Sociograph n°59
Sociological research studies

Sufficiency and wellbeing

A study of degrowth practices in the Geneva and Vaud area

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SUFFICIENCY AND WELLBEING: A STUDY OF DEGROWTH PRACTICES IN THE GENEVA AND VAUD AREA

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How to cite: Moynat, Orlane (2022). *Sufficiency and wellbeing: a study of degrowth practices in the Geneva and Vaud area.* Genève: Université de Genève (Sociograph - Sociological Research Studies, 59)

ISBN: 978-2-940386-69-7

Publication sur Internet: www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/socio/sociograph

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A big thank you to the French-speaking Switzerland Degrowth Movement (*Réseau d'Objection de Croissance*) who has given me the opportunity to reach to incredible people that made this work possible, and to all the participants that agreed to discuss and debate around degrowth and the good life.

A kind thought to Prof. Marlyne Sahakian who has been more than supporting all the way through this research work, and still is today.

Finally, a warm thank you to the talented Loïc Bara, a lifelong friend, for the amazing cover illustration.

INTRODUCTION

In his seminal work in sustainability studies, Jackson (2017) stresses that "the conventional formula for achieving prosperity relies on the pursuit of economic growth" (p.23), which represents one of the cornerstones of a capitalist political economy, together with individualism and consumerism (Wilhite, 2017: 5). Based on greed and profit, the process of infinite growth questions and challenges limits (Latouche, 2019: 113—all quotes by Latouche are translated in english by author in this work) and supports accumulation and "commodification of more and more aspects of life" (Gough, 2017: 173). Growth for the sake of growth has become "the primary, if not the only, objective of the economy and of life" (Latouche, 2019: 25). This has permitted "people who are raised in capitalist or quasi-capitalist political economic systems" to be exposed to the idea of a "positive association between economic growth and wellbeing in virtually every domain of life, from work, to home to public spaces" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 302). This is what Robbins (2004) has referred to as the *culture of capitalism*, where "growth in income as well as growth in the number and size of things possessed and consumed" are associated with better life (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 302), propelled forward by the maximization of the production and consumption of goods (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 302). In that direction, the "traditional neo-classical assumptions of non-satiation and individual's utility maximization" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 304) lead human beings to resemble the *homo economicus* (Mill, 1848) representation that is defined by "a type of rationality based on the maximization of one's own utility or happiness while not necessarily accounting for other people or the environment when deciding what to consume" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 306). The "engine of growth on which modern economies depend" lock people into what Weber called an 'iron cage' of consumerism (in Jackson, 2017: 104), and makes "the everyday reality" of life

inherently material (Jackson, 2017: 139). This, in turn, implies that people mostly rely on consumption and material artefacts in their everyday life, which constitute "a powerful 'language of goods' that [is] use[d] to communicate with each other—not just about status, but also about identity, social affiliation", about feelings for each other, hopes and dreams of the good life (Jackson, 2017: 114). A reduction of consumption seems impossible to achieve, as ever-more consumption is embedded in people's minds as offering "the ability to facilitate […] participation in the life of society" and to contribute to prosperity (Jackson, 2017: 114). As succinctly stated by the degrowth thinker Kallis (2019):

> As the endgame of two centuries of limitless expansion nears, no one is willing to pull the emergency brake, and many are happy to push the accelerator instead (p.126).

This culture of capitalism and maximization leads to a form of economic growth that is highly detrimental to the environment. As stated by Klein (2015), "capitalism, by ignoring the finite nature of resources and by neglecting the long-term wellbeing of the planet and its potentially crucial biodiversity, threatens our existence" (p.233), to become a systemic driver of climate change (Gough, 2017: 194). The pillars of capitalism: "economic growth, individual ownership, marketization, product differentiation, product turnover" (Wilhite, 2017: 6) are seen as the main causes of environmental degradation. An economy whose stability rests on the relentless stimulation of consumer demand places "unsustainable burdens on the planet's ecosystems" (Jackson, 2017: 201), and threaten the "stability of its financial and political system." (Jackson, 2017: 24). This suggests that we should reach for a system where economic values are not central and where the economy is only a mean and not the ultimate end to human endeavors (Latouche, 2019). An emphasis is placed on changing the ways in which the economy is evaluated; in a capitalist economy, indicators are developed to measure the advancement of an economy that justifies economic growth. This is the case for the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator that measures "everything in

short, except that which makes life worthwhile" (Jackson, 2017: 53), based on Robert Kennedy's historic speech in 1968, thus ignoring social and environmental costs. The concepts of capitalism and economic growth seem to be questioned and challenged, as they have "failed the fragile ecological system on which we depend for survival" (Jackson, 2017: 21). They support a concept of progress that is "damaging our environment but also degrading our own psychological and social wellbeing" (Jackson, 2005: 25).

The negative effects of unbridled economic growth are also a case of distress for human wellbeing. Indeed, it has been underlined that economic growth destroys the environment as well as undermines the "social conditions for human wellbeing" (Gough, 2017: 172). In that direction, Max Neef (1995) stressed, in his *threshold hypothesis*, that economic growth may lead to increased human welfare up to a certain point, but beyond that threshold, the environmental and social costs of growth begin to have a negative impact, reducing welfare in spite of continued economic development. In the same vein, it is stressed that the "material impacts of increasing consumption are environmentally unsustainable while the [unlimited] material consumption can conflict with crucial social and psychological components of human welfare" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 421). "Some degree of responsibility for the negative aspects of modern society is [then] attributable to the pursuit of growth itself" (Jackson, 2017: 117) which generates a double menace, both on the planet and on people's welfare. Indeed, the present levels of economic activity lie beyond the critical 'safe operating space' of the planet (Rockström et al., 2009), and seem to fail to avoid a disenchantment with modern life (Jackson, 2017 cites Soper, 2008) that appears to spread across society and to favor anonymity, social atomization and spiritual isolation (Jackson, 2005 cites Herber, 1963). The modern economy designs people's life around a "pervasive anxiety" (Jackson, 2017:101) as a consequence of the stress and pressure nourished by the consumer society founded on time constraints, work and limitless profit. For the purpose of mitigating the social and environmental costs of the present economic

system, economic paradigms promoting sustainability such as green economics, smart growth, sustainable growth assume that technical efficiency will "allow consumption and wellbeing to increase while reducing the environmental side effects of production and consumption" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 310). These paradigms are based on the concept of *decoupling*, which advocates for the decoupling of emissions from economic growth through "more efficient production processes, more sustainable goods and services" and in sum, "more profit with less stuff" (Jackson, 2017: 84). It is considered by Wilhite and Norgard (2004) as the 'efficiency delusion' as it "will fail to raise global standards of well-being to a sufficient level, or will fail to reduce emissions at a sufficient rate, or will fail at both" (Gough, 2017: 196) and is regarded as nothing but a myth by Jackson (2017). Even if described by the mainstream perspective as "the only current politically viable strategy for a global low carbon economy" (Gough, 2017: 195), the efficiency approach reinforces the link between wellbeing and income and continues to associate prosperity with growth (Gough, 2017: 102-103). It only focuses on the eco-efficiency of production when patterns of consumption and consumption-based emissions "must be given equal priority, especially in the rich world" (Gough, 2017: 195). Gough (2017) sums up this idea by stressing that the mainstream green growth approach alone will not be enough. While the decoupling strategies don't seem to be sufficient, reshaping as well as limiting consumption are considered as interesting focus for climate mitigation.

Indeed, it has been proved that "the driving role of consumption in current economic growth must be curbed" (Gough, 2017: 173). This is supported by the assumption that more is not necessarily better (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 304), and that "we […] have never needed a culture of limits as much as we do now" (Kallis, 2019: 94). But because of the strength of mainstream beliefs linked to capitalism, the reduction of consumption is "often portrayed and often perceived as constraining and threatening the human welfare" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 439) and it is hard to move people away from the consumer culture imperatives. Empirical research has demonstrated, in contrast, that modifying

people's life patterns towards a reduction in their consumption not only does not threaten, but may even enhanced wellbeing (Guillen-Royo, 2010: 384), while reducing negative impacts on the environment.

While "human wellbeing and ecological sustainability have often been regarded as incompatible" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 301), they now compose an interesting interface that allows for a new perspective to theorize a transformation to sustainable societies. This new area of research is also interesting as it will allow to design unique policies that focus on sustainability and wellbeing instead of economic growth (Wilhite 2015: 313). Building on the idea that a route towards more sustainability needs to link wellbeing, consumption and environmental impact (Vita, 2019: 1), this Masters' thesis is inspired by the two following assumptions: "we have no alternatives but to question growth" (Jackson, 2016: 21), and an emphasis must be placed on wellbeing and consumption patterns.

In the sections that follow, the literature will unveil the different notions and findings linked to this 'new' interface of study, or the nexus between consumption, degrowth and wellbeing. The research questions and the conceptual framework will then lead to empirical evidence, based on an overview of the methodological approach. In the discussion and conclusion, the challenge of reducing consumption and increasing wellbeing will be presented as a robust solution towards sustainable transitions and climate change mitigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SUSTAINABILITY AND WELLBEING

Sustainability is with no doubt a very large field of study that has been addressed for years in many different contexts and through many different perspectives. As an introduction to this specific literature, which won't be exhaustively presented here, two important notions should be unveiled that will help understand the following work. First, the concept of planetary boundaries within which we expect that humanity can operate safely (Rockström et al., 2009). This concept was first conceptualized in the Stockholm Resilience Center 'planetary boundaries' report in 2009 that proposed a study of our "proximity to nine 'critical biophysical boundaries'" and advised that "transgressing one or more planetary boundaries may be deleterious or even catastrophic" (Rockström et al., 2009), provoking serious environmental changes. Those nine planetary boundaries, later used by Raworth in her 'Doughnut Economics' paradigm (2012, 2017), include climate change, ocean acidification, ozone depletion, nitrogen and phosphorus cycle, global freshwater use, land system change, biodiversity loss, chemical pollution and atmospheric aerosol loading (Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015). In her 'Doughnut Economics', or 'life-belt' theory, Raworth (2012; 2017) added to this reflection by stressing the idea of a safe and just space between those planetary boundaries and the concept of *social boundaries* as a route towards global prosperity. The social foundations that should represent the minimum requirement for all towards wellbeing are about access to water, food, health, gender equality, social equity, energy, jobs, voice, resilience, education and income. Her theory proposes that everyone should reach a decent level of satisfaction of those specific social indicators while not trespassing

the associated planetary boundaries. She illustrates that theory with a 'Doughnut of sustainability' that is composed of the planetary boundaries representing an outer ring and the social foundations constituting the inner ring of the doughnut. This is supported by Gough's argument that "the most urgent task is to bring everyone above the social foundations which guard against threatening social deprivation while not exceeding the critical planetary boundaries—which will in turn guard against future generations falling below these social foundations" (Gough, 2017: 20).

This has been stressed in other words by Jackson, who highlights the dilemma of our times that is of "reconciling our aspirations for the good life with the limitations and constraints of a finite planet" (Jackson, 2016: 3). Following that direction, Jackson also stresses that there are "some strong competing visions of the good life [that] hail from psychology and sociology, economic history, secular or philosophical viewpoints; others from the religious or 'wisdom' traditions" (Jackson, 2016: 48). That aim for a *good life* (*eudaimonia*) (Richard, 2013 in Brand Correa et Steinberger, 2017: 44) "that is declined in multiple ways depending on the context" (Latouche, 2019: 21) seems to be "something in which we must invest […] both at the personal and at the societal level" (Jackson, 2016: 50).

As there is an attempt to tend towards theories and concepts that would help to create opportunities to mitigate climate change and preserve the planetary boundaries while aiming towards a *good life* that would assure the achievement of the crucial social foundations, some new insights on how to address the issue are emerging and adding to the studies on sustainability. This concept of social foundations in relation to planetary boundaries that seems to go beyond the mainstream consumer paradise (Jackson, 2016: 48) perspective inspires interesting approaches. One of them is the approach through wellbeing, as more and more efforts are made to consider the wellbeing of the planet as linked to people's wellbeing. Brand-Correa and Steinberger (2017) support that argument stressing that "the challenge of achieving human wellbeing in the Anthropocene era has been summarized by Raworth

(2012)" (p.43) as the following interrogation: 'Can we live above social foundations but below an environmental ceiling, or within the Doghnut of sustainability?' This suggests that a balance between planetary boundaries and social foundations is necessary, implying that the attainment of the social goals cannot harm the planetary boundaries, and that a respect of the planetary boundaries could conversely serve the contentment of the social goals. This corresponds to what has been conceptualized as the *wellbeing dividend* (Jackson, 2008a), namely the ability to live better and reduce our impact on the environment in the process (Jackson, 2005: 19). As stressed by Jackson, our "ability to flourish within ecological limits [then] becomes both a guiding principle for design and a key criterion for success" (Jackson, 2016: 160).

This aspiration to reach the *wellbeing dividend* inspired efforts to bring up the concept of wellbeing as a core component of studies on sustainability and climate mitigation (here, the concept of climate mitigation is used to describe broadly the set of planetary boundaries stressed as critical by Rockström et al., 2019). Interestingly, it has been stressed that wellbeing theories "enable researchers, communities and stakeholders to have informed and normative discussions about which activities and sectors meaningfully contribute to social progress, and where low-carbon alternatives to these can be found" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 11). Towards this aim, various theories exist that need to be taken into account to understand the differences and ambiguities that reflect different schools of thoughts. To put it simply, the two major 'conflicting' approaches to human wellbeing "can be broadly categorized as either hedonic (pleasure-seeking) or eudaimonic (flourishing)" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 44).

The hedonic approach defines wellbeing as "happiness, interpreted as the occurrence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect" (Kahneman et al., 1999) (Ryan et al., 2008: 139). It relies on the pleasure principle and sees wellbeing as preference and desire fulfilment, based on potentially infinite (Jackson, 2005: 22) and insatiable (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite, 2015: 301) individual wants. Based on the 'desires theories' (Gasper, 2004: 7),

it relies on the "assumption that preference fulfilment always or nearly always brings satisfaction" (Ibid). While supporting the preference satisfaction theory that is the "dominant conception of wellbeing within market societies", it stresses that "individuals are the best judges of their own preferences or wants" (Gough, 2017: 40). This approach, that is claimed to be drawn from mainstream economics and psychology (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 45), is based on utility maximization and happiness theories (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017). It has been argued that hedonic wellbeing has a close fit with the capitalist ethic (Ryan et al., 2008: 165), which suggest some negative implications in relation to environmental concerns. Indeed, it creates "an ethical void in which any consumption behavior is justified in terms of individual wellbeing" (Richard, 2013) and "any limits to consumption (limits on resource use, environmental impacts or economic growth) can be immediately perceived as limits to human wellbeing from a mainstream economic perspective" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 44). Therefore, the hedonic approach to wellbeing seems to pave "the way for increased economic activity" (Costanza, 2014: 283; Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 44) as it is exclusively concentrated on the outcome of happiness and pleasure (Ryan et al., 2008: 139). Consequently, its "relevance (…) in terms of climate change and policy" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 8) design doesn't go beyond adaptation prioritization and cost optimal mitigation pathways (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017), which has been claimed to be a not fast enough route towards environmental goals (Gough, 2017).

As opposed to the hedonic approach to wellbeing, the eudaimonic perspective is less focused on the outcomes as on the process of living well (Ryan et al., 2008: 139). Eudaimonic school of thought sees wellbeing as the "enabling of humans to reach their highest potential within the context of their society" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger: 44) and it is argued that "it is the actions, content and processes of an individual's life that matter, rather than transitory and subjective mental states (Aristotle)" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 3). This dimension supposes that "human wellbeing is derived from 'flourishing' and lies distinct from a state of

happiness or pleasure" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 3) and that an individual "must be able to flourish and fully participate in her chosen form of life" (Doyal and Gough, 1991) to be well. The eudaimonic approach implies a need-centered understanding of human wellbeing, opposed to the hedonic subjective views (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 43), that allows for intercultural considerations on "what constitutes a good life (and so avoid claims of paternalism), but remain specific enough to measure and operationalize the theory in practice" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 3). Following that, this approach is commonly argued to be "better suited to address questions of sustainability and climate governance" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 43) for various reasons. While allowing for the definition of what is required to live a flourishing life, this approach provides the "underpinning to a basic social minimum that should be guaranteed by constitutional right" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 3), thus informing ethical debates about climate change, "including discussions of fair mitigation burdens that provide adequate room for development" (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017: 3-4). In that direction, this theory is all the more relevant when it comes to climate change and policy as it promotes needs-based equity, sufficiency as well as consumption reduction (Lamb and Steinberger, 2017), elements that are known to be crucial for an interesting turn towards climate change mitigation (Gough, 2017).

If there are some insights that allow for the characterization of both approaches as objective and subjective depending on the method used to 'measure' them, hedonic research is, in principle, "typically grounded in subjective and adaptive self-assessments whereas eudaimonic research is founded on "objective and universal conditions". Methods are objective when the "assessments [is] made by an agent different from the subject itself" which attempt to "capture social arrangement" and subjective when one's consider his own experience (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2016: 45). "In hedonic wellbeing, the most commonly used objective measurements are done through affluence or monetary wealth, following the nexus that can be raised between utility and consumption". As opposed, "subjective methods based on a

hedonic understanding of HW have been used as the basis for measuring experienced utility" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2016: 45). Royo and Wilhite (2015) stress that "most researchers chose to address wellbeing either through objective (economic growth, basic needs level, life expectancy, pollution, capabilities…) or subjective (self-reports on life satisfaction, negative and positive emotions…) approaches" (p.301). This suggests that two component of wellbeing need to be taken into account when adopting a specific perspective: the approach to wellbeing itself (hedonic or eudaimonic) and the way in which it will be addressed and measured (objective or subjective data collection), to "avoid the assimilation of certain theories to certain data types" (Ottaviani, 2018: 58).

The exposition of the two main approach to wellbeing proposed in this section suggests that they are conflicting in that they differ in their groundings, intentions and operationalization. However, it has been stressed that they might also be complementary in some cases and for specific purposes (Costanza et al., 2007: 267). Indeed, "a convincing consensus is emerging that combinations of approaches—objective, subjective (…)—provide a more rounded picture of human wellbeing" (Gough, 2017: 62).

Before going further in the reflection, if we are to conceptualize a relationship between wellbeing and sustainability, we must consider the concept of sustainable wellbeing that express this connection (Gough, 2017: 87). For Dietz and al. (2009), "one way to conceive this is as a ratio (…) called 'the ecological efficiency of wellbeing' (Gough, 2017: 87). This is important to consider when discussing wellbeing as some stress that in the pursuit of the good life today, we are eroding the basis for wellbeing tomorrow and that "in pursuit of our own wellbeing, we are undermining the possibilities for others" (Jackson, 2017: 3). Yet, "prosperity today means little if it undermines prosperity tomorrow" (Jackson, 2016: 150) and the 'ecological efficiency of wellbeing' is therefore crucial to assure "wellbeing for all current peoples as well as for future generations" (Gough, 2017: 12). This implies "paying

attention to its distribution between people", and to concerns of equity and social justice (Gough, 2017: 12) to respect an "upper boundary set by biophysical limits and a lower boundary set by decent levels of wellbeing for all today" where "lies a safe and just space for humanity" (Gough, 2017: 12). One way forward would be to avoid the conflict and promote the synergies that exist between the "twin pursuit of human development and planetary sustainability" (Gough, 2017: 93). For that purpose, it is necessary to understand the environmental impacts of the current strategies designed to ensure quality of life to establish a route towards sustainable wellbeing, as they seem to currently represent a threat to the global environment (Vita, 2019). This remains a complex ambition to discuss as it requires addressing the two components of sustainable wellbeing at the same time—need satisfaction and emissions (Gough, 2017: 93), but nonetheless crucial for a just and safe route towards sustainability.

Considering the different approaches to wellbeing, either hedonic or eudaimonic, objective or subjective, many authors came up with their own interpretation which led to very distinctive theories of wellbeing with similarities and differences that make the literature on wellbeing quite rich but also complex. As stressed before, the eudaimonic perspective seems to be best suited when considering environmental issues. Therefore, the next section will briefly bring together different theories of wellbeing that have been applied to the questions of sustainable consumption and climate change and are based on a eudaimonic perspective, as they are the most compelling in relation to this work.

