. Introduce *cellphilm methodology and photovoice methodology briefly* (Burkholder & McCentee, 2018).
2. Allow them to choose with methodology they feel most comfortable with
3. Follow the worksheet and more detailed instructions based on that decision
4. Acknowledgement of Release
  - \*All participants must release the rights of the photographs in order for them to be used.
5. Explain waivers for taking photographs of people or photographs of property.
6. Explain that in the focus group component, they will share, show and discuss photographs taken.
7. Ethics, consent and tips on cellphilm other people/property:
  - a) Approaching people respectfully
  - b) Consent - If you are taking cellphilm of other people, you must have them sign the consent form provided (Waivers)
  - c) Consent - If you are taking cellphilm on other people's private space, they need to consent and sign the property consent form (Waivers)

### 7. Instructions for Next Meeting

- d) The next time we meet, please select 2-3 cellphilm to share and discuss.
- e) We will collect consent forms from you independently
- f) In the focus group, we will discuss and share our photographs
- g) We will then create a photo exhibit together.

Post-Interview Checklist

Is there anything you would like to contribute that has not yet been said? Is there anything that I should have asked that I didn't ask?

Thank them for their time and contributions.

Plan a follow-up and ask their availability for the focus-group follow-up.

**A follow up Doodle poll will be sent out.**

## Appendix D

### FOCUS GROUP WORKSHOP

This focus group will take place over Zoom in a private, password protected meeting.

Duration 60 minutes - 75 minutes with a 10 minute break.

#### Initial Checklist

- Introduction
- Introduce Zoom protocols, turn taking and procedures  
(muted while not talking, turn taking, safer spaces, etc.)
- Consent form
- If consent is given, begin recording the focus group

#### Introduction

*The aim of this portion is to allow the participants to introduce themselves, get to know each other, their understanding of 'degrowth' and become comfortable on the Zoom platform.*

Thank everyone for coming. Explain the purpose of the focus group.

- 1) Could you tell us your first name/pronouns, where you work and share one interesting/uninteresting thing about yourself?
- 2) Zoom protocols
- 3) Consent form and consent to recording
- 4) Creating a safer space discussion - *Share protocol for creating a safer space discussion.*

## Round Table Sharing

Two Rounds of Table Turn Taking Questions (one at a time talking; facilitator will indicate order of speaking)

- 1) Each participant will select and share 1 favourite photograph or cellphilm.

Share, using the SHOWeD method:

- a) What do we **See** here?
- b) What really is **H**appening here?
- c) How does this relate to the **tO**pic?
- d) **W**hy does this situation, concern or strength exist?
- e) What can we **D**o about it?

Questions to reflect on will be in the chat as prompts.

- 3) Short break.

- 4) What themes emerged? From the photographs/cellphilms we see?

- a) Create a collaborative word map in a password-protected Google Jam Board.

- i) Participants will be given time to brainstorm independently about words and themes that emerged and then discuss. Some prompt questions include:

- 1) What reflections do you have about others' photographs, themes?
- 2) What reflections do you have from the experience?
- 3) How did your understanding of degrowth concepts change?
- 4) What barriers/opportunities/tensions arose?

More specific questions and follow-up discussion will be facilitated based on the content.

### Public Exhibition and Sharing Display

5) Discussion of how these photographs/cellphilms and narratives will be shared with the public

- a. An online exhibit of photographs/cellphilms, quotes and reflections will be shared with the public if agreed upon by the participants. This might include a public space at the U of A, a cafe/brewery, or online exhibit.
- b. A private, anonymous poll in the Zoom meeting will be conducted. Participants will be given the opportunity to opt out of the public exhibit after the focus group as well through email privately.

6) Closing Check-out:

Share your name and a word to describe how you are feeling at this moment.

7) Thank you to participants. Follow-up about how they will receive the honorarium.

**Appendix E****PHOTOVOICE CONSENT FORMS**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give permission for

\_\_\_\_\_(Participant's Name)\_\_\_\_\_, acting on behalf of the University of Alberta and *Reimagining Sustainability: An Examination of Craft and Degrowth through Photovoice*, to take my photograph. By signing the name below, I understand and agree that unless otherwise stated in writing, the University of Alberta assumes permission is granted to use my photographs for project related reports, exhibits and presentations that are likely to result from this project. I understand that researchers, policy makers, students and possibly people from my community will see my photo.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



***CONSENT PHOTO FORM: Photovoice Property Photographs***

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give permission for

\_\_\_\_ (Participant's Name) \_\_\_\_\_, acting on behalf of the University of Alberta and *Reimagining Sustainability: An Examination of Craft and Degrowth through Photovoice*, to take photograph(s) on my property. By signing the name below, I understand that this photograph may be used at some point in the future for a public display.

