UTOPIAS BEYOND DEVELOPMENT:
a qualitative study exploring connectedness of Finnish transition movements to post-development

Jenna-Maria Soikkeli

Master's Thesis

Development and International Cooperation

Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Sociology

University of Jyväskylä

Spring 2020

ABSTRACT

Title:	Utopias beyond development: a qualitative study exploring connectedness of Finnish transition movements to post-development
Author:	Jenna-Maria Soikkeli
Programme:	Development and International Cooperation
Major Subject:	Sociology
Type of work:	Master's Thesis
Department:	Department of Philosophy and Social Sciences
University:	University of Jyväskylä
Supervisor:	Teppo Eskelinen
Time:	Spring 2020

The aim of the study is to explore the perceptions of better society of individuals associating to transition alternatives in the context of Finland and whether these imagined utopias correspond with the aims of post-development and alternatives to development transitions. The thesis is based in post-development and alternatives to development theory. To explore perceptions of societal alternatives the thesis utilizes the conceptual framework of utopia as a method. The research is rooted in a social constructionist approach to qualitative reflective research. The data is collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews, which involve participants in the imagining of utopian societal alternatives. The data analysis process is informed by Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. The results suggest that societal utopian imaging arising from Finnish transition discourses connects to post-development discourses on the levels of economic criticism, desire for living guided by social and ecological sustainability as well as in the recognition of the value of learning from other alternatives discourses. The utopian images and post-development diverge in their relation to modernity and development as the foundation of criticism.

Keywords: alternatives to development, degrowth, post-development, transition discourses, utopia as method

Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää muutos diskursseihin samaistuvien yksilöiden utopianäkemyksiä paremmasta suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta ja miten nämä kuvitellut utopiat vastaavat post-development -kehityskritiikkiin pohjaavia muutosvaihtoehtoja. Vaihtoehtoisten yhteiskunnan muotojen tutkimiseksi opinnäytetyössä hyödynnetään utopian käsitettä menetelmänä. Tutkimus lähestyy aihetta sosiaalisen konstruktionismin ja reflektiivisen laadullisen tutkimuksen näkökulmasta. Englannin- ja suomenkielinen tutkimusaineisto koostuu puolistrukturoiduista syvähaastatteluista, joissa haastateltavat osallistuvat utopistisen yhteiskunnan kuvitteluun. Tutkimusaineiston analyysi toteutettiin Braunin ja Clarken temaattisen analyysimenetelmän mukaan. Tutkimuksen tulokset viittaavat siihen, että suomalaisista muutosdiskursseista johdetut yhteiskunnan utopiat yhdistyvät post-development -kehityskriittisiin näkemyksiin taloudellisen kritiikin, sosiaalisen ja ekologisen kestävyyden tavoitteiden sekä oppimismahdollisuuksien tunnustamisen tasoilla. Suomalaisten yhteiskunnalliset utopiat ja post-development -kehityskritiikki eroavat käsityksessään modernismin ja kehityksen roolista yhteiskunnallisen kritiikin perustana.

Asiasanat: degrowth, muutosvaihtoehdot, utopia, kasvukritiikki, kehityskritiikki, post-development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of figures

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction to the study

"To root oneself in the present demands an image of the future. It is not possible to act here and now, in the present, without having an image of the next instant, of the other, of a certain temporal horizon. That image of the future offers guidance, encouragement, orientation, hope." Gustavo Esteva, 1992 (in Sachs 1992 p.23)

This thesis is one benchmark on a personal academic journey that has been guided by post-development, alternatives to development, and utopian social theory. The outcome is a critical examination of the current society which I inhabit, what its alternative futures could look like, and what the utopian imaginaries of individuals who associate with transition movements contribute to how we could imagine our currently insecure future differently.

When first starting the research process this insecurity was mostly defined by the loom of climate change and the slow realization even in popular media that the Western, and Finnish, ways of living were unsustainable. At the end of the process and in the stage of final interviews this insecurity was also colored by the coronavirus. Raising questions about what the world will look like after the virus. Will it continue on the same tracks or will a desire for a transformed world emerge?