The first one that can be exposed is the Theory of Human Needs, which has been developed by Doyal and Gough (1984; 1991). They developed an approach to wellbeing based on 'fundamental' or 'objective human needs' (Jackson and Marks 1999: 427). They present a compelling representation of human need satisfaction arguing that we all share a finite number of satiable and non-substitutable human needs (Steinberger, 2020) that are met through culturally specific *satisfiers* (Max-Neef, 1991). They conceive the needs as organized roughly as a pyramid, "with

basic need satisfaction at the bottom underpinning physical, mental health and autonomy, culminating in wellbeing and social participation" (Steinberger, 2020). Max Neef's shares a similar approach with his Theory of Fundamental Human needs and Human Scale Development (1991). However, his approach differs as his list of needs is non-hierarchical except from the need for subsistence, that is staying alive. He states that a need theory is required for development (Max-Neef, 1991), and proposes a matrix that is operational as "for every existing or conceivable satisfier, one or more of the needs stated must appear as a target-need of the satisfier" (Max-Neef, 1991: 29). In the same direction and drawing on the concept of *needs*, Sen (1999) and later Nussbaum (2003) proposed a *Capabilities approach* that exposes a series of *functionings* to which every human should have access (Gasper, 2004: 9). They stress that "capabilities can be considered as a prerequisite to enable people to meet their needs and experience wellbeing" (Pelenc, 2014: 2). In 2007, Costanza et al. proposed a new approach that was based on an "integrative definition of quality of life that combines measures of human needs with subjective wellbeing or happiness" (Costanza et al., 2007: 267). He ambitioned to expose the different opportunities for people to fulfill their needs (Costanza et al., 2007: 275), bringing together complementary approaches to address wellbeing at the individual, community, national, and global levels (Costanza et al., 2007). As a last contribution to this non-exhaustive list of theories, the approach of Di Giulio and Defila (2020) on protected need is worth mentioning. They proposed an operationalization of the 'good life' with nine Protected Needs "that should receive special protection within and across societies" (Di Giulio and Defila, 2020). Those protected needs focus on three dimensions—the tangibles and material things, the person, and the community—that are argued to include all of the needs necessary towards achieving wellbeing.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND WELLBEING

Following this review of the nexus between sustainability and wellbeing, and the different approaches to wellbeing that can be used to discuss environmental concerns, we will now discuss a more precise dimension of sustainability. As highlighted before, the impact of economic growth on the environment has been proved to be damaging, while its positive influence on human wellbeing is increasingly questioned. As economic growth can be characterized as a combination of production and consumption, this Masters' thesis focuses on understanding what wellbeing involves in term of consumption, as it seems a good way to address the crucial goal of the *wellbeing dividend* (Jackson, 2008a). Production systems will not be central to this work—including green growth, green development, decarbonization—as they represent a challenge unto themselves that needs to be studied precisely. The literature reviewed here focuses on consumption in relation to wellbeing, and the different forms of consumption reduction that can be mentioned as such. When it comes to consumption, many domains can be included, but food, transport and heating homes are argued to be the categories with the highest impact on the environment (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014). The area of research and policy considered as sustainable consumption is described as the "efforts to reduce either the environmental impacts of consumption, or to reduce consumption itself" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 301).

This is important when we consider to what extent current levels and patterns of consumption are or are not "good for us—not just in terms of environmental impact but in terms of individual and collective wellbeing" (Jackson, 2005: 21). Consumption has been proven to have damaging consequences on the environment such as depletion of natural resources and damage on natural environment (Jackson and Marks, 1999). The literature also shows that "growth in consumption is not positively correlated with increases in wellbeing" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 312) and that the increased expenditure provoked by raising consumption actually hinders the satisfaction of the underlying needs in certain

categories (Jackson and marks, 1999: 422). In that direction, Jackson and Marks (1999) have developed the concept of *economic bads* as opposed to economic goods to highlight the harmful consequences of economic growth and consumption on the environment but also the social and human costs it entails. Following that, the definition of the Oslo symposium (1994) on sustainable consumption that promotes "the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of further generations" has been reviewed in that direction. Indeed, Di Giulio and Fusch (2014) stress that "a definition of sustainable consumption should extend to both a minimum level of natural and social resources and a maximum level of natural and social resources that individuals are entitled to have access to" (p.187), or the concept of *Consumption corridors* with its two main propositions: "first to jointly define the external conditions necessary to live a good life (…) and use them as a basis for defining minimum consumption standards, and then "to jointly negotiate maximum consumption standards, that is, levels of consumption at which no substantial further improvement in wellbeing is to be expected and the quality of life of others is being endangered" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 188). Sustainable consumption would then be described as "consumption respecting these minima and maxima" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 187) and "the goal of sustainable development can thus be rephrased as providing human beings in the present and in the future with the resources necessary to meet their objective needs and therefore to be able to live a good life according to their individual choices" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 186). This corridors approach is interesting for the purpose of "improving the sustainability of consumption" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 184) as it encourages the consumption reduction as the "societal norm of accepting and observing these levels" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 188).

In that direction, in his work on the political economy of growth linked to wellbeing (2017), Gough proposes "a new meta-

goal for policy" that is "to 'recompose' consumption in affluent societies" which would allow "to develop a sage 'consumption corridor' between minimum standards, allowing every individual to live a good life, and maximum standards, ensuring a limit on every individual's use of natural and social resources" (Gough, 2017: 197-198). Supporting this idea of recomposing consumption to respect such corridors, more or less "radical [bottom-up] initiatives aimed at living a simpler, more ethical and more sustainable life" (Jackson, 2017: 127) are emerging across the globe that are "challenging established patterns of consumption" (Gough, 2017: 198). Following the assumption that "green growth alone will not be enough" (Gough, 2017: 2) and thus going beyond the technological efficiency theory for climate mitigation, those initiatives are based on the paradigm of sufficiency. The notion of sufficiency represents an alternative to notions of efficiency and maximization. It argues for a renewed organization of production and consumption that aims at providing enough goods and services, food and energy, etc. instead of maximizing production and consumption (Barry, 2012: 161). It supports the idea of "switching desire and pleasure from consumption and accumulation to the enjoyment of experiences and relationships" (Barry, 2012: 189). This notion helps to distinguish "'necessary' consumption from 'luxury' and 'locked-in consumption' and ways of living" (Gough, 2017: 198). Indeed, "by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the qualitative benefits of a less materialistic lifestyle were a core element in community-based initiatives for environmental change" (Jackson, 2017: 128). "Eco villages, transition towns, co-housing, eco-neighborhoods and voluntary simplicity initiatives are examples of movements" that advocate for "a more sustainable life" (Guillen-Royo, 2010: 384) and illustrate the "proliferation and independent coordination of local initiatives" (Gough, 2017: 206). Those initiatives promoting simplicity are "not associated with poverty, but [rather] linked to […] a 'subsistence society', in clear contrast to the current 'consumer society" (Guillent-Royo, 2010: 390).

Defined by Etzioni's (1998), "voluntary simplicity" (or minimalism) "refers to the choice out of free will [. . .] to limit

expenditures on consumer goods and services, and to cultivate non-materialistic resources of satisfaction and meaning" (p.620). Following Elgin (1993), Jackson (2017) sees it as an "entire philosophy for life" (p.127) and a "way of life that is 'outwardly simple, yet inwardly rich' as the basis for revisioning human progress" (Jackson, 2017: 127), if such a term can be used without referring to growth. Others (Zamwel, 2014) define it as "a way of life practiced by individuals whose ideology calls for minimizing consumption and maximizing reduction" (p.199). Studies on the voluntary simplicity of downshifting movements substantiate "the existence of negative returns to consumption" (Royo, 2010: 385), which in turn supports the ideas that a consumption corridors approach may be a safe route towards the *wellbeing dividend*. However, if these engagements towards voluntary simplicity seem to "reverse the trend towards environmental destruction and undermine the imaginary foundations of the system", it doesn't suggest "a radical rethinking of the system", and will generate a change that is likely to be limited (Latouche, 2019: 52).

Considered by Guillen-Royo and Wilhite (2015) as "one of the most robust examples of bottom up, community driven change" (p.312), the transition towns movement goes further as it embodies a "response to the failure of higher levels of government to confront resource constraints and climate change" (Gough, 2017: 206). The movement was pictured by Rob Hopkins (2008), a professor of agronomy and permaculture expert (Latouche, 2019: 104) and was born in a "transition town called Totnes in the UK, where a small group of activists established a local community-based campaign to engage people in changing their lifestyles and reforming local infrastructures" (Jackson, 2017: 129). Royo and Wilhite (2015) define it as a "micro-political movement involving participatory planning and an aim to be less environmentally intrusive and more socially inclusive" (p.312). The transition towns movement draws on "wellbeing research, both at the theoretical and practical levels" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 312) in order to find "ways to address global problems with local solutions" (Jackson, 2017: 129). According to Latouche, "this may be the form of building from the bottom up that comes closest to a

degrowth urban society" (Latouche, 2019: 104) as it proposes an "alternative political economic framing that is 'non-capitalist'" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 312) and aims towards energy self-sufficiency and resilience (Latouche, 2019).

If those movements appear as encouraging to go from the "hard-headed 'greed' and technological might of contemporary capitalism to an ethical, just and sustainable future" (Gough, 2017:2), Gough (2017) exposes that recomposing consumption away from high carbon luxuries to low-carbon necessities (p.2) "will not reduce emissions fast enough to avoid a crucial global warming (p.125). To follow his assumption that advocates for eco-social policies that effectively reduce consumption (Gough, 2017: 169), Victor (2012, cited in Gough, 2017) "has modelled a scenario of 'selective growth', where commodities are grouped into high- and low-GHG[1] intensity, and expenditure on the high-intensity goods and services is reduced fast to near zero". It proposes that GDP per capita will grow at the same rate as usual but GHG emissions will decline for the next 15 years before rising again at a slower pace (Gough, 2017: 169).

DEGROWTH

Some theories consider it as not profound enough and call for the need of a more radical change within the economic system and the practices (Gough, 2017; Jackson, 2017; Latouche, 2019). The opportunity for "the construction of another society, a society of frugal abundance, a post-growth society (the term used in Germany by Niko Paech), or of prosperity without growth" (expression of the English economist Tim Jacskon) has emerged with the concept of degrowth (Latouche, 2019: 7). Georgescu-Roegen, alongside Grinevald, is known to be at the essence of this notion with the book La Décroissance (2006), based on his concept of bioeconomics which "consists in redefining the economic sphere,

[1] Green House Gas

both as a discipline (economics) and as a set of practices (economy), in relationship with its bio-physical environment" (Missemer, 2017: 493). Degrowth is "in the words of its proponents, a 'missile concept' designed to 'open up a debate silenced by the 'sustainable development consensus'" (Jackson, 2017: 162). It's about confronting "the limitations of the past with a renewed vision for the future" in order to imagine a "path to social justice, wellbeing and ecological sustainability" (Schneider 2010: 3). Degrowth argues for a multi-level transformation to go beyond capitalism and achieve long-term socio-ecological sustainability (Brossmann and Islar, 2020) as stresses by Van den Bergh (2011) who describes it as the combination of five different dimensions. He "makes a distinction between GDP degrowth, consumption degrowth, worktime degrowth, radical degrowth (change in values, ethics…) and physical degrowth (reduction of the physical size of the economy). In turn, Brossman and Islar (2020) classify degrowth as "interrelated practices grouped in five spheres: rethinking society, acting political, creating alternatives, fostering connections, and unveiling the self" (p.921-922). This can be translated into various implications: alternative and contesting consumption choices, alternative activist commitment, contesting stance towards the 'economic whole', conditions of commitment in terms of socialization and activist affinity, ways of getting involved but also social constraints, coping strategies for diminishing purchasing power (Mège 2010: 57—all quotes by Mège are translated to English by author in this work). In turn, Latouche illustrates the concept of degrowth with the notion of "virtuous circle of sobriety" composed of "eight fundamentals of any sustainable non-productivist society": reevaluate, reconceptualize, restructure, redistribute, relocalize, reduce carbon footprint, restore peasant activity, recycle (Latouche, 2019:51). This demonstrates that "degrowth is varied, with many different contributors that sometimes [even] oppose one another" Missemer (2017: 494). As the literature is very broad in defining degrowth, it is sometimes hard to capture a specific way to qualify it, either as a movement, a set of principles, a paradigm or an ideology. It may depend on the context and the approach, and this work will focus on

degrowth as a movement but most importantly a broader paradigm composed of a set of principles that rule practices. However, the activist dimension of degrowth as a politically active won't be addressed in this work as it is a specific discussion that goes beyond the scope of this research. Degrowth is argued to be "nourished both by practitioners and […] ideas" (Mège, 2017: 79) and Gough stresses that we should actually use "the term post-growth to describe the goal" (Gough, 2017: 171) advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s) and ideas, and "degrowth as the route towards it" (Gough, 2017: 171), fashioned by its practitioners' actions.

For the purpose of understanding this route, Latouche stresses that one of the degrowth main concern is, among others including production systems and the labor market, "a change in lifestyle, and the elimination of unnecessary needs" (Latouche, 2019: 91). Indeed, "by rejecting economic growth", degrowth activists are trying to move away from "consumer society" (Mège, 2017: 63). For those reasons, and because it is the core argument of this work, a focus has to be made on the consumption dimension of degrowth. It seems that it can be considered as broader than described by Van den Berg (2011: 882), as consumption reduction can also be linked to work-time degrowth and radical degrowth. Regarding consumption, "degrowth involves a range of actions taken at the individual and collective level" (Schneider, 2010: 3) based on "voluntary restriction" (Mège, 2017: 74) that range from composting, sorting, eating less meat, buying very little new stuff, gleaning to biking, hitchhiking, carpooling or supporting network to be hosted (Mège, 2010). Mège classifies these consumption practices within three dimensions: "*faire moins*" (Do less), "*faire soi-même*" (Do it yourself) and "*faire sans*" (Do without) (Mège, 2017). "*Faire moins*" relates to the "behaviors of sobriety stemming from a principle of self-limitation to privilege simplicity, to diminish the totality of one's consumption volumes, to live differently [and] to work differently" (Mège, 2017: 69). "*Faire soi-même*" allows to "regain control of [one's] practices and their use" and to limit "spending on basic necessities of life" (Mège, 2017: 71). The notion of "faire sans" gives priority to being more sober and preferring

practical logics (Mège, 2017: 74) when consuming. These limits on consumption relate to the concept of internal limits argued by Kalis (2019) as "something to be sought as part of the good life (Kallis, 2019: 116) that "requires institutions at higher levels" to be agreed upon and secured (Kallis, 2019: 106). He argues that we need to limit ourselves in order for everyone to have enough, by accepting that our wants are limited and can be satisfied, which is for him the only way to enjoy an abundant world (Kallis, 2019: 127). He stresses that "it is our nature to choose or to search for and put a limit, to be at peace with what we have" (Kallis, 2019: 38).

This potential "macro-economic scenario" supported by the degrowth advocates is argued to potentially "have a positive influence on many of the factors that promote wellbeing (such as employment, time with family and friends, etc.), but there is still a lack of empirical evidence supporting this contention" (Guillen-Royo, 2015: 310). However, it seems to be a promising route toward the eagerly yearned wellbeing dividend, as Mège (2010) stresses that degrowth is "for the well-being of the planet and for oneself as well... it's a betterment" (p.62). In turn, Jackson sees a post-growth society as "a systemic re-construction of economics that offers both meaning and hope to the idea of social progress" and represents "the potential to deliver lasting prosperity" (Jackson, 2017: 140). The idea of investing "in assets that maximize our potential to flourish with the minimum level of material consumption, rather than in assets that maximize the throughput of material—irrespective of their contribution to long-term prosperity" (Jackson, 2017: 151) could offer the possibility to flourish, achieve greater social cohesion, find higher levels of wellbeing and still reduce the material impact on the environment (Jackson, 2017: 65). Even if sometimes considered as politically challenging for the time being (Gough, 2017), "the commitment to degrowth is contemporary in that it links social and ecological concerns that are widely valued (do-it-yourself, aspiration to work less, eat healthy, etc.)". "It therefore appears to be relatively compatible with all the discourses invoking the realization, autonomy and creativity of the individual" (Mège, 2017: 83). Argued as allowing to "live well, and

yet consume less" and "to have more fun—but with less stuff" (Jackson, 2017: 47-48), "a coherent 'post-growth' macroeconomics" can be considered as the most robust scenario to reach the *wellbeing dividend* and is seen by Jackson (2017) as "entirely possible" (p.184).

Based on the concept of *wellbeing dividend* (Jackson, 2008a; Guillen-Royo, 2010), the first section of this literature review helped to unveil the link between sustainability and wellbeing that is necessary to justify the purpose of this work as well as to propose an outcome that will be consistent with the existing findings. The second section drawn on this proved nexus between sustainability and wellbeing to go further into details and bringing up the relation between sustainable consumption and wellbeing through the concept of *consumption corridors* (Di Giulio and Fuschs, 2014). As a concluding part to this literature review, the third section relies on the concepts of *wellbeing dividend* and *consumption corridors* to uncover the link that the existing literature stresses between degrowth and wellbeing, through the idea of prosperity without growth (Jackson, 2016) or flourishing post-growth. As well as being a foundation for the conceptual framework adopted in this work, the literature review allows to assure the consistency and relevancy of the research and its outcomes in relation to the existing findings.

PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Contributing to an emerging area of research around wellbeing and consumption reduction, this work will use the various concepts described in the literature review above to answer the following interrogation: In what ways can consumption reduction practices impact sustainable wellbeing?

Towards this aim, and drawing on empirical research on community-based initiatives that promote sufficiency through more or less radical claims, this research will focus on the potential of the Degrowth paradigm(s). The concern will be to uncover forms of consumptions advocated by a Degrowth initiative, as it plays out in Western Switzerland, and link these practices and patterns to the notion of wellbeing.

As an introduction, the first question addressed in this work will help to unveil the specific practices of consumption reduction that are promoted by people following a degrowth path: *What practices of consumption reduction are significant for Degrowth?*

Then, the interest will be to understand the elements composing these practices which seem to either support or hinder their development: *What are the elements that support or hinder those specific practices?*

The attention will then be focused on the impact of those specific practices on the different dimensions considered as contributing to wellbeing: *What is the impact of those practices on (sustainable) wellbeing?*

Finally, this work will attempt to unveil the key elements that could be focused on to promote more or less radical consumption reduction practices while advocating for wellbeing as a normative

goal for the assessment of sustainable climate mitigation: *What insights can be unveiled to promote consumption reduction while supporting the goal of sustainable wellbeing?*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

WELLBEING

To answer those specific questions, this research will rely mostly on the concept of wellbeing mentioned earlier, following the assumption that one of the most promising ways to mitigate climate change is to focus on a perspective that allows for assuring people's wellbeing within the planetary boundaries (Rockström et al., 2009, Steffen et al., 2015).

As highlighted in the literature review, the concept of wellbeing may prove to be complex as well as evolving, since it can rely on eudemonic as well as hedonic theories. For the purpose of this work, emphasis will be placed on the objective dimension of wellbeing advocated by the eudemonic principles. A focus on the hedonic dimension of wellbeing would be problematic for this research in that "it further justifies the continuous pursuit of economic growth as a main policy goal" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 45). To go beyond that perspective, and because this work is based on the degrowth paradigm(s), the emphasis will be placed on an approach to wellbeing that opposes the mainstream theory of subjective wellbeing that focus on preferences and happiness to focus on the objective dimension of wellbeing. As stated by Gough (2017: 172) that cites Ryan and Sapp (2007): "the eudemonic school of wellbeing supports the premise that we all have psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness but that economic growth often fails to nurture and nourish them". This perspective even seems to offer advantages "in the definition of human wellbeing in relation to sustainability" (ibid 2017: 44).

When hedonic wellbeing suffers from a lack of stability as based on people's preferences, and therefore "does not allow for intercultural (or even interpersonal) comparisons" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 45), a eudemonic approach allows for comparable conclusions between people, regions, and even generations. This approach also goes beyond the single individual focusing on a broader context and allows for the understanding of social institutions and political systems in relation to individual flourishing (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017). Finally, eudemonia which is translated as human flourishing, "is not conceived of as a mental state, a positive feeling or a cognitive appraisal of satisfaction, but rather as a way of living" (Ryan et al., 2008: 143). Those two last points are crucial as this research is about studying everyday practices and lifestyles of people that contest growth and encourage more human values and beliefs in relation to wellbeing. Altogether, it seems meaningful to use a "eudemonic understanding of human wellbeing in order to address the issue of improving people's well-being within environmental limits" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 46), which is precisely the purpose of this work.

As mentioned in the literature review, several theories rely on an objective approach to wellbeing and have been applied to environmental studies. The theories of human needs (Doyal and Gough, 1991) as well as the theory of fundamental human needs and human scale development (Max-Neef, 1991) were studied and seriously considered for this work. They have much in common but also differ on a few points that helped to place the emphasis on one theory instead of the other.

Theory of Human Needs

The theory of human needs, developed by Doyal and Gough (1991) opposes desires "which are only subjectively felt and whose satisfaction leads to momentary pleasure" to "objective valid needs" which are "rooted in human nature and whose realization is conducive to human growth" (Fromm, 1976: 4). This approach

has many advantages when it comes to studying and discussing environmental and consumption reduction concerns, as they "imply a standard of sufficiency, rather than maximization" (Gough, 2017: 194). the theory of human needs proposes a "finite number of self-evident (universal, recognizable by anyone), incommensurable (thus satiable, irreducible and non-substitutable) and non-hierarchical needs, which encompass the range of capabilities or dimensions of Human Wellbeing" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 46). Those human needs are "universal social ends (…) satisfied or provisioned by culturally specific means" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 50) that are on the contrary flexible and allow "to evaluate and compare wellbeing across different global contexts and cultures and across generations in the future" (Gough, 2017: 38). Altogether, the theory of human needs is argued to be a meaningful "normative and ethical underpinning for evaluating the social dimensions of climate change" (Gough, 2017: 1).