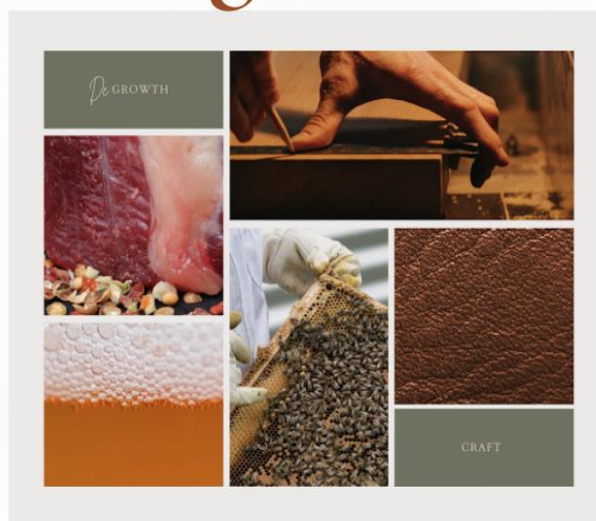
Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

## PARTICIPANT HAND OUT

# Craft and Degrowth



Focus Group



## Craft and degrowth?

Craft communities might offer pathways toward “degrowth”.

Degrowth refers to the need to create social and economic futures which provide alternatives to the growth logics of consumerism and endless growth in a world of finite resources.

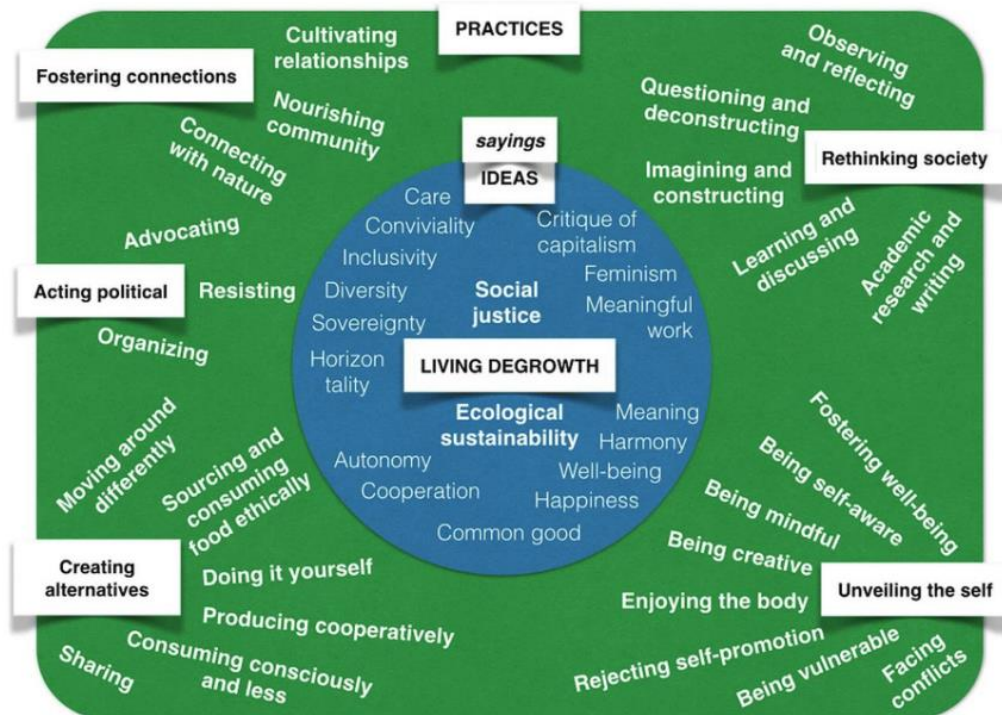
Some elements of degrowth include:

- (1) Slowness and slowing down systems of production;
- (2) Conviviality - liveliness, participatory nature;
- (3) Open localisms - connected, participatory local communities and networks of local producers and citizens;
- (4) Replacing the consumer as citizen.

This study explores how *micro-experiments*, or examples of degrowth, might be found in craft food communities in Alberta.

We are reaching out to you as a craftsperson in Alberta who might be interested to share your experience and discuss these ideas.

## Degrowth Degrowth Map (Brossmann & Islar, 2020).



**OPTIONAL:** If you are able to, please bring a photo or video of your understanding of these concepts:

- ✓ Photovoice - take a photograph of your perspective of these concepts and how they relate to your lived experience.
- ✓ Cellphilm - take 2-3 short videos (30-90 seconds) on your cellphone of your perspective of these concepts and how they relate to your lived experience.

---

If you require equipment or assistance with either of these activities, please let us know.