Arturo Escobar describes uncertainty, deterioration of planetary conditions, and loss of confidence in established political and knowledge institutions to drive change as an emergent ground for transition discourses in the last decade (Escobar 2015). He suggests the bridging of alternative movements rooted in the Global South with alternatives emerging from the Global North though the concept of *transition discourses*. The terms then come to create a passage of conversation between post-development, degrowth, alternatives to development, and other transition movements rooted in varied geographic contexts but which all call for paradigmatic transformation. (Escobar 2015) The reason for which such approaches to societal change are studied here is due to their long tradition in promoting change and their critical attachment to some of the major issues which are faced in our current time, such as environmental degradation.

This thesis aims to more closely examine this passage between discourses arising from the Global South and the Global North. The research questions address this is in a twofold manner: first, how do individuals associating to transition discourses in Finland imagine a transformed Finnish society? And secondly, how do these utopian visions of alternative futures correspond with post-development criticism and alternatives associated with the Global South? The theoretical base is therefore strongly rooted in the development criticism of post-development and the alternative visions for living of alternatives to development. As the theoretical field originally stems from the Global South the theoretical examination allows for a better understanding of what the role of the Global North has traditionally been in the discourse and how these relations have changed.

The thesis is aligned with social constructionist approaches to epistemology and therefore reflexivity of the researcher and data collection as a process of co-creation are highlighted throughout. A constructionist perspective allows for the recognition of the contextuality of knowledge, which is both important in light of association to post-development critique as well as the conceptual framework of utopias as a method.

There are many ways of understanding utopias through a method perspective and this thesis highlights the capacity of utopias to reflect societal desires, which inherently hold criticism of our current society due to their inevitable linkage to their context of creation. Utopias in this context are defined as a process of social dreaming (Sargent 2006) and expressions of desire for better ways of living (Levitas 2017). In the words of Levitas "*utopia works towards an understanding of what is necessary for human fulfilment and towards a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms different from those dominating the mundane present*" (Levitas 2013 p.4). The utopian method then acts as a means to provoke and explore imagination and desire for futures which at this moment might seem unattainable.

The following section will provide a more detailed look at the research questions and objectives of the study. The following chapters focus on discussing the theoretical background of post-development and the conceptual frame of utopias as method in more depth. After this a comprehensive look at the thesis' method and methodology will guide the reader into the presentation and analysis of research findings.

1.2. Research questions and objectives

The identification of the research question can be influenced by many factors; its relevance, gaps in knowledge as well as the researcher's positionality. This thesis emphasizes reflective methodology which will be discussed more in detail in chapter four on methodology, but the positionality of me as a researcher will be shortly discussed here due to the researcher's impact on all stages of study, including the selection of research question (Lichtman 2014). Such an approach is inspired by Mary Lichtman and Alan Peshkin, who discuss the role of subjectivity and researcher reflexivity in qualitative research. Alan Peshkin demonstrates his reflective approach through the search of selves, "I's", though out his research process, and argues that by systematically observing researcher subjectivity he was able to better tame and recognize possible assumptions based on his subjectivity as the researcher (Peshkin 1988).

Based on research notes taken throughout the process, I have identified three selves which I find to be relevant especially in the context of selection of the research question: the change desiring I, the novice researcher I and the alternatives to the development I. Such subjectivities cannot be completely tracked to their origin, but each self could connect to factors such as previous experiences, education, the context of culture, position in society and so forth. All these selves are visible in the research questions and the research process. Through identification and reflection, it becomes more apparent for me as a researcher where I need to tread with more caution.

An example of this can be seen in examining the alternatives to development I. That self is based on an association towards critical alternatives to development due to problematic experiences with development practice in training and work. The recognition of such subjectivity is important to check assumptions relating to the theoretical field's applicability in the context of Finland. Therefore, objective two also incorporates a research question that examines how relevant the correspondence of development criticism is in the utopian envisioning of the West. The identification of selves provided me with a tool to reflect upon my work as a researcher throughout the study and provide the reader with adequate information on the writer for further judgment.