The concept of needs itself allows to capture an objective dimension of wellbeing that is coherent with the degrowth paradigm(s) studied in this work, which advocate(s) for less economic growth and more human flourishing while limiting the impact on the planet. Gough stresses that "the pursuit of basic need satisfaction is in principle satiable" and could be "met with lower emissions than growth led by untrammeled consumer preferences and expenditure" (2017: 93), however this remains to be proved empirically. The concept of culturally specific *satisfiers* as means to meet those needs is coherent with the aspiration for discussing the everyday practices that are representative of "*living degrowth*" (Brossmann and Islar, 2020) and drive this research. The "ethical grounding" and the "claims of justice and equity" (Gough, 2017: 3) encouraged by these concepts of *needs* and *satisfiers* are also a meaningful argument that support the relevance of such a theory for discussing degrowth practices in relation to wellbeing. In sum, it is exposed that a human needs perspective is the only desirable approach that will allow for "negotiating trade-offs between climate change, capitalism and human wellbeing, now and in the future" (Gough, 2017).

FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN NEEDS AND HUMAN SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Based on the theory of human needs and drawing on Maslow's "hierarchical pyramid of human needs stretching from basic physical needs at the bottom to spiritual or transcendental needs at the top (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 426), Max-Neef proposes a horizontal taxonomy of nine axiological needs (subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity and freedom) "expressed in four different ways: being (attributes), having (tools, norms), doing (agency) and interacting (social expressions in time and space)" (Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017: 46). Except for the need for subsistence that is the most basic need, there is no hierarchy in the list and "on the contrary, simultaneities, complementarities and trade-offs are characteristics of the process of needs satisfaction" (Max-Neef, 1991: 17). Those "human needs are objective, plural, non-substitutable and satiable" (Gough, 2017: 3), and "common to all humans" (Pelenc, 2014: 5). This objective list of satiable and universal needs supports the reflection around consumption reduction and is in line with the approach stressed in this work about degrowth practices and wellbeing as the classification allows for an understanding of the relationship between needs and the ways in which they are satisfied (Max-Neef, 1991). While the needs are universal, the "means employed to satisfy [them] are culturally, socially and temporally flexible" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 46), and define through the concept of *satisfiers* (Max Neef, 1991). These satisfiers differ between regions, groups and even individuals, that are "free to choose how to satisfy their needs according to their values and aspirations" (Pelenc 2014: 5). They can be "organized within the grids of a matrix" (Max-Neef,1991: 30) as "individual or collective forms of Being, Having, Doing and Interacting to actualize needs" (Max-Neef, 1991: 30) (see simplified Max-Neef matrix as Appendix 1). They can be "social practices, values, forms of organization and political models that characterize a specific society" (Guillen-Royo, 2010: 385) and can promote or hinder wellbeing depending on their characteristics and

their effects in specific contexts. As stressed by Guillen-Royo, this concept is "necessary to understand the relationship between sustainable consumption and wellbeing" (2010: 386), and appears as evidently relevant if not necessary for the purpose of this research. In addition, it is stressed that "for a satisfier to enhance wellbeing it cannot have long-term detrimental effects on the environment because if the environment is negatively affected, [it] would negatively influence human needs fulfillment" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 307).

"The optimal fulfillment of the nine human needs is what defines wellbeing which is achieved or hampered through satisfiers" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 307). As "there is no one-to-one correspondence between needs and satisfiers" (Pelenc 2014: 5) and the latter can have very distinctive effects on the former, Max-Neef proposes five different types of satisfiers. This typology is relevant to the research question that aim at understanding the effect of satisfiers on wellbeing, and the different categories of satisfiers allow to apprehend the ambiguities that can rely among the satisfiers: limited satisfaction, false satisfaction, negative impact on satisfaction, backfire effect over satisfaction, but also proficient satisfaction. The satisfiers can be exogenous and "imposed, induced, ritualized or institutionalized" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34):

The singular satisfiers "satisfy one particular need" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34) and are neutral to others.

The pseudo satisfiers "generate a false sense of satisfaction of a given need" (Max-Neef, 1991: 31).

The violators (or destroyers), "when applied with the intention of satisfying a given need", "annihilate the possibility of its satisfaction over time" and impair the satisfaction of other needs (Max-Neef, 1991: 31).

The inhibiting satisfiers "over satisfy a given need, therefore seriously curtailing the possibility of satisfying other needs. With some exceptions, they share the attribute of originating in deep-rooted customs, habits and rituals" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34).

And there are satisfiers that are endogenous (external) to civil society as they "derive from liberating processes which are the outcome of acts of volition generated by the community at the grassroots level" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34).

The synergic satisfiers "satisfy a given need, simultaneously stimulating and contributing to the fulfillment of other needs. They share the attribute of being anti-authoritarian in the sense that they constitute a reversal of predominant values, such as competition and coerciveness" (Max Neef, 1991: 34).

While each need can be met with different intensities (Max-Neef, 1991), they can be satisfied within three contexts: (1) with regard to oneself (*Eigenwelt*); (2) with regard to the social group (*Mitwelt*); and (3) with regard to the environment (*Umwelt*) (Neef, 1991: 18). This understanding of needs satisfaction brought up by Max Neef (1991) is interesting in the context of this research as it allows for the apprehension of individual and collective practices as well as a broader consideration of it, taking into account the environment as one's surroundings and living contexts but also as the natural habitat one's evolves in and should protect.

Those two theories propose lists of human needs that seem all the more relevant in relation to the present research for various reasons that are, as exposed above, underlined in the literature. First, they allow for an objective approach to wellbeing which has been proved appropriate earlier in this section. Then, they seem to allow for a local, fair and ethical approach to consumption reduction and degrowth linked to wellbeing as they promote satiable needs away from growth consideration and call for a rational relationship with the environment. In addition, those needs-based approaches to wellbeing are recognized as providing a solid basis to identify the social dimension of human wellbeing exposed by the inner ring of Raworth's lifebelt, "a normative foundation for assessing the social implications of climate change and climate policies in the Anthropocene" (Gough, 2017: 62).

If both those theories seem relevant for the present study, the conceptual and methodological frameworks proposed by

Max-Neef are considered easier to operationalize and seem to constitute the most "interesting paradigm to frame future research on sustainable consumption and wellbeing" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite, 2015: 311), which is why it has been preferred over the Theory of human need introduced by Doyal and Gough (1991). The matrix on which the human scale development theory is based has already been used to discuss consumption patterns in relation to needs and satisfiers (Guillent-Royo, 2010: 386). It allows to consider consumption practice as satisfiers, and captures both individual and collective attributes and almost all other dimensions" (Pelenc, 2014: 7) proposed by the various objective theories of wellbeing. In addition, it allows for a classification of satisfiers depending on their effect on wellbeing, that range from violators to synergic satisfiers, which "enables the inclusion of environmental limits and limits to consumption and economic activity" in the discussion (Brand Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 47). For the purpose of this work, an emphasis will be made on the inhibiting and synergic satisfiers as they appear relevant to the research question. The concept of inhibiting satisfier can help understand which satisfiers need to be transformed to avoid a need satisfaction that generates the inhibition of another need. On the contrary, the concept of synergic satisfiers could allow to recognize the satisfiers that need to be sustained for an optimum satisfaction of needs and an ideal path towards wellbeing. In turn, this would unveil the elements that hinder of support degrowth practices that must be shifted. As it has been shown in other researches (Cruz, 2008; Castell, 2009 cited in Guillen-Royo, 2010: 386), it allows to address the outcome of policy interventions related to need satisfaction, and "the relations which are established between needs and their satisfiers make it possible to develop a philosophy and a policy for development which are genuinely humanistic" (Max-Neef, 1991: 23), and more focused on an "increase in the levels of local, regional and national self-reliance" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34). Furthermore, "contrary to traditional top-down strategies for societal change, Max-Neef's approach to human wellbeing provides a participatory tool for groups of people" (Guilen-Royo, 2010: 384) to analyze their satisfiers. These characteristics are

consistent with the advocacy for consumption reduction and with most of the degrowth claims. Finally, while Max-Neef's list of fundamental needs offers the possibility to acknowledge collective as well as individual practices, it also allows to follow the assumption that practices are not based on individual behaviors but on a much broader combination of elements, approach that is more precisely termed and described within the social practice theory outlined below. This is interesting as, through a clear concept of interdependent satisfiers, it allows to unveil the multiple and inter-dependent changes" in practices "that need to be in place to attain the long-awaited wellbeing dividend" (Guillen-Royo, 2010: 391).

SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORY AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

In the effort to mitigate climate change and reduce energy use, it seems like the "growing critique of economic growth from a sustainability and carbon-reduction perspective (…) [has] left intact the power of economic growth in household consumption" and has "only been marginally effective" (Wilhite, 2017: 17). Following that assumption, it is also worth mentioning that the apprehending of consumption as being an individual responsibility has long dominated the sustainable energy and environmental policy arenas (Maniates, 2001; Shove, 2010; Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014). In order to oppose the mainstream "theories of energy consumption and savings that conceptualize consumption as individual-driven and reduce low energy policy to the provision of efficient technologies to rational economic actors" (Wilhite, 2017: 23), this work will focus on perspectives that consider consumption as practices that are rooted in everyday habits. As stressed by Wilhite, "capitalism's 'common sense' of growth, speed, convenience and comfort is driving the formation of habits that make a heavy demand on energy and materials (…)" (Wilhite, 2017: 17) and are "rooted in societal norms, commercial discourses, materialities and experiential knowledge" (Wilhite, 2017: 2). Those "materially dense and carbon-intensive habits" (Ibid) are precisely what degrowth

paradigm(s) contest and try to restrain by promoting a more or less drastic reduction in consumption practices. As the research focuses on those specific practices through a study of degrowth in relation to wellbeing, an emphasis will be put on a social practice approach to consumption, as opposed to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2015), based on the rational choice assumption (Smith, 1776).

In his work, Bourdieu followed Mauss (1973) by using the term *habitus* "to capture the domain of knowledge on which body and mind draw in performing countless actions in the course of a day" (Wilhite, 2017: 27). The social practice theory that was originally shaped in Bourdieu's (1979) and Giddens (1984) writings and more recently in Schatzki (1996), Reckwitz (2002a), "has been adapted and applied to consumption by social scientists representing a number of academic disciplines (Warde 2005; Shove 2003; Ropke 2009; Wilhite 2013; Halkier et al. 2011 and others)" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 308). "A theory of social practice distributes agency in consumption between cultural, social and material contributions to action" (Wilhite, 2017: 24) and the "stubbornness of habits depends on how deeply anchored the habits are in relation to […] three pillars of practices" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28).

Practices are usually defined as being made up of three elements. The teleoaffective structures, that are also termed as the "place of mind and body in theories of action" by Wilhite (2017), correspond to the "cognitive processes and physical dispositions, acquired by the body through social experiences, inscribed in space and over time" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28). It relates to "people and the knowledge they embody, both physically and mentally" (Shakian and Wilhite, 2014: 39). The material dimension of practices, also labelled as the "agency of material structures in everyday action" (Wilhite, 2017), includes "the objects and technologies involved in consumption practices" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 29) and "that influence and are influenced by everyday life" (Shakian and Wilhite, 2014: 39). Finally, the social dimension of practices involves what is regulated or prescribed, that

is all the "social rules and values related to consumption and change […] that are tacitly accepted" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 29).

This theory has many advantages that are worth mentioning for the purpose of this research. First, as stressed before, it allows to consider consumption as practices rooted in habits that depends on several elements highlighted above, in order to go beyond the behavioral perspectives of the rational choice theory in term of practices. Then, it allows to deeply understand specific individual or collective practices including the elements that constitute them, which is appropriate for the comprehension of specific reduction consumption practices. Next, the claim for a social practice approach which defends that "practices are interrelated and must be viewed as a system and not as siloes" is compatible with this work as it supports the "argument in environmental studies that a more holistic view of resources consumption must be promoted" (Shakian and Wilhite, 2014: 37). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the social practice theory is consistent with an understanding of the relationship between consumption and wellbeing. Indeed, as stressed by Guillen-Royo and Wilhite (2015), "evidence from wellbeing research supports an approach to consumption based on social practices and its constituting elements (…) focusing on the social, physical, technical and natural contexts in which both consumption and wellbeing are created" (p.310). It is useful as a theory of practices "can be used to explain the choice of certain satisfiers" that satisfy needs. (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 49) Altogether, as opposed to behaviorist perspectives, a social practice approach seems to represent a solid basis for a robust theory of change within the framework of consumption reduction and climate change mitigation and in relation to wellbeing.

It seems likely that the foundations for a potential robust theory of change claimed by the degrowth advocates and linked to the wellbeing can be relevantly addressed through a social practice approach. In that direction, Sahakian and Wilhite stress the consistency of "applying social practice theory to theorizing

consumption, specifically in relation to transforming practices that have problematic environmental impacts" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 25). In their work, they emphasis Wilhite's term of 'routine busting' as the process of moving "habits in more environmentally friendly ways" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28). Supporting the social practice theory, they state that "a change in any of [the] three pillars [underlined above] can shift a habit and indeed influence our overall dispositions" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28). "Once the distributed agency potential across different elements of a social practice is identified, change can occur through social learning, which involves engagement in and with new practices" (Shakian and Wilhite, 2014: 30) to challenge strongly grounded habits.

But change is not easy, as the meanings and social norms that hold practices together can generate fear of social marginalization for example. "The perverse effects of dominant structures are legion" (Jackson, 2016: 129) and there is "little wonder that people trying to live more sustainably find themselves in conflict with the social world around them" (Jackson, 2016: 130). As stressed by Latouche, "the realization of the project of a society of frugal abundance", that would confront the established practices, "requires above all a mental revolution" (Latouche, 2019: 96) and a "decolonization of the imagination" (Latouche, 2019: 108). In that sense, "the achievement of a low-energy and climate-friendly political economy will demand breaking and reforming [the] collectively reinforced and individually enacted habits" (Wilhite, 2017: 3) and "convincing people [that there are] other elements (beyond consumption after a minimum level has been reached) that are constituents of wellbeing (O'Neill, 2006)" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2017: 44). Following the literature, it seems accurate to believe that "the chance of wide-scale societal shifts in behavior are negligible without changes in the social structure" (Jackson, 2016: 203) that could offer "people viable alternatives to the consumer way of life (…)" (Jackson, 2016: 204).

As stressed by Wilhite (2017), "to make a low carbon transformation, a focus on changes at the top—in the growth politics of capitalism—must be supplemented by changes in everyday

practices that have emerged within capitalist political economies (p.3). Max-Neef objective wellbeing perspective and the social practice theory are consistent with this assumption which emphases the fact that change is political as well as individual. The objective approach to wellbeing and the concept of satisfiers allows for an individual (buy local food) and collective (being part of a group) apprehension of the ways of satisfying needs, as well as an understanding of the broad contexts (cooperative housing) and situations (living in a house with an outdoor space) that allows this satisfaction. The social practice theory allows for the recognition of the elements of practices that are specific to an individual (mental dispositions) but linked to broader arrangements (institutions or norms in place). The association of Max-Neef's objective approach to wellbeing (1991) and the social practice theoretical reflections (Wilhite 2013) appears to be consistent. Indeed, it allows to discuss the social practices as a mean to reach the normative goal of human need satisfaction. As stressed in a recent study on green public places and wellbeing (Sahakian, Anantharaman, Di Giulio et al., 2020), the (sustainable) practices help to satisfy needs. In that direction, an interesting way to address the *double dividend* is through the understanding of such practices in relation to wellbeing. This is all the more relevant as the purpose of this work is to show how changes in practices advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s) have a positive impact on wellbeing and are not so difficult to achieve and extend.

METHODOLOGY

EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of studying consumption reduction and especially degrowth in relation to wellbeing, my empirical study focuses on the Degrowth movement in Geneva and related networks in the region.

The Geneva degrowth movement (Réseau d'objection de croissance - ROC)[2] is a "politically, economically and religiously independent" initiative. Its core objectives are "to free society from the dogma of unlimited growth, to challenge its doctrine, to promote respectful thinking about life on earth and future generations, and to develop a societal and economic alternative in harmony with the limits of the planet and the needs of humanity."[3] The movement holds on various engagements around natural resources management, equality and solidarity, a reappropriation as well as the relocation of the economy and the system, the conservation and sharing of knowledge, a de-commodification of social relations, the development of education, culture and arts, a more frugal and less resource-intensive lifestyle and a reappropriation of time, among other claims.

By including people both directly and indirectly affiliated with the Geneva degrowth network (ROC), my aim was to capture different life situations and implication levels in the degrowth paradigm. While a study only focused on the degrowth movement itself would have allowed a deep understanding of a community of

[2] Platform of ROC-Genève: http://decroissance.ch/plateforme-roc-ge/

[3] Platform of ROC-Genève: http://decroissance.ch/plateforme-roc-ge/

practices, opening up the field work to a broader network allows for an understanding of the implication of other forms of communities in the degrowth practices and in the path toward wellbeing. Therefore, through the contact and recruitment processes, the goal was to engage with people with diversified profiles, to make sure the research would cover several types of lifestyles, habits and situations. The concern was to "not only consider radical individuals (…) but also individuals caught up in contemporary social logic" (Mège, 2017: 67).

As shown in the conceptual framework section, this research is based to a large extent on Max-Neef's theoretical work but also methodology. In that respect, a major part of the field work interviews and discussions were based on the matrix of fundamental human needs, which was made available to participants before the meetings. Given the time constraints around this Master thesis, only one-to-one interviews were conducted, which represented the most relevant way to gather relevant information while organizing a decent number of interviews in a short time, in contrast to the initial methodology of Max-Neef that recommends participatory workshops lasting for three or four full days. These participatory workshops could be organized in the context of a following research, allowing more time to organize several few-days meetings with a large proportion of people willing to attend and participate.

Sampling Strategy and Contact

The goal was to gather people from the Degrowth movement of Geneva (ROC: Réseau d'objection de Croisssance) and its surrounding network. More specifically, the emphasis was made on people that 1) were living in Geneva at the time of the interview 2) and were the individual in charge in their household. The purpose was to gather a sample that stands for diversity, though not representative. In fact, the study is exploratory and only seeks to unveil some valuable insights about following a degrowth path, and has no claim for comprehensive representativeness. The

sample is composed of very different people in term of age, education, occupation, income, family situation, housing situation, residential location (city center, suburb), different variables to be taken into account that are likely to influence practices

I contacted a few people that had been recommended to me by the academic community through email. Some of them answered and it allowed me to create a snowball effect as the individuals contacted introduced "other people to take part in the research" (Naderifar et al., 2017). Usually used when "the population of interest is a hard-to-reach group" (Elliot et al., 2016), this method allowed access to people involved in the ROC or in a degrowth way of living that may have been difficult to get access to otherwise. When this snowball effect sampling reached saturation (with a total of seven initial contacts), I directly contacted the ROC, and a contact person there accepted to post a presentation of my research as well as my contact details in their monthly newsletter. I thus received a few messages from people who were interested in being part of the research. It turned out to be very difficult to find people in the close or surrounding network of the ROC that lived in Geneva and were willing to participate in the study. Therefore, I decided to extend the research to the Vaud area and for one participant around the boarder with France.

PARTICIPANTS

At the end of the recruitment, 11 people were willing to participate in an oral interview via digital platform due to the sanitary situation. The participants were part of the degrowth movement in Geneva or its surrounding network. They themselves claimed to be in a degrowth path and were not labelled as such by the researcher (Mège, 2017: 67).

The participants were all French speaking people and really diverse in term of age, education, occupation, rate of occupation, family situation or housing situation. An effort was made to recruit people with rather distinctive profiles regarding several important

dimensions. Regarding the household income levels, they were distinct, ranging from rather low income (relatively to the number of people in the household) to rather substantial levels. However, the majority of the participants can be situated in the higher level of household income.