As said, there are also other factors influencing the selection of the research question. The overarching aim of this study is to explore local perceptions for alternative ways to imagine societies beyond development, consumption, or growth in the context of Finland. Such an emphasis is based on the discussions of post-development transitions and their possible relevance in the context of the West. Latouche and Bendix argue that any scaled societal transitions towards post-development in the South also require a societal change in the North (Bendix 2017; Latouche 2009). The main research objective is motivated by the question which arises from such views; what could such a utopian North look like?

As framed in the introduction the research process has been contextualized in an understanding of global uncertainty regarding climate change and the coronavirus, which continue to provoke discussion on societal change and alternatives. Societal alternatives in this thesis are explored in the context of transition discourses associated with post-development, alternatives to development, the pluriverse, degrowth, and other growth critical movements. This is by no means a suggestion that alternative societies can merely be understood through such a theoretical or practical framework.

The research question is strongly tied to the inability to imagine a radically different society to the one which I, the researcher, but also the other actors who work with alternatives live in now. Abensour emphasizes the ability of utopian imagining to bridge such inabilities to imagine a vastly different way of living than the context in which consumers of utopia inhabit (in Levitas 2017). The utopian method approach will be discussed more in detail in the following sections, but here it is important to highlight how such utopian imagining supports the research question in the quest to clarify even temporarily what it is that transformative movements imagine as the outcomes to all their actions for change.

The research questions are organized below in accordance with the research objectives. Objective one is directly concerned with the above-examined exploration of alternatives, while objective two adds to the understanding of linkages between Northern and Southern alternatives.

Objective 1: To explore the perceptions of better society of individuals associating to transition alternatives in the context of Finland.

- What kind of societal alternatives do utopian explorations present?
- What criticism is present in the utopian imagining of Finland?

To more comprehensively understand what transition discourses from the Global North can contribute to the global search for alternative paradigms it is essential to explore what kind of utopias arise from specific local contexts – here from Finland. The choice to limit the research scope to the context of Finland is a methodological one that recognizes the social constructionist emphasis on cultural relativism of knowledge and aligns with the post-development aims of searching for plural alternatives rather than universal ones.

The research questions are informed by the utopian capacity, where utopias can be seen to reflect both criticism and views on societal opportunities. This understanding will be discussed more in detail in chapter three.

Objective 2: To access the correspondence of post-development criticism with perceived opportunities and criticism inherent in utopias imagined from the perspective of transformative alternatives.

- How do utopian opportunities and criticism relate to post-development theory and alternatives to development thinking?

The second objective aims to understand how the utopian images of society stemming from the Finnish context correspond to post-development and alternatives to development theory and practices. Such an examination allows for identifying possible convergence and conflict that might strengthen dialogue between movements from the Global South and the Global North.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Post-development theory

For the construction of the research question I will view the literature of post-development in two general parts at its core: one focusing on the criticism of development itself, the other on possible alternatives. Post-development is a development critical theoretical field, which does not aim at changing development and its practices, but discards development as a conceptual whole (Ziai 2017a). The abandonment of development is based on the idea that development is a historically and politically formulated practice that is based on values deriving from a Western experience of societal change and its impacts include othering and homogenization of cultures globally through economic and technological practices (Sachs 1992b).

In addition to criticism of development, post-development also explores alternatives to development as a core guiding principle of organizing social life. Alternatives to development offers a possible place of linkage between Southern and Northern alternatives traditions. This is apparent in the inclusion of Northern alternatives such as degrowth into more recent discussions on post-development and transitional alternatives. Degrowth and its more region-specific manifestations share some theoretical and intellectual base with post-development, such as the strong critique of the Gross Domestic Product as a measure of development or wellbeing, critique of the economy's dominance over nature, and so forth. Degrowth criticism has been connected to criticism of development as criticism emanating "*from the belly of the beast*" (Trebeck 2016). Post-development does not converge all Southern and Northern alternatives under one umbrella, but the concept of transition discourses opens up a space to imagine radically different local futures globally. Including different futures in the North. Escobar utilizes the preliminary conceptualization of transition discourses to bridge both Southern and Northern alternatives that call for a global paradigm shift (Escobar 2015). Northern alternatives which have been included in post-development explorations of alternatives, such as degrowth, will be examined in this thesis through their strands of connection. These strands connecting the disciplines are further discussed in the section on alternatives to development, but it is important to note that Northern and Southern alternative movements are not equated, but rather their

similarities and differences will be examined in the course of the research as the 3rd research objective states.

Post-development thinking on alternatives is crucial in the formulating the background for this thesis, but before delving into them it is necessary to focus on some core writings in post-development theory to clarify their foundation. The following section will examine the literature of key pieces of post-development literature: The Development Dictionary edited by Wolfgang Sachs and Encountering Development by Arturo Escobar. Their analysis will be accompanied by more recent reflection on the relevance of post-development in our time and open the door to the discussion on alternatives to development and Northern alternatives.

These two pieces of writing have been chosen to present post-development literature due to their influence in the theoretical field. The Development Dictionary at its publishing was one of the first extensive collections which drew together critical development thinkers all of whom were through their criticism attempting to go beyond development and not improve the practice as was common in previous critical development literature (Ziai 2017). The relevance of The Development Dictionary to this thesis is also echoed by its impact on the discipline. Post-development is still to an extent viewed as radical and marginal in the context of development practice, but its critiques have echoed in the discipline after the publishing of The Development Dictionary. Ziai's brief analysis of the prevalence of post-development critique in development teaching materials is one demonstration of this (Ziai 2017).

Arturo Escobar's Encountering Development on the other hand is examined due to its ability to highlight aspects of power and knowledge production in the context of development through examination of discourse linking it to constructionism. The piece strengthened the use of genealogy in building criticism of development, which is prominent in much of post-development writing. Encountering Development also demonstrates the two strong tendencies of post-development; criticism and search for alternatives. While The Development Dictionary mostly focused on the compilation of critique, Encountering Development highlights both and can introduce the search for alternatives as a motivation for post-development.

The Development Dictionary: where development and genealogy meet

The Development Dictionary was first published in 1992 as an obituary to development, in the words of Wolfgang Sachs (Sachs 1992 p.1). The dictionary is built around 19 fiercely critical essays, each focusing on key concepts of development. During its publication, its reception was mixed: the essays were seen as required reading for development enthusiasts (Kolås 1994), its writers were undermined due to their lack of identification to academia, their native language and sources (Petersen 1992) as well as lack of inclusion of the grassroots (Parajuli 1996).

The dictionary takes a contextualizing approach to the concept of development. Most of the contributors to the volume trace the birth of development as a concept to the inaugural speech of U.S. President Truman in 1949 (Alvares p. 219, Cleaver p.233, Esteva p.6, Illich p.91, Sachs p.2). This historic moment guides much of the analysis of the development of development. It becomes connected to the fight against communism, a *"false philosophy"* in Truman's words (1949 Inauguration Speech of Harry Truman - 5.43 min). According to Gustavo Esteva, Truman's use of the term *underdevelopment* was unique in its global contextualization. Development and underdevelopment were to become a defining feature of American development action and global dynamics of needs, power, and desires. (Esteva 1992) This semantic is important as it frames the political atmosphere within which development as a global project was conceived; with the backdrop of the Cold War, where communism was seen as a threat to democracy and freedom. With most of the essays in The Development Dictionary, the authors more or less use such a genealogical approach to the concepts examined and thus trace the political, social, and historical settings which have formulated the emergence of development to its current state.

Deriving from this genealogical approach development does not stand on its own in the face of criticism, but The Development Dictionary also becomes a critique of modernity and capitalism which intertwine with development in values and practice.

While there is a vast variety of modernization theories, Parsons' approach provides a very clear contrast to The Development Dictionary's criticism. Simply put, modernization theory based on Parsons' stages of societal evolution from primitive to modern societies, enforces a clear indication of a single desirable goal for society as well as processes which

guide the way to modern societies. These descriptions of modern societies and the processes of change are mostly based on the Western experience of societal change. (Martinelli 2005) Such theoretical strands, while currently viewed in development studies as mostly inappropriate and flawed, did enjoy support in the 1950s and 1960s contributing to the idea of a linear path to development (John Baylis, Smith, and Owens 2011).