Even if it could represent a bias, this is also an interesting bias as the literature on consumption underlines the fact that higher incomes often lead to higher consumption. In addition, the literature also stresses that the people with the higher incomes are not always the more willing to change, and don't always feel good about changing, as Guillen-Royo stressed by Guillen-Royo (2010: 390). Conversely, a bias about inequalities in term of economic possibilities or time availability for example is often pointed out when discussing degrowth. In fact, it is argued to be easier for the richer to stand for "living degrowth" (Brossmann and Islar, 2020) as their basic needs are largely satisfied so they have the time and the energy to think about shifting practices and having less. It then seems interesting to unveil how people that have comfortable income reflect about their consumption practices. In addition, Switzerland is considered as being a rich country, and this sample simply allows to reflect that situation.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews were semi-structured, in-depth and one-to-one, via Zoom or Skype depending on the interviewees' preference, as in-person meetings were not recommended during the Covid-19 semi-confinement measures in Switzerland. The methodology, inspired by Max-Neef (1991), was used slightly differently than what was originally intended. But nonetheless, as Max-Neef puts it, the "measure of need satisfaction can be aggregated to assess the well-being of populations, but their fundamental unit is the individual or individuals in household" (Gough, 2017: 56). To save time and make the interviews easier for both parties, an email was sent one week before each interview to allow the participants to familiarize with the research and prepare for the interview. This message

included a precise document that presented the research with more details so they could get familiar with the topic and the different concepts that were going to be brought up during the interview. In addition, beyond the consent form that was attached to make sure everyone was willing to be part of the research and to be registered for later transcription and analysis, a French version of Max-Neef's matrix (translated by myself—Appendix 2) was sent to every participant that accepted to be interviewed. This allowed to save some time as the participants were able to read through the document in advance and understand it prior to the interview, thus making sure everything was clear for the meeting day. This was also meant to build trust with the interviewee, as it represented a second contact (after the recruitment) before the day of the interview.

Every interview started with a small discussion about the research and its purpose, within which was brought up the fact that during the whole interview, that lasted between 1h20 and 2h40, no judgment or moralistic stance were going to take place. This small discussion also allowed the interviewees to ask questions, to comment on the subject and to share whatever thought they had in mind concerning the research and the upcoming interview. The interviews were conducted in French and started with a question that allowed the participant to explain openly why she or he came to adhere to degrowth, to follow information or even to participate in actions related to degrowth. As the interviewees were not equally active in the degrowth movement in Geneva, and for some of them not even part of it at all, it was a way to understand their degree of participation in degrowth action and their relative involvement and acknowledgement of the ideas of the broader degrowth theory. It allowed every participant to describe how they came to degrowth, through which step, and to highlight what was difficult in the process.

This constituted a good introduction to continue with the first actual section of the interview that was about consumption reduction and social practices. In this section, the interviewees were asked about their practices about food, housing and mobility. The

interest was to unveil what practices were important for them in their (more or less ambitious) degrowth lifestyle, and what was helping or hindering those specific practices. The discussion was then open to other potential consumption domains that seemed important for the participants. A last question concluded this section by querying about the elements that motivate their practices, be they environmental, social, economic, about a wellbeing utopia (Wilhite, 2016: 312), or anything else.

The second section was the main component of the interview as it was the one linking the degrowth practices and the idea of wellbeing. After a few general questions that allowed the participants to discuss about their consumption reduction and wellbeing, this part relied almost entirely on Max-Neef's matrix of fundamental human needs. The interviewees were asked in what ways their lifestyle allowed them to satisfy the nine needs brought up by Max-Neef: Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity, Freedom. Restating the practices that were mentioned in the first part, or bringing up new ones, the participants were able to fill out the matrix of needs with their own satisfiers, corresponding to their practices and living situation. The interview guide supported them in doing so as it gave some examples of satisfiers, inspired by Max-Neef's work (1991: 32-33) but also others' (Pelenc, 2014: 12; Guillen-Royo, 2010: 392). The last question composing this section was meant to make the participants reflect on limits (Kallis, 2019) and what they represent for them in their everyday life.

Finally, the last section of the interview was a concluding one that allowed a discussion about degrowth, the future and the unprecedented sanitary situation happening at the time. Each interview was concluded by a short socio-demographic survey to understand the participants' profile, if it had not been discussed yet during the interview. At the end of the interview, each participant was acquainted that she or he could get in contact for any further reflection or discussion.

Regarding the interview guide, it was initially written in French as all of the participants were French speaking people, and was later on translated so it could match the language of the present report. The interview guide can be found translated in English as Appendix 3. The participants' quotes were translated from French to English when used for the purpose of the paper.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

Each question of the interview was designed to answer the set of subquestions highlighted on page 21, together answering the broader research question: In what ways can consumption reduction practices impact sustainable wellbeing?

The first section of the interview, namely the one about degrowth practices, allows to answer the first two sub questions: What practices of consumption reduction are significant for Degrowth? and What are the elements that support or hinder those specific practices? This will then result in a specific section of the analysis about degrowth and degrowth practices. The second section of the interview, namely the one about wellbeing and Max-Neef's matrix allows to answer the two other sub questions: What is the impact of those practices on sustainable wellbeing? and What insights can be unveiled to promote consumption reduction while supporting the goal of sustainable wellbeing? This will then be translated into a second analysis section that will unveil the ways through which degrowth practices impact wellbeing. The introduction question and the last section of the interview about the future and the pandemic were going to be useful to reflect on the different visions of degrowth brought up by the several participants and for the discussion section.

ANALYSIS

The interviews described above were analyzed through basic qualitative content analysis. A codebook was created in order to make

the analysis of the 11 interviews easier and consistent. This codebook was designed first from the general understanding of the field work and the substantial insights that came out of it. Then, the interview guide, as it had been specifically produced in order to answer each one of the research questions, was considered to add to the codebook. Finally, a more precise look at the interviews allowed to complete the codebook as well as building a first draft of the analysis plot. Exactly as Guillen-Royo noted for her own work, "groups of satisfiers or themes emerged and were used as guidance for the analysis of the (…) transcript(s)" (Guillen-Royo, 2010: 387). The interviews were analyzed according to this codebook. Throughout the coding, new insights emerged and a few more codes were added. The final codebook is composed of 6 categories, 25 codes and 18 sub codes that are meant to address the various issues relevant to this work and allow to answer precisely the research questions.

Beyond the classical content analysis of the interviews, the interview guide had the specific goal of helping to create a wellbeing matrix of degrowth, based on Max Neef's matrix and specific to this research, as it has been proposed in diverse works (Pelenc, 2014: 12 for example). Based on the data gathered through interviews, this matrix would present the degrowth practices highlighted according to the needs they satisfy for the individuals. Aggregation of all the practices would allow the creation of a matrix that could serve different goals: communication, practical explanation, discourse writing, etc. to promote degrowth. This matrix will serve as an introduction to the analysis, as it's a way to consider both the theoretical and conceptual framework, as well as the methodology and the empirical work to answer the research question.

This methodology section was designed in order to help with the understanding of the empirical framework preferred for this research. It emphasizes the recruitment and field work processes as well as the challenges faced due to the unique sanitary situation. Then, it presents the procedure of contact with people involved in the ROC and the final participants' characteristics that are

critical for the purpose of the research. Finally, it helps with a preliminary apprehension of the potential outcomes that could be drawn from the field work and the way they will be analyzed and discussed.

RESULTS

To contextualize, the first section of the analysis will briefly present the complexity of the degrowth paradigm through the principles and the practices highlighted in the interviews. Then, it will expose the considerations about the elements that compose practices and either hinder or support their development. The second section will concentrate on wellbeing, which is the focus of this study, to present how "living degrowth" helps the satisfaction of human needs.

To better understand the group of people interviewed who will be discussed below, it is worth mentioning some of their characteristics that could serve the apprehension of the analysis. Out of eleven participants, two live in a cooperative, two in small apartments, and the seven remaining are tenant of detached houses. Nine of the people interviewed have access to an outdoor space. Regarding mobility, seven out of eleven people interviewed don't have a car, and the others use it really rarely if necessary. Four out of eleven people have between two and three children that range from one to twenty years old. Only one of the interviewees works at a rate that nears 100%, but not all year long. The others are either part time or work on punctual assignments.

MULTIPLE DEGROWTH

People follow a degrowth path for various reasons and in different ways, and this diversity in degrowth practices will be the focus of this first section, presenting the various ideas and interpretations of degrowth brought up by the participants. This will be followed by a consideration of the different practices that are adopted by those participants and how they relate to the different elements that compose practices.

As Latouche puts it, "it is necessary to take note of the now planetary extension of the degrowth project" (2019: 20) and of the fact that it is not an alternative but a matrix of alternatives to globalized capitalism. This idea was broadly supported by the various participants who underlined the fact that even if there is a common grounded paradigm around degrowth more or less shared by its supporters, it is not always as simple as it looks. One of them expressed it that way:

> There are people who think a bit like us in the sense that we question the system in which we live, in that sense it is people who think like us, but on the other hand from the moment we question this system, it is a lot more complex (…). There are not two possibilities, there are an infinite number of possibilities, and as we start questioning capitalism, there are multitudes of ways of seeing and thinking that are different and specific to each (...) *(Valentin, involved in the ROC, interviewed on the 28.04.2020).*

"*There's no degrowth with a big D, there's no lifestyle, really each person is respected in their way of seeing things*", *(Lynn, involved in the ROC, interviewed on the 22.04.2020),* and that is what makes degrowth so complex and interesting. Offering several alternatives to the present capitalist system, the degrowth paradigm(s) and principles can allow very interesting discussion and debates around various subjects, fed by divergent understandings of degrowth and the social norms it contests. On one hand, this variety of alternatives can be considered as a positive situation as it is "really enriching" as expressed by an interviewee that is very active in the ROC and who states:

> We discuss among ourselves because we agree (…) to question the current system, that's the common point, but on the other hand there can be other points on which we are more or less in disagreement but nonetheless a rich terrain for discussion (*Valentin*).

On the other hand, so many understandings and interpretations of degrowth can be confusing and make it difficult to feel involved. One of the interviewee who is not active in the ROC but would like to find a way to get collectively involved in degrowth affirms that "*there's a lot of life around these issues of degrowth, environment etc. but it's extremely dispersed and extremely diffuse (...) even when we agree more or less on our values, our principles, people will try to stand out or to be different and so sometimes we don't have the impression of being together*" *(Ethan, not directly involved in the ROC, interviewed on the 23.04.2020).*

The participants are themselves very divergent about their perception of degrowth and their level of implication regarding this paradigm or in adhering to its principles. One of the participants, who is a father of three, claimed:

> Let's say that I'm not exactly an extremist, first of all I have a family with three children, so it's true that children are also a big problem (…), that children encourage consumption *(Ethan).*

Some of the interviewees don't even feel completely embedded into such a process and legitimate to claim so when others, on the contrary, have been collectively involved in degrowth for many years. Some of the participants see degrowth as the process of working less, earning less and consuming less, when others see it as only consuming less and better, as one of the interviewees puts it: *"I don't know if it's related to degrowth, it's more about animal suffering that made me think about it, but it's related to degrowth" (Sam, interviewed on the 28.04.2020).* Some of them consider degrowth as an alternative form of development: *"Degrowth means slowing down but it is not the opposite of growth. Degrowth is another way of doing development, based on specific principles, by reducing speed" (Sam)*, when others are completely against any form of development at all.

Also, there are divergences in how people came to adhere to the degrowth principles, becoming familiar with these ideas and practices through different processes: through family, education, work, ecological concerns, etc. They entered a degrowth process

when they were either really young, young adults or when they first had children. Some are more concerned about the environment as their choices are *"above all for ecology" (Lynn)*. Others clearly declare that their choices have little to do with the protection of the planet and that their understanding of degrowth is much broader than that:

> So it's not for the planet, for me it's a way of looking at things that's completely out of place, it's the whole, there's not one area that's more important than the other, the total of it in the end, it's an overall coherence (*Charles, active member of the ROC, interviewed on the 23.04.2020*).

Others bring up some more disembodied reflection around it: *"in the beginning there was a spiritual aspect to it, trying to stay focused on what's essential, what really brings me fulfillment, avoiding all the superfluous, the distractions (…)" (Michelle, interviewed on the 07.05.2020).* In the end, the common point shared by almost all the participants is that they pursue degrowth for *"[various] reasons, whether they're energy-related, social, ecological, ethical, it's all of it. (...)" there is not "one area [that] takes precedence over the others" (Gaspard, interviewed on the 04.05.2020).*

Finally, we can say that the participants also differ regarding their relationship to limits, which is an important concept when considering degrowth (Kallis, 2019). Some of them see limits as external, in term of resources: *"I am conscious of the limits and that consciousness make me cut down on my consumption" (Ethan)*. Others follow Kallis' point of view that we shouldn't consider the limits as external, but instead take responsibility for them (2019) and see them as internal and personal: *"Limits are conquests and I don't consider them as limits because I impose them to myself" (Mark, active member of the ROC, interviewed on the 21.04.2020).*

Following the discussion about the different considerations around degrowth brought up by the interviewees, an analysis of their daily practices will allow a deeper understanding of what degrowth means for them and nurture the next section about well-being in everyday life. As one of the interviewees put it, *"everyone has (her or his) own way of living [degrowth] also because it is very difficult*

today to live 100% in degrowth, so everyone takes care of a certain percent of the thing" (Lynn). That mirrors the fact that there are many practices that can be ascribed to degrowth, even if people don't necessarily see them as such. As Gough puts it about a *salutaire* (salutogenic) degrowth process, "this will entail radical shifts in the basic institutions of society: not only less, but different" (Gough, 2017: 171). This highlights the fact that degrowth can mean less- or non-practices (i.e, reducing meat or not consuming meat), but also different and changing practices (i.e., switching from car to bike). The interviews allowed to unveil the individual as well as the collective dimensions of practices, capturing the diversified people's ways of "living degrowth" in relation to specific consumption areas. This concept of "living degrowth", that was studied by Brossmann and Islar in their investigation on degrowth practices drawing on practice theory (2020), was mentioned by a participant in this study and will be used in this analysis to describe the "forms of living" (Brossmann and Islar, 2020) brought up by the various interviewees.

This work will focus on three high impact categories of consumption: food, transport (also related to as mobility), and heating homes (considering heating homes within the broader area of housing). However, it also allows some space for the consideration of other domains of consumption that were brought up by the participants so to apprehend every practice that is meaningful to them.

Food

When talking about food (related to provisioning, preparing and eating), the practices of consuming less and better were very similar between the interviewees. The growth of fruits and vegetables at home to avoid as much consumption and spending as possible was the most common practice. This was accompanied by the consumption of very basic foods that require little spending and more home-made cooking. When buying food, the interviewees turned to cooperative grocery shops, of which they are members

most of the time, and local and organic food options. They try to avoid supermarkets and favor short food-supply chains (vegetables gardeners for example). The boycott of specific brands came up as an important practice, as well as trying to reduce packaging by shopping in bulk stores for example. The practice of reducing meat consumption was a common ground between the participants. Some of them follow specific diets, vegetarian and vegan most of the time. Finally, and maybe most importantly, the process of avoiding overconsumption and waste was essential, as expressed by an interviewee who lives with his wife and their three daughters: *"We never have a full fridge, it's almost empty, and the idea is to always make [food] with what's available" (Ethan).*

HOUSING

Regarding housing (related to the practices of heating the home, doing laundry, etc.), there are two categories of practices that can be unveiled from the interviews: the way people choose their home and where they want to live, and how they manage their home and housing arrangements.

Regarding accommodation and location, some of the participants make really crucial choices when moving to a place which resonates with Mège's statement about "the importance given to the place of life (...) for its capacity to become a place conducive to the realization of the practices (...)" (2017: 76). First, they may try to go for smaller dwelling as an interviewee living in a small apartment by himself expressed it:

> I try to keep (my dwelling) as small as possible, to have a living area where I don't have to heat it up too much so that I have a footprint that's as small as possible *(Gaspard).*

Another practice that is prevalent among the participants, and more broadly supported by the degrowth paradigm(s), is living in a cooperative, which represents many advantages in term of consumption reduction. Indeed, as stressed by Kadriu and Wendorf

(2011), it provides "good housing at affordable rates regarding the loan maintenance and repairing costs" (p.6), it supposes technological changes and better management in terms of energy consumption (p.7) and overall energy savings as they promote long-term and non-profit calculation of investments (p.17). Finally, more broadly, cooperative housing spaces are argued to motivate the members and stimulating and organizing sustainable consumption (common use of facilities, car sharing, gardening…) (p.17). Also, choosing a place that offers an outdoor space is important, particularly when we think of housing practices as related to food and the opportunities that an outdoor space offers (a garden to grow vegetables, to raise chickens for eggs…). Finally, living next to the workplace is a choice that seemed crucial for most of the interviewees, as stated by a participant who said to be ready to move anywhere for work: *"it wouldn't occur to me to live away from my work" (Charles, living in a cooperative in Geneva city center).* Here, it is interesting to note how this location choice can be related to other practices. Indeed, people who chose to live in the city will be able to go food shopping by walking or biking, when people living in the countryside may find it a bit more difficult to reach supermarkets or stores. They will have to use a car, but in turn this may allow them to shop more and less often, and maybe also to have a facilitated access to direct selling of fruits and vegetables for example. This is crucial as it shows how practices are inter-locked, especially housing, food and mobility, and how each of them can impact others.

Concerning how people manage their home and related appliances—as part of the material arrangements that make up practices—one main environmental concern when discussing housing that was largely acknowledged by the interviewees is around heating the space. The first practice that can be unveiled from the interviews in the process of consuming as little energy as possible is related to buying more efficient appliances that consume less, as expressed by a participant who lives with his wife and their three teenage children: *"when we bought a fridge, we bought one that doesn't have a freezer and it consumes very little" (Mark, living in a cooperative with his wife and their three teenage children).* Relating to material arrangements,

interviewees also described their inventive cooking techniques to consume less:

> I have a technique to keep the heat when I cook, I boil and then I put a kind of blanket I made with wool and cotton to insulate (…) I love it because then I don't have to watch it and it's economical *(Lynn, launching her own project to sell homemade dishes).*

Another technique to avoid overconsumption in the home brought up during the interviews relies in the use of strategies to feel warm at home. This practice of 'keeping warm' was studied in the ENERGISE project in 2019 that investigated the different strategies people put in place to feel warm and comfortable at home at rather low temperatures (Sahakian et al., 2019). In that direction, one of the participants expressed her way of doing so: *"I am not particularly looking for warmth, but this winter I thought it was a bit cold, so I added an extra jumper" (Roxane, interviewed via Zoom the 27.04.2020, living in a detached house in the Geneva countryside)*. Here, it is interesting to note that the material arrangement represented by the sweater interacts with the skill of dressing up developed to feel warm and reach the norm of comfort.

MOBILITY

Regarding mobility (related to the practice of getting around), the interviews highlighted two categories as distinct: everyday mobility practices and occasional mobility practices.

About everyday mobility practices, they mostly relate to work and social life. The interviews unveiled that very few of the participants use a car and that most of them use public transport or soft mobility, such as bike or walking, to move around. Here, a relation can be found between the practice of choosing a living space and the practice of mobility, as a participant puts it:

> If you tell yourself in advance that a car is a proof of failure, then you're not going to buy that house in the countryside where there's no train and no bus (…) *(Mark, who has no car)*.

Then, regarding getting about through soft mobility, a participant emphasized that *"it's [about] the comfort"*, he *"find[s] that the first reward when we move on foot or by bicycle is that we have our head for ourselves" (Mark)*, in that it allows time for mental reflection and relaxation. These mobility practices can also, as stated earlier, be interrelated with food practices such as provisioning for example, as one will not shop the same if moving around by bike or by car. Another practice related to everyday mobility that was exposed during the interviews is the fact of working from home, thus avoiding everyday mobility while increasing wellbeing. Two of the interviewees (*Lynn and Michelle*) who are entrepreneurs work full time from home. Three of the interviewees for whom assignments represent part or all of their activity work part time or full time from home (*Mark, Sam and Gaspard*). Another interviewee (*Thomas*) is a student and work mostly from home. All other participants, except from the ones who have a job that don't allow them to stay home (*Charles and Valentin*), work from home at least occasionally (this represents their work situation outside of the Covid and semi-lock down circumstances).

The second category that can be considered when talking about mobility is the occasional transit to go on business or leisure trips. Participants made it clear that the most essential matter for them was to go on a plane as little as possible, and never for small trips. Also, if they were to take a plane for work for example, they would try to make the most of the work trip by organizing holidays right after. The discussions around sporadic mobility practices during the interviews also led to discourses about train travel, which was considered as a positive alternative and expressed as such by most of the participants. One woman affirmed that when traveling by train, *"the trip is part of the vacation, whereas [by plane] the trip was the hassle of finally arriving on vacation" (Barbara, interviewed on the 08.05.2020, living with her husband and their two young children).* With

the train, *"the adventure begins, when you put the key in to lock the door" (Barbara)*. Another means of moving around for business or leisure trips brought up by three of the participants is the practice of car sharing, which was mostly expressed by those who don't own a car and don't have children.

Other practices have been brought up as essential during the interviews, related to other consumption domains, mostly leisure, clothing and internet. A participant talked about the consumption of leisure time that he and his partner try to escape from: *"people tend to always run after it, but we don't" (Valentin, living in the Geneva countryside with his partner)*. About the clothing area, the *"social and environmental costs" (Barbara, who used to love shopping but not anymore)* seemed important for most of the interviewees, who then mostly try to buy second hand and to take good care of their clothes. Finally, the internet seemed to be an important area of consumption which the participants try to be aware of, mostly in terms of indirect costs of energy usage.