The modern economy on the other hand is in several instances described as a significant driver of this *monoculture* in The Development Dictionary. The modern economy here refers to capitalist economics, characterized by a free market, privatization as well as profit and growth-seeking. The economic system is not criticized only due to its content, but also due to its position as a primary global concern as a measure for development and its prioritization of material well-being over other forms. (Berthoud 1992 p.70-87). The growth economy is also highlighted in The Development Dictionary as a danger to the environment. As capitalist economics and development are intertwined for the authors, development is criticized as unsustainable and impossible as a global plan (Sachs 1992 p.38), an argument that resonates even more acutely in our time.

What connects the criticism of development, modernity and capitalism here is a larger criticism of the single idea or a single way forward for all. Post-development and The Development Dictionary echo the post-modern theoretical field in their refusal of the metanarrative, in this case the global narrative of development. Ideas of modernity and economic capitalism could be viewed as two, to an extent, intertwined historical periods, which from a post-development perspective have influenced the formation of development as a concept to this day. The effects of global prioritization of specific values and ways of life presented in The Development Dictionary can be summed up into simultaneous homogenization and othering.

By setting a geopolitical starting point to development as a process, its implications for the values inherent in development become important in building criticism. Sachs introduces the reader to development as a project of Westernization of the world, grounded in the threat of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the end for colonialism (Sachs 1992 p. 1-4). Truman's four-point program indeed aimed at economic growth through capitalist economic ideals such as encouragement of private investment and modernization of industrial technology (Macekura 2013). Sachs views development and its values as

creators of a global *monoculture*, which he argues can be seen in desires which are occupied by Western imagery, in the use of language globally as well as in the disappearance of alternative ways of living to growth-oriented industrial society (Sachs 1992 p.4).

Serge Latouche applies a similar train of thought in his writing on standards of living. While the pursuit for the good life has always been a priority for humans, he argues that the ways of living well have become defined on a global level making some pursuits and definitions less compatible with the logic of modernity, therefore having a homogenizing effect (Latouche 1992 p. 255-257). The homogenizing effect of development on culture and societies described by both Sachs and Latouche is a common thread throughout The Development Dictionary; Western values are seen to dominate over others, effecting prioritization of nations states, development planning, and ecological thinking.

Simultaneously the contributors to the dictionary discuss the drive for monoculture creating an inferior outsider identity to those not "developed enough" or not desiring development. For Esteva this is again inherent in the birth of development. He refers back to Truman's inauguration speech and the first use of the word underdevelopment in a global political setting: "*underdevelopment began, then, on January 20, 1949. On that day, two billion people became underdeveloped… they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of the others' reality; … a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority (Esteva 1992 p.7)".* Esteva describes a process which in the seeking of a uniting aim defines desires for a diverse global population and interprets all other forms of being in the light of these aims, with an assumption of universality of those desires. Development here comes to define America and the West, democracy, and freedom, while simultaneously defining "the other" only through its lacking in that what developed nations already have.

The Development Dictionary at its core is critical; it is critical of sustainable development, technological progress, the United Nations, academic knowledge production, capitalism, westernization, and development. Where it manages to deliver its most powerful impact is in its dissection of the uncomfortable power relations inherent in development. Discussing its birth as a product of the Cold War and building its biography in sync with historical

events and political context, it manages to frame development as politics and as historically constructed multifunctioning process and concept which due to its evolution is not valueless, but value ridden.

Encountering Development: Making and Unmaking of the Third World by Arturo Escobar

To emphasize the role of power in the post-development discourse, it is a good time to discuss Arturo Escobar's Encountering Development and connect its insights on knowledge as power to The Development Dictionary. Encountering Development was first published in 1994 and continued post-development criticism centering issues of knowledge creation, power, and representation in international development. Escobar defines the piece as anthropological as well as post-structuralist with its focus on the cultural systems which have created the knowledge around development. He begins the history of development from the same place as many of the contributors to The Development Dictionary; at Harry Truman's inaugural speech. For Escobar, underdevelopment became a form of representation of the "other" within the discourse of development. This othering echoes Edward Said's writing on the creation of Orientalism as a means to define and strengthen the West rather than describe accurately a culture or nation different from a Western perspective (Said 2003). Through discourse analysis knowledge about and representation of social worlds lose perceived neutrality. Knowledge about development then implies knowledge of how others should live and how they could live better through specific actions. Here the power lies in the more privileged and powerful entity applying its knowledge as neutral, deeming other ways of knowing as less powerful.