A participant reflected more broadly that *"it is not [only] about buying or not buying something, it's about how you use it (…) so it lasts longer" (Thomas, student interviewed on the 27.04.2020),* which represents an important dimension of consumption practices with regard to every consumption area.

Those practices, regardless of the consumption domain they correspond to, are composed of various elements that range from competencies and material arrangements to social norms, as highlighted in the conceptual framework. This last section of the analysis on the various forms of degrowth aims at understanding the elements that compose practices that were highlighted the most in the interviews. The concern is to expose the elements that seem to support the degrowth practices mentioned during the interviews and to unveil what elements may hinder their development.

> I don't feel like there's that many things that help me, because it's kind of my lifestyle (*Gaspard*).

Even if this is what was brought up most of the time by the participants, some elements came up that seem to support sustainable and especially degrowth practices.

The teleoaffective dimensions of practices are of substantial help. Here, we think of the "cognitive processes and physical dispositions, acquired by the body through social experiences" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28). The development of strong competencies through various means seems to be the key to support the practices lived by the interviewees and more broadly those promoted by the degrowth paradigm(s). The competencies may have been uncovered alone or within the household through the process toward better consumption*: "it's clear that we're in an experimental logic, all the time" (Ethan)*. They may have been learnt through the internet and various exchange platform: *"On the internet I find a lot of recipes or tips, techniques and ideas in general. For example, I'd like to make dried meat, so I'm going to look at some layout to make a dryer" (Lynn, lives in the countryside near Lausanne)*, or during formal courses or workshops: *"what helped me is that I took a course in organic vegetarian cooking, it helped me a lot with the new products I didn't knew about" (Roxane, interviewed on the 27.04.2020, who has lived for a few months in a transition village where she learnt a lot about alternative living)*. Finally, those teleoaffective elements brought up during the interviews can be delivered by people, especially neighbors and acquaintances and friends that bring a knowledge that is different and has even more meaning: "*my 19-year-old son, he is very convinced, convincing, committed, and has integrity, so he is our guide" (Mark)*. The same participant who has been living with his family in a cooperative for years also stated: "*what helps us is to be in a building with people who think pretty much like that (degrowth)".*

It is worth mentioning that there is a normative dimension to degrowth. As stated earlier, degrowth has multiple meanings and when it comes to adhering to social norms around it, people are either for something (less consumption) or against something (capitalism). Then, when it comes to the meanings tied up with many of the practices that make up everyday life—cooking, getting around, heating, entertaining, taking holidays—social norms

are opposed to degrowth principles, and it is difficult for people who want to "live degrowth" to contest them. This can have some negative consequences, as stated by one of the participants when asked about the obstacles he encounters regarding his practices: *"Difficulties? mainly social! We are very quickly considered as marginal"* (*Valentin*). In sum, the social norms dimension of practices doesn't seem to be of great help for the purpose of supporting degrowth as most of the degrowth claims, by definition, go against the mainstream existing norms.

The material arrangements, namely the "the objects and technologies involved in consumption practices" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 29), in their current configuration, seem to hinder the reduction of consumption practices. Indeed, the lack of supply and the composition of the offer for food for example doesn't seem to lead towards degrowth practices, as one of the participants put it when talking about the few bulk store available in town: *"if I have to go across town with my jars to the bulk store and back across town to my house, my waste of time isn't worth the bulk" (Michelle).* Another participant talks about the composition of the offer stressing that *"it's pretty poor what's in the shops, it's carrots and fennels, it's leeks, and necessarily when I eat wild plants, I have a greater diversity in my diet" (Lynn, who learnt to recognize wild plant to collect and consume)*. Regarding mobility, we can come to the same conclusion about the material arrangements in place, as the train is relatively costly, "more expensive than flying and harder", and the offer is such that *"we're being pushed to fly, we're getting lower and lower costs and the alternatives are getting harder and harder" (Barbara)*. The same observation can be made about soft mobility, as one of the participants put it about riding a bicycle in Geneva: *"If you're a cyclist in Geneva you have to be brave, you don't have to be afraid of risk" (Thomas, who used to go to the university with an electric scooter)*. Finally, the same can be considered for housing practices, as for example *"the houses we have are not insulated" (Lynn, who lives in a rather old house)*, which represents another evidence that material arrangements in place are elements of practices that need to be shifted on some dimensions to be able to help the formation and perpetuation of consumption reduction practices. However, the material dimensions of practices seem to

represent a substantial help in some cases and for some people, as a few participants mentioned it as supporting their practices. The existence of cooperative housing options is a good example that shows how material arrangements in place support degrowth practices. Also, as stated by an interviewee, the "existence, the mere presence of shops like Nature en Vrac and the farm of Budé is a filtering that's already done" (Mark) and that helps towards more responsible food practices.

Those are some examples of elements that can have a positive or a negative impact regarding the development of responsible and even degrowth practices. It gives an idea of ways in which a shift could occur in relation to teleoaffective structure, social norms, and material arrangements to broadly develop the practices mentioned earlier. The development of such practices could enable the satisfaction of specific needs towards the normative aim of wellbeing. Indeed, as it will be discussed in the next part of the analysis, "living degrowth" tends to satisfy a number of essential needs, and the expansion of such practices seems to be a potential direction towards the effort of (sustainable) wellbeing.

DEGROWTH AND NEEDS SATISFACTION

The purpose of this new section will be to unveil what was highlighted in the interviews regarding practices in relation to the concepts of wellbeing and needs satisfaction.

A MATRIX OF WELLBEING AND DEGROWTH

What would degrowth practice towards need satisfaction look like? This following matrix is an attempt to fill out Max-Neef's 'boxes' (1991) in his needs-meets-satisfier matrix with all forms of being, having, doing and interacting that emerged from my interviews with people that claim to "live degrowth". These "forms of living" can be considered as satisfiers, including for Max-Neef "among other things, forms of organization, political structures,

social practices, subjective conditions, values and norms, spaces, contexts, modes, types of behavior and attitudes (…)" (Max-Neef, 1991: 24). Following Max-Neef's theory of human scale development, we can say that those satisfiers are considered to have an impact on need satisfaction and therefore on wellbeing. The ones in black are the ones that impact positively the satisfaction of needs, and the ones in red are those that impact it negatively. Some satisfiers originally associated with degrowth (after studying the literature on degrowth) were first thought to impact negatively the satisfaction of certain needs (living environment, social settings, dwelling, work, values…), other to impact it positively (sense of belonging, spaces for expression…), and other to either impact positively or negatively depending on the situation (friendships, family…). It turned out that most of the satisfiers originally hypothesized as 'negative' regarding wellbeing actually impact positively the satisfaction of needs, which represents an interesting observation that shows the interest of challenging prejudices and examining degrowth in relation to wellbeing.

This matrix of wellbeing and degrowth highlights the role in satisfying wellbeing of the practices around food, housing and mobility discussed earlier but also broader habits and routines. The whole will be discussed below in more detail, focusing on each need separately. Even if we could think that everyday practices are only represented by the different forms of doing highlighted in the matrix, the other existential categories of needs namely being, having and interacting can be composed of satisfiers that can be considered as practices such as going on a vegetarian diet, using short food supply chains or living in a cooperative.

Table 1: A Matrix of Wellbeing and Degrowth

Needs according to axiological categories	**Needs according to existential categories**	**BEING (B) (personal or collective attributes)**	**HAVING (H) (institutions, norms, tools)**	**DOING (D) (personal or collective actions)**	**INTERACTING (I) (spaces or atmospheres)**
Subsistence		[1] priority in immaterial needs, country ensures minimum subsistence, vegetarian diet	[2] free time, organic and local market, farm/producer, compost, part-time work, cooking time, short food supply chains	[3] balance between work and rest time, cooking, baking bread, buying in bulk, wild harvesting, renovating housing, paying a fair price for products, self-production, joint production	[4] co-operative, flat sharing, garden, shared garden, balcony, vegetable garden with permaculture, campaign
Protection		[5] country ensures the subsistence minimum, know how to recognize plants (knowledge)	[6] alternative bank, don't have savings, own property	[7] feed oneself in nature, spend little, depend less on savings, free oneself from material attachment	[8] living in a village, interdependence with others

Affection	[9] solidarity, respect for the environment and people, being attentive to the well-being of others, loving oneself, benevolence, having radical ecological positions	[10] relations with family or close friends (negotiation, controversial discussions), relations with local merchants	[11] working in an association, exchanging skills (interdependence), debating, getting help/advice (specific skills), going to the library, experiences in nature, share/exchange	[12] benevolence with neighbors (cooperative), shared places in cooperative, conviviality, sharing an apartment, part of a community (ROC), having a house with an outdoor space (greet people), communities of shared values, community to share 'sacrifices'
Understanding	[13] to be critical in relation to one's critical outlook, be objective, experimental logic	[14] to have time	[15] questioning one's way of life, exchanging skills, learning to do it yourself, learning, (re)discovering, self-training, questioning oneself	[16] information from ROC, discussion with friends (skills), relationships in co-operative
Participation	[17] degrowth: horizontal	[18] work, volunteering	[19] creating alternatives, bringing	[20] use one's opinion and freedom of

	(feel listened to)		people together, debating, changing (oneself)	expression to do things (ROC), live in a co-operative, Green party
Leisure/Ildness	[21] getting back to basics	[22] associational work, activities, forest, unpaid leisure activities, part-time work,	[23] reducing work time, working on the house, gardening, biking, reading, bricolage, do-it-yourself	[24] cooperative housing, free time
Creation	[25] critical thinking, resourcefulness, ability to live with little	[26] develop intellectual abilities	[27] transmitting, making clothes, cooking, self-imposed constraints, self-production	[28]
Identity	[29] ethics, self-construction, self-respect	[30] have more time, have fewer distractions	[31] make something that looks like me	[32] ROC (shared values), marginalization (not finding one's place - neither among extremists nor among others), relationship to others
Freedom	[33] rebelliousness,	[34] have just a few things	[35] making choices, spending	[36] cooperative housing

	self-emancipation		less money, working less, creating alternatives, understanding, becoming emancipated	

Source : Max Neef, 1991 — Constructed by Orlane Moynat from the interviews

Before jumping into the analysis of needs satisfaction, it is essential to mention that the understanding of needs varied among the participants, and the same can be said for the understanding of satisfiers. The perception of needs was divergent for each interviewee. For example, the need for subsistence, that will be discussed in more details below, may be strongly connected to food and satisfiers regarding physical health for some people while others would link it to relationships with people and concentrate more on satisfiers regarding mental health. Regarding the satisfiers, people sometimes thought they were 'needs' gathered in categories and had some difficulties to understand the difference between the two concepts. The interviews and examples of satisfiers provided in the interview guide helped to lead their reflection towards the unveiling of their own satisfiers. It is also important to note that the following analysis about the satisfiers is based on the interviewees' interpretation of each need. If someone talked about a specific satisfier for the need for affection, this will be analyzed as a satisfier of the need for affection, and won't be displaced and bonded to any other need, and so on.

NEEDS SATISFACTION

Jackson and Marks stress that "the material needs are essentially the subsistence and protection needs (…)" (1999: 436) and refer to the remaining needs introduced by Max-Neef (1991) as non-material needs. This distinction, that was not raised by Max-Neef himself, could help classify the needs that are discussed below.

However, it shouldn't be what strictly distinguishes them as some needs considered as material can include non-material characteristics, just as needs considered as non-material can to a certain extent relate on material dimensions. Nonetheless, it seems relevant to keep this distinction in mind when discussing the satisfaction of needs in relation to consumption reduction.

It is also noteworthy to underline here that most patterns of consumption in Western countries appear "increasingly to implicate material artefacts in the attempted satisfaction of non-material needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 437). As Jackson and Marks (1999) put it, "revisioning the way we satisfy our nonmaterial needs is (…) the most obvious avenue for renewing human development" (p.439). As a matter of fact, this shows why a study apprehending degrowth practices in relation to wellbeing is interesting, unveiling practices that allow to satisfy needs with alternatives to material goods.

Subsistence and Protection

The first two needs discussed during the interviews were the needs for subsistence and protection. They will be considered here together as they were related in the interviewees' responses, who often exposed the same ideas for both of the needs or even discussed them together. Here are a few insights raised by the interviewees about what help them to satisfy the needs for subsistence and protection in their everyday life.

For most of the interviewees, it seemed that whatever were their practices, income or living situation, the Swiss context helped them to feel protected and safe no matter what. This relates to the need for subsistence, as a participant puts it: *"I feel I'm in a country that provides the basic necessities of life (...)" (Mark)* as well as the need for protection: *"I also feel completely safe because I'm in Geneva" (Mark)*. We can here stress the fact that the institutions, infrastructures and more broadly the context proposed in Switzerland help people to feel safe, regarding basic needs but also actual safety.

A second point regards the very basis of the degrowth paradigm: needs are simple, so easily fulfilled. Indeed, the need for subsistence requires a few spending to be fulfilled, as one participant puts it: *"We don't need a lot of resources to meet that need (…)" (Ethan)*. As this first essential need appears to require less spending to be fulfilled, people need less money and savings, and feel protected with less, thus satisfying the need for protection at the same time. The point here is the idea that those two basic needs can be met with fewer resources.

Even if throughputs are reduced in a degrowth way of life, "the satisfaction of these needs requires material throughput" such as "material food, clothing fabrics [or] building materials" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 436). A participant who was among the one promoting a simple lifestyle with little spending still expose this material dimension of need satisfaction:

> The fact that I have a simple lifestyle makes it easier for me to put money aside as soon as I have a little bit of money, and gradually build up savings that are enough to have a trouble-free retirement *(Michelle)*.

Here, the material dimension of practices is prevalent and useful to uncover where the satisfaction of material needs comes from. Indeed, as it was proved when describing the degrowth practices in the precedent section, "there may be more and less materially-intensive ways of providing foods, clothing and shelter" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 436). This is useful to note in order to demonstrate that the reduction of consumption advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s) can also be lived without violating the essential needs for subsistence and protection. This can be illustrated by the practices of going to local food markets or buying an apartment in a cooperative for example.

Away from the material satisfaction of material needs, the interviews showed that material needs can also be satisfied in some ways by non-material goods and services. The most striking example of that takes us back to the teleoaffective dimension of practices, as the competencies and knowledge seem to go along

with the satisfaction of the needs for subsistence and protection for most of the participants. One of the participants who learnt to recognize and collect wild plants remarked:

> I did an internship; I did five days of survival and I read books and after that (...) I really had a great feeling of security that arose because I knew how to feed myself in the wild *(Lynn)*.

Another interviewee, who is working a few days a week in exchange for a house feels very confident and safe with her skills:

> I feel like I've got a lot of skills, and as everything can be learnt, I'm like ok I've got no more money saved, but I know that the day I am broken, and I have to go to work I can go to work anywhere *(Roxane)*.

Another participant summarized this idea more broadly by stressing that money *"becomes something less necessary [when] you're less dependent on saving as you're building alternative means to do without savings, to do otherwise" (Valentin)*.

Those quotes emphasize Jackson and Marks' belief (1999) that material needs are not necessarily only satisfied by material goods but can also be met through non-material practices (that in turn, however, sometimes rely on materials—internet connection and computer to work from home, bike or car that takes you to the countryside to pick wild plants, etc.). In addition to that, the research helped to stress the fact that freeing oneself from the material dependency can even have a positive impact and may represent a path towards wellbeing by satisfying other needs. In that direction, one of the participants stated the following:

> I know from experience that the more objects we have (a house, a cottage and therefore a car), the more stressed we are, the more taxes we pay, the more things we have to repair or restore, the more we are dependent. I need freedom more than anything else in my life, and material attachment sometimes is a toxic attachment *(Sam, interviewed on the 28.04.2020)*.

Affection

The first non-material need to be analyzed in relation to degrowth is the need for affection. The practice of being part of a community seems to be the most striking one when discussing the satisfaction of this need. As brought up by most of the participants, the ROC helps to find people who also question the system and who live and think in similar ways, thus allowing to develop strong relationships. A participant who has been involved in the ROC for several years emphasized the opportunity this community offers to fulfill the need for affection:

> What I really like about the ROC in general is that (…) I find that there's a lot of love between people, a lot of kindness, they're very nice people and I really like the social aspect of the ROC *(Lynn)*.

As some of the participants live in a cooperative, the interviews also helped to show how this form of community can support the need for affection. Following the pattern of the ROC or any community that gather people around common ideas and principles, the cooperative housing seems to offer the possibility to live in an environment of shared beliefs and values that bring people together. An interviewee living with his wife and their three children in a cooperative apartment declared:

> We are among those who almost never lock the door, except at night (...) I think we benefit from an exceptional personal situation of benevolence with the neighbors *(Mark)*.

This shows how the practice of living in a cooperative allows for meeting new people and creating relationships based on common convictions.

Even if it allows to create special bonds between people under specific circumstances, some practices and specific lifestyles advocated by the degrowth supporters can have an impact that is much less positive in terms of affection and relationships with others. Indeed, when talking about the need for affection, most of the

participants came to the same conclusion: "living degrowth" helps to create bond with people within specific communities that promote shared values questioning the system. However, it can become a difficulty and a source of marginality when it comes to relationships with family and friends who don't particularly understand the promotion of *"ideas that speak to the marginalized and not necessarily to the mainstream yet" (Roxane)*. One of the participants that stressed the advantages of following a degrowth process in his practices regarding the need for affection all the same acknowledged that it wasn't always easy:

> With a drawback: I have in my family people who are highly consumerists, and that's not easy to live with, i.e., in family reunions it's always a bit tense, so I mean we each make an effort *(Ethan)*.

Another participant even declared it created problem with a former partner:

> I was leaning towards a certain lifestyle, and giving up on that was a problem for me, and that lifestyle frightened my girlfriend even though I wasn't imposing anything on her *(Gaspard)*.

A participant summed it up pretty well:

> Everything that concerns social needs we'll say, it's harder... I think it's a lot easier for a person who has a busy consumer life to build himself socially. It doesn't mean we can't belong to collectives, but we belong to a kind of collective where we have a label and we're considered a little different... *(Lynn)*.

This resonate with Becker's study on deviance and the labelling theory raised in Outsiders (1963). He stresses that deviance is built in interaction, when one fails to obey the group's set of shared norms and values that constitute its homogenous culture. His theory exposes that the deviance appears when people violate those social norms (deviants) and are sanctioned by controlling authorities (others). This social control stigmatizes the individuals (or

group of individuals) who are considered as deviating from the mainstream norms and values and carry this social stigma. This creates stereotypes and stigmatization towards the group of deviants. This illustrates pretty well the situation raised by some participants who feel stigmatized and judged because "living degrowth" implies considering alternatives to mainstream lifestyles, norms and values.

Following the same idea, and as stressed before, "living degrowth" can create the feeling of not fitting anywhere because of the variation of opinions within the degrowth movement itself:

> So sometimes you feel like you are kind of on your own (...) when you go to a community that's close to you in terms of values (...) well, you're confronted with a lot of different points of view (...) *(Ethan).*

Also, the gap between the radical movements and the mainstream norms can make oneself feel alone, as brought up by a participant:

> I'm a little bit between two worlds: for radical ecologists I'm a 'bobo' because I live in a cooperative in the city center and for my neighbors I'm an extremist *(Charles).*

When asking about the opportunity of degrowth for satisfying the need for affection in everyday life, the same interviewee stated: *"I wouldn't say that degrowth brings that, on the contrary it's better to be quite moderate" (Charles).*

Yet, the practice of "living degrowth" seems to be an opportunity to (re)create a concrete relationship with nature that is favorable to satisfy the need for affection as it may compensate the possible negative impact on social relations. One of the participants remarked that *"today the man/nature distinction is obsolete, [and] it is this distinction that has created a lot of problems" (Thomas)*, which is close to Rosa's (2018) reflection on resonance and relationship to nature and things. The same interviewee stated: *"at least nature's here and it's going to stay for a while whereas the people in my life are coming and*

going away unfortunately" (Thomas), because of his non-mainstream lifestyle.

Understanding

The second non-material need to be analyzed in relation to degrowth is the need for understanding.

As stressed by an interviewee, this may be *"one of the most important points (…) from where the rest comes from" (Valentin)*. Practicing degrowth seems, for most of the participants, to help developing reflection and analytical mindset. One of them declared:

> We have a way of life that is so much against the mainstream, against what's going on in the mainstream, that I think from the very beginning we're in a critical mindset *(Gaspard)*.

It seems that reflecting around degrowth and questioning the system brings people to reflect on broader issues:

> If the entry door of the subject which is degrowth pushes to ask questions on our environment, sooner or later everything else comes as well *(Valentin)*.

Here, the interviewee argues that it allows to develop a critical reflection around the overall political and economic system, which is interesting in the context of the satisfaction of the need for understanding.

Also, being part of a community seems to be a good way to satisfy the need for understanding, as it offers the possibility for exchanging knowledge and learning as well as discovering new information. A participant discussing about the degrowth movement stressed that *"it gives [her] access to information that [she] didn't necessarily come across" (Lynn)*. It seems to develop curiosity and allows for new experimentations: *"understanding this kind of thing also sharpens the curiosity, it allows us afterwards to make tests, to experiment certain things" (Valentin)*. As underlined before, cooperative housing

is also a form of community which was pointed out by all the interviewees living in this type of accommodation as opening to discussions and offering a deeper understanding of situations and of oneself: *"Living in a cooperative increases the speed at which you learn about yourself, to live better, to be well" (Mark, who has lived in a squat for ten years and now lives in a cooperative).*

One last point that was outlined during the discussions about understanding is the opportunity that "living degrowth" offers to have free time, particularly because it promotes the reduction of working time and the development of spare time outside of the economic activity. This free time seems for all very important to think, discover, and understand:

> I think one of the first things that counts is to have time, to have some free time. I have some free time (…) but it must be something that slows people down a lot, to think for themselves, to be curious *(Mark).*

One of the participants noted that *"the understanding of all this (...) encourages to participate, to create something else, and to organize each other to be able to do just that" (Valentin)*, emphasizing the fact that needs are interlinked and connected to each other, and bringing us to the next section that analyzes the need for participation.

Participation

As described broadly by a participant, being involved in any way in degrowth *"gives the impression that you can participate at your level, at least not participate in the destruction and all that is going on that shouldn't" (Lynn*). Indeed, the interviews unveiled that "living degrowth" allowed in various way for the satisfaction of the need for participation. First, because as outlined before, it offers a space for questioning and debating: *"we can participate in thinking because degrowth is a space for reflection" (Lynn).* Most of the participants noted that the understanding that comes with their interests about degrowth encourages them to participate in any way possible:

> It makes you want to participate, to do things. If you understand that there is a problem in this system, automatically it pushes you to try to participate to create alternatives *(Valentin)*.

In that direction, most of the discussions ended up back to the concept of community, as the participants felt that engaging in active projects to create alternatives required the cooperation of a group: *"being in one of those groups allows you to use your opinion and your freedom of expression to do things, that I wouldn't do on my own" (Gaspard)*. A participant, linking his involvement in the ROC to the need for participation, states:

> The ROC is nice because at least you find people like you and that's where you can be launching petitions and then launch bigger movements *(Thomas)*.

The same tendency was mentioned regarding cooperative housing, where people meet on a regular basis to debate about alternatives and make decisions about housing arrangements.

Some of the discussion ended up on a less positive note about "living degrowth" while satisfying the need for participation, as some of the participants find it difficult to identify space where they can have a voice. One of the participants, not involved in the ROC but who aspires to be more collectively involved in degrowth stated:

> I am not a degrowth extremist, so I am not really recognized by my peers, and on the other hand I am too different to have all my freedom and a voice in a mainstream environment *(Ethan)*.

Leisure

Another non-material need proposed by Max-Neef as contributing to wellbeing is the need for leisure.

One important point raised by the participants regarding this need is the practice of unpaid leisure. Most of them declared that they would avoid any *"leisure consumption" (Valentin)* and favor free activities that don't imply any act of consumption:

> Reading takes a lot of time, or games too...or arts in general take time to develop and it consumes little material energy in the end compared to other stuff *(Thomas).*

This also entails, as was mentioned before, the (re)creation of a relationship with nature and the formation of the activity of discovering and enjoying the nature as a leisure practice: *"Obviously my hobbies correlate with the way I see things, so I like to go out in nature" (Lynn).*

Another point, linked to that human/nature relationship in a way, is the practice of traveling. Two dimensions that are somehow linked came up from the interviews in this regard: the choice of the location, and the mean for traveling. Most of the people confessed they tried to discover local regions and spaces as there is *"no need to go far away to take a break" (Roxane).* The travel location will then impact the choice of means of transport to travel, so this needs to be taken into consideration, as one of the participants mentioned it: *"I choose my trips according to whether I can go there by train or by bike" (Roxane).* The shifting of means of travel becomes something really positive regarding wellbeing, as seen before with the train. About travelling by bike, one of the participant states:

> It's a slow time, it's a very pleasant time, it's not really meditation times because you don't think on a bike, you just have an empty mind, but it's really special, it's a kind of parenthesis *(Ethan).*

A third point with regards to leisure that represents one of the bases of the degrowth paradigm(s) concerns the discussion around work. Some of the participants declared they tried to find a job or shift to a job they would feel passionate about. One stated: *"there is not a professional world where I sacrifice myself and then a world of leisure where I am not really who I am" (Mark).* Another interviewee

who is in the process of professional reorientation is developing her *"own project that somewhat embodies [her] vision of society" (Lynn)*. This follows what Mège stated as the practice of "reorienting oneself towards a profession in line with its passion" (2017: 73), which offers the possibility of satisfying the need for leisure while developing an economic activity that would allow to satisfy the very essential needs detailed earlier. Other participants were favoring the reduction of working hours, which allows to free some time for them to experience their passions and do things that really matter to them. About work time reduction, one of the participant states: *"it's one of the things that's most important to me, I value time more than money, having time for myself" (Gaspard)*. He tries to work at most at 80% to have some free time, as it is enough to cover his basic needs and it releases some time *"to do other things, for example to go to the Valais, spend time in nature"*.

A final point that may summarize pretty well this analysis of the leisure need is the process of re-appropriation of time (slowing time): enjoying the little things, avoiding the pressure, releasing from expectations. As one of the participants mentioned it, degrowth is really *about "getting back to the ordinary"* and *"the ordinary can be rich" (Sam)*. For most of the interviewees, satisfying the need for leisure doesn't necessarily mean to complete as many activities as possible with what it implies in term of stress and pressure. A participant put it evidently:

> In a degrowth vision, leisure doesn't necessarily means running all the time, having crazy activities. It can be settling down for a little while, having a book in your hands, having a drink with friends, having just simple things that are detached from the obligations of the daily routine, to be able to live them fully, live the moments of every day to the fullest *(Valentin)*.

This supports Latouche's statement that "it is a matter of resurrecting the faculty of wonder at the beauty of the world that has been given to us, which productivism is plundering by predation and which consumerism is trying to destroy through commercial trivialization" (2019: 121).

Creation

Associated with the need for leisure is the creation dimension of wellbeing. A fundamental ground for "living degrowth" is the practice of doing it yourself, which requires some aspiration for creation, as stated by a participant: *"I think that if I didn't like to create, I wouldn't be trying to do it myself" (Lynn*). This shows that the very basis of the degrowth intention participate to the satisfaction of the need for creation. This process of 'do it yourself' also leads to the recognition of what was necessary to produce (vegetable garden), design (furniture or a house), or the development of skills regarding cooking or sewing for example. One of the participants, talking about his house he renovated for years before being able to live in it, noted the enjoyment of *"being in a room and remembering the time and the energy it took... and [being] all the more satisfied to be there, to enjoy it and to know the work it represents" (Ethan, living in a renovated old house with his wife and their three daughters).*

This links directly to a second point that is about the competencies and abilities that "living degrowth" brings along the way. More than representing specific practices of learning and developing abilities, those represent central elements that compose every practice that is essential in the process of creation. As stated by one of the participants, *"learning to do it yourself is something pretty basic for self-reliance and resilience" (Lynn)*, so all the more crucial. In addition to the wish for creation, these competencies help to invent and imagine alternatives, which is essential when questioning and challenging the economic system in place. As put up by an interviewee, *"our society is built in a way in which we come up against walls, there is a crucial lack of infrastructure that correspond to our sensitivity (degrowth)" (Lynn),* which makes it necessary to be creative and learn to be so to come up with alternatives that allow to go beyond the constraints of society. Also, if we go back to considering the theory of Kallis (2019) that states that the limits can only be internal, it is interesting to share the thoughts of one of the participants about personal constraints and creativity: *"the constraints that we impose on ourselves are those that will allow us to generate our creativity" (Ethan).*

To summarize, the constraints (that are not necessarily considered as negative neither external here) that the degrowth paradigm(s) advocate(s) for allows to develop one's creativity as well as the competencies that are required to come up with the relevant alternatives to the current system. This emphasize the fact that the degrowth practices participate to wellbeing by answering the need for creation. However, this may happen in stages, as one might need to invest energy and time to learn specific skills to develop new creative ways of doing. Indeed, not all the participants are in the same phase of their degrowth career, as some are just starting to design change in their life and practices when others have been involved in doing so for years.

In addition, as mentioned before about leisure and free time, "living degrowth" certainly offers more time to create and to develop any kind of creativity and the relating competencies mentioned above.

The two last needs to be considered here are the needs for identity and freedom. They both seem to unveil the same challenge that is of being paradoxical, and were discussed very similarly by the interviewees. Indeed, the interviews indicated that both these needs seem to imply two aspects: one that is personal, individual and subjective, and another one that is social, external, objective and out of one's reach, which makes them all the more complex to apprehend.

Identity

Indeed, as pointed out by several interviewees when discussing the need for identity, this dimension includes two sub concepts that are worth mentioning for the purpose of the analysis: the personal identity (and the felt identity) that is individual and per se, and the social identity that is objective and is constructed in relation to others (Goffman, 1963).

The study reveals that with regard to the construction of the internal identity, "living degrowth" *"is extremely rich" (Ethan)* as it allows to realize this personal identity. Firstly, "living degrowth" may allow for reflection one oneself, as brought up by several participants. It enables to have more time, to eliminate distractions and therefore to have more opportunities to face oneself:

> I think we have a lot more time to think about who we are, who we want to be, what we want to be, to ask ourselves these existential questions *(Gaspard).*

Then, linked to that question of reflection on the self, the opportunity that "living degrowth" offers to respect one's own values, integrity and ethic is an important point raised by all the interviewees: "living degrowth" is *"a matter of personal ethics" (Charles).* In that regard, a participant noted:

> What changes my satisfaction is that when I behave in a way that reflects my values, I feel strong and whole, honest, sincere, etc. ...so it strengthens me *(Mark, who has been "living degrowth" since he was a teenager).*

To that extent, degrowth practices seem to allow for the satisfaction of the need for identity, concerning the personal identity at least.

Following that point about ethics and values, it is important to go back to the concept of community and especially to the ROC to discuss the satisfaction of the need for identity as conceptualized by Max-Neef (1991). The practice of being involved in a community such as the ROC genuinely allows to share one's values, perceptions and beliefs and to bring a positive sense of belonging. Above helping the realization of personal identity, it helps to conceive a common identity within a specific "community of practices" (Mège, 2017: 75).

When it come to the social identity that is built in relationship with others, it seems more difficult to satisfy the need for identity while "living degrowth". It seems especially challenging when lived collectively, as it may create marginalization and even

labelling (Becker, 1963), as pointed out by a participant: *"compared to the majority, we're actually considered as aliens" (Gaspard)* which also mentioned that the ROC has a "socializing aspect but also a marginalizing aspect".

Freedom

> Free of what? What is freedom? The freedom to consume what we want?! That's an illusion! *(Thomas)*

This quote from an interview appeared as very interesting as 'freedom of choice' is often put forward in consumerism to justify and support growth imperatives.

In his work discussing limits, Kallis states that freedom is linked to voluntary limitation (2019: 57), which represents incidentally one of the bases of the degrowth paradigm(s). As mentioned by a participant, *"the exercise of freedom is precisely about the limits"* and not the idea that we have *"that freedom is having a 180-degree opening on a lot of things" (Thomas).* In this sense, the literature as well as the interviews unveil the fact that "living degrowth", namely reducing consumption, avoiding surplus and distraction, live to the minimum, etc. might be a way of satisfying the need for freedom and therefore another step towards wellbeing.

The first point that can be made to link degrowth to the notion of freedom is about choices. All of the participants stressed the fact that they felt freer to make their own choices as "living [their] degrowth" means moving towards alternatives that are against the mainstream system of practices. In that direction, a participant, involved in the ROC, remarked that *"if we live in a society of growth and advocate for degrowth, we will gain freedom by challenging it and creating alternatives" (Lynn).* Making choices and creating alternatives that lead to more freedom also allows, as stated by the participants, for more autonomy and emancipation. Making the choice to tend to alternatives to consumption (henhouse, vegetable garden,

rainwater tank…[4]) seems to be "something that liberates a little bit from the system" (Valentin). This support the notion of "empowering practice" (Mège 2017: 72) and "values of autonomy and personal development" (2017: 79) raised by Mège in his work on the practices of degrowth activists in France.

As the points outlined above seem to reveal practices and routines that satisfy the need for freedom and therefore allow for a positive influence on wellbeing, it is important to note that the concept of freedom may appear paradoxical, as pointed out by many participants. It encompasses the idea of personal and internal freedom, which is fulfilled by the opportunity to choose alternatives, to be autonomous and empowered. However, it also encompasses the conception of external freedom, which the individual can barely influence. The interviews revealed that the material arrangements as well as the social norms in place don't really allow the participants to actually feel free in "living [their] degrowth". As mentioned by a participant, *"the capitalist system is always on the move and it's going to be on the move until it falls... so then you have to be aware of your freedom and your non-freedom" (Thomas)*. This is why we may temper the assumption that "living degrowth" fully satisfies the need for freedom, saying that it offers a *"relative freedom"*, as stated by one participant *(Ethan)*, that seem to only concern the individual dimension of it. This was summarized pretty well by this participant:

> I feel very free in my head, with my convictions, my ideas, but in reality, in my daily life, I am not because I realize that most of my actions are still dictated by mainstream lifestyles *(Ethan)*.

Considering those two needs for identity and freedom, there is a last point that it seems interesting to address here. Discussing about degrowth, Latouche states that the most important thing of all may be to "recover the sense of the sacred, to restore the

[4] Those are some of the alternatives to consumption discussed by the participants during the interviews.

legitimacy of the spiritual dimension of man - this spirituality can perfectly well be totally secular" (2019: 121). This relates to the discussions that were raised during the interviews about those two needs, as most of the participants underlined this spiritual dimension as one of the most satisfactory outcomes of "living degrowth".

DISCUSSION

VARIOUS DEGROWTH

There are many forms of degrowth, as imagined and practiced by individuals who claim to "live degrowth", and even if this leads to interesting debates and discussions, it can also create confusion and make it difficult to follow a specific approach. One important question that was central in analyzing the interviews can be phrased as: Is degrowth only about consuming less, or also about consuming better? For some interviewees who declared to "live degrowth", it implies reducing working time and consumption at its very minimum. For other people, while advocating for the same paradigm(s) and goals, degrowth obviously implies reducing consumption but equally and above else consuming better. This illustrates what Mège (2017) alludes to in his work on the radicality of degrowth practices, when he proposes that there are "two major trends in the militancy for degrowth: the revolutionary trend on the one hand, and the reformist trend on the other" (Mège, 2017: 83). In the same work, Mège states that "the (degrowth) community is made up of activists identified as being all practitioners—but more or less coherent and radical practitioners" (Mège, 2017: 77). Even if not all the individuals participating in this present work claimed to be activists, they characterized themselves as "practitioners", more or less radical in their way of "living degrowth" (Brossmann and Islar, 2020). This allowed for the understanding of a diversity of practices that represent very different ways of "living degrowth". In that direction, the analysis, even if based on a small sample, might allow for the development of ideal types (Weber, 1919) that could help the understanding of the various form that "living degrowth" can take in practice. When discussing degrowth, the interviews showed that two groups of

principles that rule practices and could be seen as typologies can be distinguished. The first is degrowth as against something, against the system, materialism, consumption, and broadly any kind of development. This ideal type seems to lead to practices that support a radical shift in the system, an ambition to review all the system and the institutions it's composed of. It is mostly about avoiding at most any form of consumption and supporting non practices in everyday life. The other type that can be unveiled from the analysis is degrowth as for something, for a more flourishing life, more social relations, more nature. This idea type seems to lead to practices that support a process about changing the self, be more open, discover new things, create stronger relationships with nature, people and things. It is mostly about changing one's practices to consume better and more thoughtfully. This typology offers the possibility of analyzing the various forms of "living degrowth" to see the extent to which people's patterns of practices resemble them. Those are borderline cases that are never met in their purity, but in light of which one can compare the phenomena observed in reality.

As seen in the analysis, a lot of the practices advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s) and lived by the interviewees tend to help the satisfaction of the fundamental needs promoted by Max-Neef's Theory of Human Scale Development (1991). In this regard, those practices can be considered as main needs satisfiers in many respects and be analyzed as such.

THE POWER OF SATISFIERS

SYNERGIC SATISFIERS

The analysis of each need specifically showed that those degrowth practices sometimes "manage simultaneously to satisfy several different kinds of needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999: 429), which is the exact definition that Max-Neef gives of synergic satisfiers (1991: 34). This concept, combined with the interviews, allows to

unveil the power of specific satisfiers related to "living degrowth" towards achieving wellbeing.

Guillen-Royo also mentions this concept by using the term of utopian satisfiers (2010: 389) and gives the examples of time sovereignty and community centered society among others as approaches to reach the wellbeing dividend. Those two utopian satisfiers, that represent some of the main element encouraged by the degrowth paradigm(s) will be discussed below as well as others explored in the interviews. In this way, the purpose of this section is to give an idea of what can be, really practically, the positive impact of practicing degrowth on an individual's wellbeing.

The practice of reducing one's working time may be one of the most important points to raise when talking about synergic satisfiers as defined by Max-Neef. Commonly shared by all the participants to this present study and more broadly most of the people that advocate for degrowth, this practice seems to be one way to satisfy various needs at the same time. This reduction of working time is linked to a shift in the relationship to time, as working less offers the possibility to free some time outside of the economic activity. This free time enables to "implement strategies that objectively allow to consume less" (Mège, 2017: 70), therefore creating a virtuous circle that reduce the need for money to meet the "material needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999), but not only. It also allows for the satisfaction of most of the "non-material needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999), directly or indirectly. As Brossmann and Islar mention it citing a participant in their study (2020), degrowth encourages to "take time to do things" and "live more slowly", which can pretty much relate to the whole exhaustive list of non-material needs considered in the analysis section. As stated by a participant in the present study *(Sam)*, *"free time means finding small pleasures"* which relates to the need for leisure, *"creating conviviality"* which relates to the need for affection, as well as *"participating in the development of society"*, which relates to the need for participation. Altogether, releasing free time seems to allow for the accomplishment of practices that satisfy all of the nonmaterial needs, including identity and freedom. However, this work-time

reduction—and releasing more free time—is hard to attain for some, as it goes against social norms. The social difficulty in reducing working time, especially for men, is emphasized by a (male) interviewee: *"it's very rarely accepted for a man to work part-time (…) what I'm going to be encouraged to do is to work 100%" (Gaspard).*

The practice of being part of a community is another important point in this study. As stressed by Brand-Correa and Steinberger, "some of the most important decoupling opportunities are likely to be found at the community level" (2016:49). Being part of the ROC was stated by the participants embedded in such a movement as a possibility to fulfill needs: creating relationships, understanding and participating through debates, discussions and actions, as well as "acquiring a sense of belonging" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 40) which helps with the realization of one's personal identity. The ROC, and probably more broadly any "community of practices" (Mège, 2017 :75) that is "promoting the creation of spaces for discussion and socialization" can indeed be referred as "having many synergic effects" (Guillen Royo, 2010: 389). Vita's argument also goes into that direction as he states that "grassroots initiatives such as the degrowth and voluntary simplicity movements not only provide sustainable goods but also create contexts for social learning, cooperation networks and alternative narratives of need satisfaction" (Vita, 2019: 13). As one of the participants stated:

> It helps me psychologically, it's good not to feel lonely anyway. There's an aspect where it allows you to exchange, you feel you're not alone with it and you can exchange with other people (…) *(Michelle)*

In that direction, as we consider that living in a cooperative housing means being part of a community (as highlighted by the participants concerned), this practice raised in the interviews represents another profitable synergic satisfier interesting to focus on. However, as seen before, the practice of being part of such communities can also entail to some extent the need for affection and for identity, as people involved claim to sometimes suffer from labelling and marginalization.

Other practices considered as meaningful when "living degrowth" can also be considered as synergic satisfiers, as they "satisfy a given need, simultaneously stimulat[ing] and contribut[ing] to the fulfillment of other needs" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34). Local consumption, as stated by all the interviewees, participate to the satisfaction of the need for subsistence, but also allows for the creation of relationships:

> I think about the grocery store we go to next door, I don't necessarily know these people very well but they know my life, I know their life, we're small talking, and I think it just feels good to say I'm not just here to buy something *(Ethan)*.

Most of the participants mentioned the relationship to nature as important, and the practices that relate to it are also essential synergic satisfiers. Considered by Max-Neef as a form of having that fulfills the need for affection, it came out that the relationship with nature can become a mean to satisfy the need for leisure and to some extent for creation. In that direction, a participant mentioned:

> "What has changed in the last few years is my relationship with nature, before I didn't necessarily go to the forest, but now I go there to read for example" *(Thomas)*.

As presented by Rosa (2018), it is the fact of considering nature as a mere resource, and in fact denying its character as a sphere of resonance that is at the core of the ecological crisis that modern society is experiencing, and that is maybe the most crucial point brought up by the participants when asked about wellbeing and their relationship to nature.

The last element that can be pointed out when looking at synergic satisfiers as intended by Max-Neef (1991) is the practice of learning and experimenting that comes along with "living degrowth". As mentioned in the interviews, the competencies allow to fulfill the need for leisure and creation, regarding cooking but also producing vegetables or imagining alternatives to

consumption for example. It also allows for the fulfillment of the needs for protection and freedom as well as identity as it offers a possibility of emancipation from the system and a sense of self-confidence and serenity.

INHIBITING SATISFIERS

While focusing on those synergic satisfiers seems to be a favorable approach towards the accomplishment of the wellbeing dividend through "living degrowth", it is essential to mention that the impact of the variety of practices it entails can also be ambiguous in some instances. Indeed, the interviews unveiled that some practices can represent satisfiers that fulfill "one need to which they are directed but tend to inhibit the satisfaction of other needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999:428). This represent another type of satisfiers identified by Max-Neef (1991) as inhibiting. This concept can be of great help to unveil scenarios where a satisfier, while satisfying a need, hinder the satisfaction of another and thus creates a paradoxical situation that needs to be addressed and tackled by the individual.

While being considered as a synergic satisfier in many respects, the interviews showed that the practice of reducing working time can also be recognized as an inhibiting satisfier. As stated by Guillen-Royo, the "flexibility to set one's working schedules reduces time stress and time spent commuting and also liberates time" (2010:391) for other activities, thus supporting the needs for freedom but also creation, leisure and participation. While supporting those needs, the practice of reducing working time can have a detrimental impact on the need for protection, as it suggests less money less regularly and therefore less security, particularly in the long term (retirement).

On another note, the practice of travelling by plane represents for some the only way to visit some family or friends that live abroad, and thus flights are necessary to satisfy the need for affection that relies mainly upon positive relationships with close

relatives. The interviews unveiled that this specific consumption practice seems to have a harmful impact on the need for identity, as it forces people to go against some of their values and beliefs that are based on ecological concerns.

In the same vein, some practices related to ethical concerns around food for example (as having a vegetarian or vegan diet, trying to avoid some specific aliment) occur to have a negative impact on the very basic need for subsistence. This was mentioned by a participant who suffers from very common health problems that compel her to reconsider her diet and occasionally transgress some of her principles, which is felt like wrong as people "living degrowth" always try to "find ways to do things that [are] in line with their beliefs" (Mège, 2017:67). Thus, to satisfy her need for subsistence, she has to sacrifice some of her values and ethics and hinder the satisfaction of her need for identity.

While mentioning the paradoxical "attributes" (Max-Neef, 1991) of those satisfiers, the participants described the different strategies they implemented to address these situations and to cope with the inhibiting character of those practices. Some of them simply tried to find a balance that they valued as acceptable, by trying to work just enough to feel safe, or going to see the family once a year by plane for example: *"it's always a matter of balance, so we do the best we can to live with it" (Barbara)*. Others, on the contrary, declared their solution to cope with it was to take responsibility for their choices and don't regret it no matter what.

CULTURAL SHIFT

Those concepts of synergic and inhibiting satisfiers could help to design a path towards a possible double dividend, namely the possibility to live better and flourish within ecological limits. We identify that "living degrowth" seems to contribute to the satisfaction of most of the fundamental needs that represent objective wellbeing, particularly when identified as synergic satisfiers. This, among other things, seems to indicate that a cultural change can be

imagined towards reaching the so-called wellbeing dividend. A cultural change is defined by Max-Neef as "the consequence of dropping traditional satisfiers for the purpose of adopting new or different ones" (Max-Neef, 1992: 200). This is exactly what is indirectly stressed by the degrowth paradigm(s), which advocates for new "forms of being, having, doing and interacting to satisfy the needs" (Jackson and Marks 1999: 428). As we identify degrowth practices as essential satisfiers, it is interesting to mention the conceptual closeness that exist when it comes to cultural change and change in practices. Indeed, Guillen-Royo and Wilhite (2015) states that disrupting dominant practices involves the "healthy destabilization of habits' (Berressem, 2009: 64) and thus provides an opportunity for the formation of new habits" (p.312). The concern is then to put everything in place that could support the change towards the strengthening of existing synergic satisfiers, the possibility of converting others to become synergic, the creation of new ones that would be considered as synergic, as well as the finding of solutions to reduce the negative impact of inhibiting satisfiers. This process could rely on the attempt of Guillen-Royo (2010) to transform negative satisfiers into utopian satisfiers. Addressing other types of satisfiers, such as violators, would have been interesting for the purpose of this work, but no key negative satisfiers have been raised during the interviews, except from the relationships to others that may be problematic in some instances for people who "live degrowth". In addition, synergic and inhibiting satisfiers seem to link the different needs and were the most evident in the interviews. For those reasons, and because they represent an interesting focus towards a decisive cultural shift, we focused on synergic and inhibiting satisfiers as a basis for this reflection.

Just as the inhibiting satisfiers are considered by Max-Neef as exogenous, namely "usually imposed, induced, ritualized or institutionalized and traditionally generated at the top and advocated for all" and the mentioned synergic satisfiers are recognized as endogenous and "derive from liberating processes which are the outcome of acts of volition generated by the community at the grassroots level" (Max-Neef, 1991: 34), the practices that are

considered for the purpose of this work as satisfiers are claimed to be supported or hindered by a mix of different elements that range from individual to societal. Following that, those elements will either be supporters or obstacles in allowing a cultural shift and satisfying needs, by promoting synergic satisfiers and reducing the negative impact of inhibiting satisfiers. As seen before, the teleoaffective structures seems to be the elements that helps the most in the achievement of consumption reduction practices in the degrowth movement while material arrangements and social norms seem to play the bad guys regarding these practices. This is what has been mostly raised in the interviews, but it is not always the case, as for example cooperative housing are available as material arrangements that help the practice of living in a cooperative.

If we consider the reduction of working time, proved to be a synergic satisfier, it seems like social norms are the most prevalent element that has to shift to strengthen this practice, along with material arrangements to some extent. Regarding the practice of belonging to a community, it seems like the shift has to happen mainly at the sociocultural level to see a positive change. If we consider as a last instance the practice of learning and experimenting, it seems that the most important shift will be needed at the teleoaffective level and the material dimension to some extent.

Even if change is embedded in a dynamic three-way relation between people, things and norms, it has been showed that "a change in any of these three pillars can shift a habit and indeed influence our overall dispositions" (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014: 28) and that is where the societal level needs to be engaged to support degrowth practices (or more broadly 'patterns' of responsible practices) in meeting the needs that lead to wellbeing. Focusing on elements of practices that seem to promote degrowth practices while allowing for the satisfaction of needs allows to change our imaginaries and to go beyond what is considered normal and possible and can therefore represent an interesting path to follow towards the promotion of a wellbeing that seem to be more respectful toward the planet in term of consumption.

However, the implications for sustainable wellbeing remain to be discussed—in the section that follows.

SUSTAINABLE WELLBEING?

When thinking about sustainable wellbeing, it is always necessary to be aware it implies "the idea of a safe and just space for humanity, living within planetary boundaries and providing a decent, safe and just floor of wellbeing for all people" (Gough, 2017: 86). This implies being aware of the impact of the practices that lead to the need satisfaction on the environment, while considering what is valued as the "just floor of wellbeing". Interesting studies calculated the carbon footprint of the different needs brought up by Max-Neef, and found that "half of global carbon emissions are driven by subsistence and protection, a similar amount are due to freedom, identity, creation and leisure together, whereas understanding and participation jointly account for less than 4% of global emissions" (Vita, 2019: 1). A similar investigation could then be conducted regarding satisfiers and practices specific to consumption reduction and degrowth, as "satisfiers can be sustainable or unsustainable" (Vita, 2019: 3) depending on various factors, be they material or non-material. Without knowing the carbon footprint of consumption reduction and of "living degrowth", it is hard to measure the impact on the environment and to declare that degrowth allows for the achievement of sustainable wellbeing.

This work cannot pretend to precisely assess whether or not degrowth practices lead to sustainable wellbeing, but some cross analysis between the empirical findings and the literature can highlight some positive elements regarding this notion. In fact, some practices and life situations can participate to the fulfillment of needs (several at the same time) while reducing impact on the environment. Reducing working time is a good example of a degrowth practice that led to what is considered as sustainable wellbeing: trading pay increments for more disposable time limits the rise in consumption and thus emissions that would otherwise

take place; it would weaken the 'work and spend' cycle, which locks employees into a trajectory of fixed hours and rising consumption. Secondly, working shorter hours is likely to change the time and expenditure budget of households in a lower-carbon direction (more time-intensive and less carbon-intensive ways of travelling, shopping, preparing food, repairing goods…) (Gough, 2017: 187-188). This practice of reducing working time and therefore salary can be considered as one of the main focuses of the degrowth paradigm and movement and was mentioned a lot during the interviewees and the discussion around the matrix of wellbeing. As Gough (2017) puts it, "reduced working time (…) can improve sustainability as well as (…) dimensions of non-monetary wellbeing and human flourishing" (p.198). However, t is important to consider the long-term implications of such a shift, which haven't been discussed a lot by the participants in this work. On the same pattern, being part of a community designed around sustainability principles, which is another important practice promoted by the degrowth paradigm(s) and considered in this work as a synergic satisfier, is worth mentioning regarding sustainable wellbeing. As Guillen-Royo (2010) puts it, a group of support represents "the ideal space for design and implementation of changes toward wellbeing dividend" (p.385), which implies "highlighting the factors (…) that constitute scenarios where people experience high levels of personal wellbeing within the ecological limits of the earth" (Guillen-Royo and Wilhite 2015: 31).

Just as reducing working time and being part of a sustainable community, other practices considered above as synergic satisfiers could represent relevant evidence that consumption reduction and degrowth especially might stand as an appropriate approach to reach a wellbeing that would be sustainable, but this question requires research that goes beyond the intention of this work.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at understanding in what ways can consumption reduction practices impact sustainable wellbeing?

The concern was to uncover forms of consumptions advocated by a Degrowth initiative, as it plays out in Western Switzerland, and link these practices and patterns to the notion of wellbeing. The first subquestions, What practices of consumption reduction are significant for Degrowth?, was designed to help unveiling the specific practices of consumption reduction that are promoted by people "living degrowth". The second subquestion, *what are the elements that support or hinder those specific practices?*, aimed at discussing the elements composing these practices which seem to either support or hinder their development. Then, the third subquestion, *what is the impact of those practices on sustainable wellbeing*?, focused the attention on the impact of those specific practices on the different dimensions considered as contributing to wellbeing. Finally, the last subquestion, *what insights can be unveiled to promote consumption reduction while supporting the goal of sustainable wellbeing?*, was aimed at unveiling the key elements that could be focused on to promote more or less radical consumption reduction practices while advocating for wellbeing as a normative goal for the assessment of sustainable climate mitigation.

This research began with the assumption that we could possibly "live better by consuming less and reduce our impact on the environment in the process" (Jackson, 2005: 19). This represents the concept of wellbeing dividend, also mentioned by Guillen-Royo and Wilhite (2015) as the "scenarios where people experience high levels of personal wellbeing within the ecological limits of the earth" (p.313). Based on this assumption, and focusing on

the degrowth movement and its surrounding network in the Geneva and Vaud area, the purpose of this work was to study what "living degrowth" means in terms of practices in the Swiss context, and towards the normative goal of objective wellbeing. The original hypothesis, that relies on the dominant notion that restrictions to consumption would lead to decreased wellbeing, stressed that degrowth practices would have a limited positive impact on the different needs that constitute wellbeing. The analysis, based on the concept of eudaimonic wellbeing as well as the social practice theory, unveiled the many different ways of "living degrowth", which in turn promote less-intensive practices and actually satisfy most of the fundamental needs crucial to reach (sustainable) wellbeing.

This approach through objective wellbeing, especially the one developed by Max-Neef (1991), allows, "in contrast to the conventional characterization of economic welfare", to adopt a "conception of wellbeing in which human development is characterized in terms of fundamental needs" (Jackson and Marks, 1999:422), and therefore universal and comparable. This focus "on human flourishing rather than individual preferences" offers the possibility to "consider alternatives patterns of resource use, which can be compatible with upper limits to consumption" (O'Neill, 2008b, 2011). The satisfiers, namely the means to satisfy those mentioned fundamental needs, are context dependent and culturally specific, which allows for a "systemic analysis of sustainable alternatives" (Brand-Correa and Steinberger, 2016: 50). In addition, the utilization of the social practice theory framework allowed for a better understanding of practices associated with "living degrowth" in relation to wellbeing, as it is stressed that "it is through understanding the social practice of everyday life that 'need satisfaction' can be achieved" (Sahakian, Anantharaman, Di Giulio et al., 2020). Through this approach, the practices that are stressed by the participants and more broadly the degrowth supporters are analyzed with respect to their embeddedness in relation to three pillars—the body, the material world and the social world—that go beyond the individual dimension of practices. Furthermore, this allows to unveil the levers that are crucial for

influencing a cultural shift based on a change in practices that would lead to the wellbeing dividend: scenarios of everyday consumption that are less intensive while satisfying all of the needs that are considered indispensable to reach wellbeing. The concept of objective wellbeing as well as "a theorization of habits enable to break with the neoclassical assumptions and policies and takes us beyond the imagines insatiable individual maximizer to encompass a socio-material contextualization of consumption and wellbeing" (Royo and Wilhite, 2015: 309). Altogether, an objective wellbeing approach linked to a social practice theory seems to represent a solid basis for a robust theory of change, which is advocated by the degrowth movement.

LIVING DEGROWTH

The analysis allowed to unveil some main concepts that are consistent with the social practice approach (as a mean) to reach the normative goal of (sustainable) wellbeing (as an end). The idea of "living degrowth" was underlined as a combination of practices that compose the consumption patterns of someone who lives in accordance with the degrowth principles. The ways of "living degrowth" are diverse and dynamic, as they evolve depending on the context and period of life. Following that idea, and as stated earlier, we could distinguish two ideal types of degrowth, as against something, mainly the system, or as for something, mainly the pursuit of a simpler and flourishing life.

Even if representing different combinations of practices related to "living degrowth", those ideal types are all theoretically argued to be based on limits, which was confirmed by the participants to this study. The interviews showed that limits to consumption are reflected by the individual as corridors that they place for themselves in order to live a fulfilled and flourishing life. This resonate with Kallis' argument that, if internal, limits are beneficial as they allow to free oneself from distraction and to support more prosperous patterns of life. This is interesting as it allows to expose that if internalized at the individual level (as well as promoted

at higher levels), limits are not hindering freedom in any way and are helping to satisfy all the other needs. This can only be possible if limits, while promoted at meso and macro levels, come from the bottom level (community level for example) and are not imposed to individual through top-down processes.

Those limits, as stated earlier, are the underpinnings of the concept of sufficiency. If internalized, they can allow for the construction of consumption patterns based on sufficiency and thus remaining within the consumption corridors, between a decent satisfaction of social foundations and the respect of planetary boundaries. The concern is to seek, in every consumption practice, to stay within a just space that allow oneself to consume sufficiently to meet her or his fundamental needs while respecting others and the planet. These concepts of sufficiency and limits, as well as "associated concepts of enough, thrift and frugality" (Barry, 2012: 161), advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s), allow for oneself to satisfy her or his needs while having a limited impact on the sustainability of the planet and would be the key principle of a more sustainable and resilient economy (Barry, 2012: 140, 162).

SATISFYING DEGROWTH

> Accepting and living by sufficiency rather than excess offers a return to what is, culturally speaking, the human home: to the ancient order of family, community, good work; to a reverence for skill, creativity and creation; to a daily cadence slow enough to let us watch the sunset and stroll by the water's edge; to communities worth spending a lifetime in; and to local places pregnant with the memories of generations (Durning, 1992).

Just as it has been stressed by Durning, the research revealed that the reduction of consumption, especially the practices of "living degrowth" allow to "live better (or at least as well as we have done) by consuming less, and become more human in the process" (Jackson, 2005: 33). The analysis of the discussion with members

of the Degrowth movement of Geneva and its surrounding network unveiled that the reduction of food consumption, energy consumption, mobility consumption, but also all the habits that go along with "living degrowth" have a positive impact on objective wellbeing. Even if, as stressed in the discussion, we can't openly consider this wellbeing as sustainable, several studies (Guillen-Royo, 2010; Gough, 2017, among others) show that this consumption reduction and this shift in practices also reduce the human impact on the environment and help to keep consumption patterns within the planetary boundaries.

The earlier analysis showed that the reduction of consumption and the practices advocated by the degrowth paradigm(s) does offers two crucial elements towards the wellbeing dividend. The first one is the possibility of using less polluting material needs to satisfy the material need. This was showed by the analysis on the needs for subsistence and protection, declared as fully met by all the participants, and is illustrated by the examples of local food consumption or living in an energy efficient housing. The second point is the possibility of developing non-material means to satisfy non-material needs (Jackson and Marks, 1999), which also seems to mean satisfying needs at a lower environmental cost. This can be illustrated by the fact of enjoying nature to meet the need for leisure, reading books to fill the need for understanding, being part of communities to satisfy the needs for affection, identity and participation or working less as a mean to meet the need for freedom and creation for example. An analysis of the exhaustive list of satisfiers associated with "living degrowth" that help the satisfaction of the various fundamental needs helped to unveil a third point that is crucial towards reaching the wellbeing dividend. While enhancing the fact that those satisfiers are really positive regarding the satisfaction of the needs raised by Max-Neef (1991), the analysis showed that some of them can be considered as synergic satisfiers, meeting several needs at the same time. The practice of reducing one's working time, of being part of a community - be it an activist movement, a cooperative for food or housing or any other "community of practice" (Mège, 2017: 75) that promotes sustainability- as well as the practice of experimenting new

alternatives or consuming more local food are here considered as synergic satisfiers and therefore interesting to focus on. This concept helps to prove that the fact of "living degrowth" is not violating the satisfaction of the fundamental needs, and can on the contrary offer some confirmation that a shift towards it could benefit to the majority if widely expanded.

This shows that practices encouraged by degrowth, that are based on sufficiency and are part of sustainable consumption patterns, represent compelling satisfiers that have a crucial role in meeting the fundamental needs that constitute wellbeing. This is interesting as it shows, just as in a recent paper from Sahakian, Anantharaman and Di Giulio (2020) on green public spaces, that practices represent a crucial resource to understand how needs are satisfied, and in turn to recognize how to satisfy needs, in different contexts for different people.

From Individual Actions to Institutionalization

As stressed earlier in this work, the practices in place are relatively difficult to change. A cultural shift towards more responsible life patterns and even practices that are associated with "living degrowth" will need a crucial shift in the pillars that compose those specific practices: the material dimension, people's competencies and dispositions and the sociocultural dimensions need to be challenged. The reflection in this work is raised from the bottom, which seems to represent one way forward as Jackson states that "rebuilding prosperity from the bottom up is what's required" (Jackson, 2017: 216) as approaches imposed by top-down processes can appear heteronomous and "imposed by the higher-level authority" (Kallis, 2019: 107). In that direction, the reflection based on individual as well as collective practices within the community seems to unveil good insights about shifting consumption patterns while leading towards the satisfaction of the normative goal of objective wellbeing. This can be made by enhancing the utilization of less polluting material goods as well as the

development of non-material goods to satisfy the needs. In other words, promoting "satisfiers with low material intensity that foster both wellbeing and sustainability" (Royo and Wilhite 2015: 312). As proved by the social practice theory, the self-limitation it implies "requires institutions at higher levels to secure the endurance of agreed limits" (Kallis, 2019: 106).

Indeed, as it was underlined during the interviews and stated above in the discussion, people who want to "live degrowth" are sometimes restricted by the material arrangements in place, the competencies and knowledge and the shared meanings that can be crucial hindrances to the possibility of "living degrowth". This study exposes the relevance of building from the bottom up to set limits that will then be supported by higher levels in order to support practices that assure the satisfaction of people's needs while not exceeding the planetary boundaries. The human needs, to be protected by society (Di Giulio and Fusch, 2019) within the consumption corridors, obviously need individual actions but more importantly overall meso (communities, political parties, organizations) and macro (government, public policies) levels implementations and achievements that will support limits and promote sufficiency at a broader level. In this way, individual practices based on sufficiency and sustainable patterns of consumption could be enhanced collectively through the elements that compose practices.

This could be supported through the development of competencies that promote sustainable consumption patterns, considered as a synergetic satisfier, at school for example, or in the everyday life spaces frequented by people on a daily basis. Learning could also be a good way to challenge social norms at the meso and macro level, through awareness-raising campaign for example. Based on insights from the individual (and from the community as well), material arrangements can also be discussed and shifted to support sustainable practices. This could be conducted through the provision of Universal Public Services (Coote and Percy, 2020), to make public services free such as public transports for example, as it is stressed by Coote and Percy (2020) who argue for

a universal right of access according to need for services that supports sustainability.

In the Swiss context, and as discussed during the interviews, the interest would be to focus on specific insights that allow for people to "live degrowth" within the consumption corridors. The provision of learning spaces (i.e., school) to support the development of competencies and knowledge over various domains of consumption could be an interesting adjustment as the possibility of learning and experimenting has been raised by all the interviewees. Social norms about reducing working time could also be discussed, as well as the opportunity and meanings around the practice of being part of a "community of practices" (Mège, 2017: 75) that promote sustainability for example. The shifting of specific material arrangements could be interesting to enhance practices of local consumption through the provision of more bulk stores or the development of local markets for example. These examples expose what it might mean for a society to organize itself to allow all of its citizens (regardless of cultural capital and social class) to "live degrowth", and what it means to rely upon bottom-up processes to draw on individual practices to design collective implementations at the meso and macro levels that would allow individuals to be in a default position of sobriety, and therefore expand sustainable practices while enhancing needs satisfaction.

This study, as it doesn't aim at uncovering all the practices of "living degrowth" in the chosen area neither to expose the specific shifts that need to be enforced, represents an exploratory study that has three main outcomes. First, it shows in practice that degrowth doesn't have, as it may be assumed, a harmful impact on people's life and on the contrary can have very positive consequences on (objective) wellbeing that need to be enhanced. Second, it offers a quite interesting basis for communicating to the majority about the benefits of turning to more responsible practices and even to "live degrowth" in terms of environmental effect but also wellbeing and for engaging people who are not convinced yet by the need for and the benefits of shifting consumption. Finally, it may, to a certain extent, serve as a support for the top-

down initiatives that are constantly and incrementally implemented in Switzerland towards the national and international goals about emissions and climate change, which would with no doubt benefit from relying on bottom-up approaches.

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations to this work can be underlined regarding the approach used for the purpose of the research as well as the concepts and notion discussed in relation to the data.

Max-Neef's objective approach used to consider wellbeing has proved to be useful and appropriate for the purpose of studying environmental concerns and degrowth paradigm(s). Nevertheless, it seems like it represents a rather fixed model of wellbeing, "however open to revision" (Pelenc, 2014: 5) that may deserve to be completed by other approaches that may be complementary, such as the Capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2003) for example. Indeed, some dimensions that may emerge as crucial to wellbeing are claimed as absent from the nine fundamental needs matrix: "there is one dimension of wellbeing that is not captured by the Max-Neef's list which is the spirituality/transcendence dimension" (Pelenc, 2014: 21). But fortunately, this dimension which is relatively important when considering degrowth (and was underlined during most of the interviews conducted for this study); was to some extent at discussed with the participant when reflecting on the nine needs. In addition to that, this objective approach to wellbeing used to design and conduct the interviews and analyze the data can never be considered as completely objective as "we did not and will never know with certainty how to define objective needs" (Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 189). However, the arguments supporting the actual approaches to objective wellbeing as contrasting with the subjective perspectives seem to be promising enough to accept the gap of information that exists around those. It also appears relatively rational to use it as a basis for discussing the wellbeing dividend ambition, "given the urgency of the sustainability related challenges humanity is facing"

(Di Giulio and Fuchs 2014: 189). A last point about the wellbeing approach is worth mentioning if we are to advocate for possible improvements to the present research. Indeed, objective wellbeing is only objective, and as stated by Gough (2017), "a convincing consensus is emerging that combinations of approaches—objective, subjective and relational—provide a more rounded picture of human wellbeing" (p.62).

Regarding the treatment of the data and the notions analyzed, a gap can be pointed out that could have been addressed through a more activist approach to degrowth. The consumer-citizen (McGregor, 2002) dual role of the participants hasn't been discussed as such in this work, which would have been interesting considering the fact that the participants were all more or less embedded in the degrowth movement that is usually mostly studied as activist (see Mège, 2017 for example). It may have been interesting to discuss further how people engage with degrowth as activists in relation to their consumption patterns and to the satisfaction of needs. This could have been addressed by focusing on the needs for participation and identity for example, as being an activist and the practices that relate to it can represent crucial satisfiers to meet those needs.

These limitations can represent valuable foundations for further research that could take into consideration a broader approach to wellbeing as well as a more political approach to degrowth.

FURTHER RESEARCH

When discussing further research in relation to this exploratory study, there is another point that is worth mentioning. As stated earlier in the methodology section, the research was conducted during the unexpected sanitary crisis of Covid-19 which made the field work experience unusual and complex. Beyond the empirical adjustments that had to be developed (see Methodology: 28), the situation raised an interesting point for debate around degrowth

and wellbeing. Gough, when describing the critical situation of modern capitalism, asked in 2017: "Is it not possible that we are entering a phase of post-growth by accident rather than design?" (Gough, 2017: 192). This question made a lot of sense at the time of the interviews (April 2020), for the participants but also for the society as a whole. The term of "*décroissance subie*" (imposed degrowth) came out in the press and the wide public to define the crucial situation imposed by the lockdown that was enforced in numerous countries around the world. While Switzerland was only imposed a partial lockdown, the discussion around this possible situation of imposed degrowth was considered during the interviews. Some of the participants agreed to contemplate this situation as imposed degrowth, as it shifted consumption patterns towards more sobriety and simplicity. Others, on the contrary, refused to label this situation as any close to degrowth as it implies, among other things, some kind of denial of freedom and a social distancing that are far from the degrowth paradigm(s). No matter how we call it, the lockdown situation did in practice shift the patterns of consumption towards less rather than more (even if the practice of shopping online remained significant during this period), and encouraged a return to simpler practices, which seem to have had a positive impact on the environment as well as the wellbeing of many for various reasons. Several questions arise from this reflection that are not necessarily linked but that would be worth focusing on within the debate on the relation between degrowth and wellbeing. First, we may want to question the sustainability of the more responsible practices developed during the lockdown. As stressed by an interviewee, we could imagine that *"once the lockdown is over, people are going to go back to the way they used to live (…)" (Charles)* and we may hypothesize that *"it's [not] going to bring about a fundamental change in society, in people, in their lifestyles, in the way they see things" (Gaspard).* Then, it would be crucial to further understand if and in what ways the lock-down impacted people's objective wellbeing, and what helped them assure that positive impact. Finally, this situation could be a good start to reflect on the need to change before it may be too late, as stressed by Latouche in 2019: "It is then necessary to oppose this undergone and

undesirable degrowth with a desired degrowth which would be desirable and serene, if not happy" (Latouche, 2019: 12). While several perspectives have been imagined as possible continuation for this work, the lockdown and unprecedented sanitary situation and the teachings that can be learnt from it represent relevant approaches to the discussions around degrowth and wellbeing and would be interesting to address. Since this study has been conducted, a new research has been led on the impact of the lockdown on (sustainable) practices in relation of wellbeing (Moynat et al., 2022).

More broadly, this research allowed to show that an approach through practices is all the more relevant for a reflection around needs satisfaction and towards (sustainable) wellbeing. It also exposed that the possibilities of understanding the nexus between the specific categories of consumption (food, mobility and housing) and wellbeing through such a perspective are abundant in the Swiss context and may deserve deeper consideration. It would then be interesting to go further into understanding the myriad of practices that it implies and how they link to needs satisfaction. In addition, as stated earlier in this work, Max-Neef's approach promotes participatory methods to unveil the link between satisfiers and need satisfaction, which wasn't possible for this work due to the time and space constraints, but would represent a relevant perspective for addressing such concerns. Altogether, this research exposes that more attention is needed on the nexus of the specific categories of consumption and the practices related with the satisfaction of needs towards the normative goal of (sustainable) wellbeing, that could be addressed through participatory methods and discussed through a practice theory approach.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: SIMPLIFIED MAX-NEEF'S MATRIX (ORIGINAL – EN)

Needs according to axiological categories	Needs according to existential categories	BEING (B) (personal or collective attributes)	HAVING (H) (institutions, norms, tools)	DOING (D) (personal or collective actions)	INTERACTING (I) (spaces or atmospheres)
Subsistence		[1]Physical health , mental health, adaptability	[2] Food, shelter, work	[3]Feed, procreate, rest, work	[4] Living environment, Social setting
Protection		[5] Care, adaptability, autonomy, solidarity	[6] savings, family, work	[7] Cooperate, take care of, help	[8] Living space, social environement, dwelling
Affection		[9] Self esteem, solidarity, respect, tolerance, generosity, passion, determination	[10] friendships, family, partnerships, relationship with nature	[11] Express emotions, share, talke care of, cultivate, appreciate	[12] Home, space of togetherness
Understanding		[13] Critical conscience, curiosity, discipline, rationality	[14]	[15] Experiment	[16] Setting of formative interaction, groups, communities
Participation		[17] adaptability, solidarity, dedication, respect, passion	[18] Rights, responsibilities, duties, privileges, work	[19] become affiliated, cooperate, propose, share, dissent (contestation), express opinions	[20] settings of participative interaction, parties, associations, communities, neighbourhoods, family
Leisure/ Idleness		[21] Curiosity, imagination, recklessness (témérité), tranquility	[22] parties, games, spectacles, clubs, peace of mind	[23] give way to fantasies, have fun, play, remember, relax	[24] free time, privacy, intimacy, spaces of closeness, surroundings, landscapes
Creation		[25] passion, determination, imagination, boldness (audace), rationality, autonomy	[26] work, abilities, skills	[27] work, build, invent, design, compose, interpret	[28] cultural groups, spaces for expression, workshops, temporal freedom
Identity		[29] sense of belonging, self esteem, consistency, differentiation, assertiveness (affirmation de soi),	[30] habits, reference groups, , values, norms*, work	[31] Commit oneself, integrate oneself, confront, decide on, get to know oneself, recognize oneself, actualize oneself, grow	[32] Social rhythms, everyday settings, settings which one belongs to, maturation stages
Freedom		[33] autonomy, self esteem, determination, passion, assertiveness, open-mindedness, boldness, rebelliousness, tolerance	[34] Equal rights	[35] be different from, dissent, choose, develop awareness, commit oneself, disobey	[36] Temporal/spatial plasticity

ANNEX 2: SIMPLIFIED MAX-NEEF'S MATRIX (TRANSLATED – FR)

Besoins axiologiques	Besoins existentiels	ÊTRE (attributs personnels et collectifs)	AVOIR (institutions, normes, outils)	FAIRE (actions personnelles ou collectives)	INTERAGIR (espaces, atmosphères)
Subsistance		1 Être en bonne santé mentale et physique	2 Avoir un toit	3 Se nourrir, se reposer, travailler	4 Environnement de vie, environnement social
Protection		5 Être autonome, être solidaire	6 Avoir des économie/épargne	7 Aider les autres, prendre soin des autres	8 Espace de vie, logement
Affection		9 Être solidaire, respectueux, tolérant	10 Avoir des amis, une famille, des partenariats Relation avec la nature	11 Exprimer ses émotions, partager, apprécier	12 Foyer, domicile Espaces de convivialité/d'unité
Compréhension		13 Avoir une conscience critique, être curieux(se), être discipliné(e), être rationnel(le)	14	15 Expérimenter/expérimentation	16 Interactions formatrices (intéressantes) Groupes, communautés
Participation		17 Adaptabilité, être solidaire, dévoué(e)	18 Droits, responsabilités, devoirs, privilèges	19 S'affilier, coopérer, partager Proposer, contester, exprimer opinions	20 Espaces d'interaction participative Fêtes, associations, communautés, quartier/voisinage
Loisir		21 Être imaginatif, téméraire, tranquille	22 Soirées, spectacles, clubs Tranquillité, paix de l'esprit	23 Laisser place aux fantaisies, s'amuser, jouer, se relaxer	24 Avoir du temps libre
Création		25 Être passionné(e), imaginatif(ve), audacieux(se)	26 Avoir les compétences, capacités	27 Construire, designer, inventer, composer	28 Groupes culturels, espaces d'expression
Identité		29 Sentiment d'appartenance, estime de soi, affirmation de soi, différenciation	30 Habitudes, groupe de référence, valeurs, normes	31 S'impliquer, s'intégrer, décider	32 Cadre de vie, cadres auxquels on appartient
Liberté		33 Être autonome, ouvert(e) d'esprit, audacieux(se), rebelle	34 Égalité des droits	35 Être différent, contester, choisir, désobéir (aux standards notamment)	36 Plasticité/adaptabilité temporelle, spatiale

ANNEX 3 (1): INTERVIEW GUIDE (TRANSLATED – EN)

INTERVIEW GUIDE
TRANSLATION
Degrowth and wellbeing

For these interviews, the goal was to recruit people who adhere to the principles of degrowth and who practice it to varying degrees. There is no right or wrong answer, no good or bad practice. The goal is simply to engage in a discussion that allows for a better understanding of the links between degrowth and sustainable wellbeing, different for each interviewee.

1. Consumption reduction and social practices

We will start by discussing your degrowth practices in a fairly broad way, then we will focus on the three areas of consumption that have the most impact on the environment: food mobility and housing (energy).

FYI: A social practice is a daily habit, activity or action that becomes regular, repetitive.

1. Please describe when and how you came to adhere to degrowth/started following information/participating in degrowth action?
    a. How did your transition to a more degrowth lifestyle go? What were the important stages, the difficulties?

2. Please describe your daily practices in the following three areas of consumption:
    a. **Please describe tour daily practices in relation to food**
        - Type of places you prefer to buy from
        - Product categories
        - How do you buy (packaging, brands, quantity)?
        - Homemade, exchanges?

        What does help you/ Who does help you? What are you having problem with/Who are you having problem with regarding food practices?

    b. **Please describe your daily practices in relation to energy consumption in your home (housing)**
        - Type of housing you live in, what motivated this choice?
        - Lifestyle in the home
            a. Heating (routines for staying warm…)
            b. Lighting
            c. Household appliances and use of appliances (eg. Washing routines – washer, dryer, dishwasher…)

        What does help you/ Who does help you? What are you having problems with/Who are you having problems with in relation to energy consumption in the home?

    c. **Please describe your daily practices in relation to mobility**
        i. Daily mobility
            - Means of transport you use
            - Frequency of use
        ii. Professional mobility (business trips, incentives, etc.)
            - Means of transport you use
            - Frequency of use
        iii. Leisure mobility, personal, holidays
            - Means of transport you use
            - Frequency of use

        What does help you/ Who does help you? What are you having problems with/Who are you having problems with in relation to mobility?

3. Does a consumption area that has not been mentioned seem important to you in relation to your degrowth practices?

4. In your opinion, what are the implications of theses practices on the different dimensions of sustainability? Environmental, social and economic dimensions, wellbeing? See utopia of wellbeing (Wilhite, 2015:312)

2. Degrowth and wellbeing

In this second part of the interview, we will talk about the link between the degrowth practices discussed just before and wellbeing.

Wellbeing

5. How have your needs been more or less met since you have adopted a degrowth lifestyle?

6. Do you feel that there is something missing in your life today? (which may not have been the case before you moved to a degrowth lifestyle)

ANNEX 3 (2): INTERVIEW GUIDE (TRANSLATED – EN)

7. In terms of wellbeing, what has become the most important thing for you (which was not necessarily important before? What has become the less important? (which may have been more important before).

Human fundamental needs, Max-Neef

When we talk about wellbeing, we are talking about needs, not desires. Indeed, unlike desires, which are specific to each person and insatiable, needs are universal and finite. This is what the Max-Neef fundamental needs matrix that I sent to you a few days ago shows us, and which we will now discuss in connection with your practices.

8. In relation to the degrowth practices discussed above, how does your current lifestyle meet the following needs (from the matrix that was provided to you)?

Being (B), Having (H), Doing (D), Interacting (I)

a. **Subsistence** (indispensable, vital)
   - Physical health, mental health (B)
   - Food, shelter, work (H)
   - Feed, procreate, rest, work (D)
   - Living environment, social setting (I)

b. **Protection** (security, serenity)
   - Autonomy, solidarity (B)
   - Savings (H)
   - Take care, help (D)
   - Living space, dwelling (I)

c. **Affection** (relationships, sharing)
   - Solidarity, respect, tolerance (B)
   - Friendships, family, partnerships, relationship with nature (H)
   - Express emotions, share, appreciate (D)
   - Home, space of togetherness (I)

d. **Understanding** (of the world, what is happening)
   - Critical consciences, curiosity, discipline, rationality (B)
   - Experiment (D)
   - Setting formative interactions, groups, communities (I)

e. **Participation** (participate to life, society)
   - Adaptability, solidarity, dedication (B)
   - Rights, responsibilities, duties, privileges (H)
   - Become affiliated, cooperate, share, dissent, express opinions (D)
   - Setting of participative interactions, parties, associations, communities, neighborhood (I)

f. **Leisure/Idleness** (relaxation, fun)
   - Imagination, recklessness, tranquility (B)
   - Parties, spectacles, clubs, peace of mind (H)
   - Give way to fantasies, have fun, play, relax (D)
   - Free time (I)

g. **Creation** (build, compose, express oneself)
   - Passion, imagination, boldness (B)
   - Abilities, skills (H)
   - Build, invent, design, compose (D)
   - Cultural groups, spaces for expression (I)

h. **Identity** (to assert oneself, to belong)
   - Sense of belonging, self esteem, differentiation (B)
   - Habits, reference groups, values, norms (H)
   - Commit oneself, integrate oneself, decide on (D)
   - Everyday settings, setting which one belongs to (I)

i. **Freedom** (choose, autonomy)
   - Autonomy, open-mindedness, boldness, rebelliousness (B)
   - Equal rights (H)
   - Be different from, dissent, choose, disobey D)
   - Temporal/ Spatial plasticity (I)

9. Do you see any practices in your lifestyle that would be likely to meet one of the needs just mentioned, while at the same time reducing the possibility of meeting others of these needs?

10. What do the limits (which you set yourself in your practices) mean to you?

ANNEX 3 (3): INTERVIEW GUIDE (TRANSLATED – EN)

3. Covid-19 et future

After discussing your practices and how they relate to the notion of wellbeing, we now enter the last part of the interview which questions, based on the current context, the opportunities and possibilities for a different and more 'degrowing' future.

11. How do you imagine a '*degrowing*' future (environmentally and socially sustainable)?
    a. Who would be the key actors (individuals, community, law, municipality, city/canton/country)?
    b. What would be the advantages and disadvantages?

12. It seems that the current health crisis has changed the consumption patterns of all, as well as their impact on wellbeing. What do you think?
    a. What do you think of the notion of suffered degrowth?
       Is it necessary to choose to 'build' the degrowth before being confronted with the obligation of a suffered economic degrowth?

Sociodemographic data

- Age of household members
- Marital status
- Professional situation, activity rate
- Highest diploma of each member of the household
- Household income
- Welfare benefits received
- Type of accommodation (house, apartment)
- Owner or tenant of the dwelling in which you reside
- Other assets (real estate, financial), ancillary income
- Residential location
- Nationality, date of arrival in Geneva

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Consumption is a crucial issue in relation to environmental sustainability, particularly addressed through studies on the impact of consumption patterns on the environment. Consumption patterns have also been considered in relation to another dimension of sustainability that involves people's quality of life and notions of social justice. In that respect, there has been a growing interest in the links between consumption, environmental sustainability and wellbeing (Guillen-Royo & Wilhite, 2015; Brand-Correa & Steinberger, 2017; Gough, 2017 among others). One hopeful hypothesis suggests that reduced consumption levels and associated negative impacts might actually lead to higher wellbeing – what Tim Jackson has termed the double dividend (2005). Yet, more empirical evidence is needed to better understand this double dividend. This book draws on a research project that aimed at understanding the nexus between everyday consumption patterns and wellbeing, in relation to sufficiency – or absolute reductions in consumption. Building on Max Neef's theories of fundamental human needs (1991) and a social practice theory approach to consumption (Shove, 2003 among others), this work proposes a distinctive conceptual framework that supports the theoretical and empirical compatibility of social practice theory, consumption reduction, and a needs-based considerations of wellbeing. Drawing on individual interviews with people close to the Geneva degrowth movement network (*Réseau d'objection de croissance*), the book questions the relationship between everyday life consumption and the good life. It illustrates how the understanding of the nexus between sufficiency and wellbeing through everyday practices can be considered as a window of opportunity towards forms of change that would take into account environmental and social dimensions of sustainability, as equally crucial and interrelated aspects of (sustainable) wellbeing.

Orlane Moynat is a PhD student and research and teaching assistant at the Institute of Sociological Research and the Department of sociology of the University of Geneva. She holds a Master's degree in Communication and Marketing with a specialization in consumer behavior (2017) and a Master's degree in Sociology specializing in sociology of consumption and sustainability (2020). She has contributed to various research projects on consumption in sociology and political science and her interests are evolving around sustainability and well-being in relation to the ecological transition and the future(s).

ISBN: 978-2-940386-69-7