One of Escobar's major contributions to post-development thought is the demonstration of how development as a discourse has been able to label entities in the real world from a specific point of reality, without recognizing its specificity. He characterizes the language of development as *devspeak,* the language of "uncontextualized global knowledge (Escobar 1995 p.146)". The linking of power and development knowledge through Escobar's discourse thinking importantly elaborates upon The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power. This element of power and epistemology is a core one in post-development thought and the foundation upon which later writing has been built.

What is the relevance of post-development today and has it changed since its conception?

Did development die with The Development Dictionary? It didn't, but the contributors to the epos of post-development among others continue to reflect upon the impact and relevance of the scholarship in our current time. The context in which the dictionary was published is different from what it is now and while some aspects of the criticism have only strengthened due to the latest economic and environmental crisis, some aspect of criticism have lost their relevance or their critical edge due to their integration into common practice.

On the 25th anniversary of the publication of The Development Dictionary, the journal Third World Quarterly published an issue on post-development including contributions from many of the original writers. In the edition, Aram Ziai highlights criticism of power relations and contribution towards the non-Eurocentric theory of change as the lasting achievements of post-development (Ziai 2017a). He takes a look at the impact of post-development in the context of academia in his brief study of the prevalence of core post-development arguments in publications aimed at teaching development studies. In his article he finds that the acknowledgment of values inherent in development and the historical examination of the concept is present in two-thirds of his sample, which is comparatively much more that between 1989 and 2006 (Ziai 2017b). Such a remark is significant in demonstrating that some elements of post-development are no longer located in the periphery of the academic field and that Eurocentrism as well as colonialism are finding a place in how development studies are taught.

Sachs takes an eloquent and more radical approach to the state of post-development through practical examples. In his comparison of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the encyclical Laudato si' by Pope Francis, he argues that enthusiasm for development is over and that it has been replaced by the decline of expansive modernity. Sachs ends with a call to declare the end of the post-development era. (Sachs, Wolfgang 2017) His analysis of the SDGs brings to the forefront the subtle movement from a developing – developed dichotomy to a set of goals targeted at all United Nations member states, explicitly specifying "*developed and developing countries alike (United Nations 2015).*" (Sachs, Wolfgang 2017) In addition to emphasizing global responsibility, the

consumption and production patterns of developed nations are targeted for more sustainable and responsible action (United Nations 2015). Such a shift of focus through a post-development lens buries the singular aim of modernizing societies as a goal and crumbles the position of Western countries as the target of all societies.

Both Ziai's and Sachs' contributions emphasize the persisting relevance of post-development and simultaneously present examples of our time where development as a concept has been changed and power associated with it has started to crumble. The previously radical and fringe scholarship has in some ways been integrated into more mainstream development studies and simultaneously the representatives of the classical concept of developed, such as Western nations, are losing their role model status on the global market and in the face of climate change.

In a casual exchange, Esteva and Escobar, do not deny the desire for development which still prevails globally, but similarly to Sachs recognize the end of development's most dominant era and the demise of modernity. What is key in their writing is the focus on alternatives. Escobar's insight into the fear which accompanies the demise of modernity guides to the questions of how to better desire – to "*desire non-capitalist, non-liberal and non-modern forms of life*" (Esteva and Escobar 2017 p.2569), which resonates with discussions on the functions of utopia that will be discussed in the following sections. Esteva emphasizes the existence of pluralist alternatives and their location outside academia. (Esteva and Escobar 2017)

The need to justify the core arguments of post-development seems to have diminished and the focus is oriented towards the changing environment of development and societal post-development alternatives. This desire for transformation and alternatives is key to the elaboration of post-development theory.

2.2. Alternatives to development

Thinking about alternatives is only somewhat present in the early texts of post-development. In this section I will shortly discuss the role of alternatives in The Development Dictionary and Encountering Development. This will be followed by an introduction to more recent writing on alternatives to development. The section does not

attempt to present the substance of different alternatives as there is a vast variety within the literature. What I will try to do here instead is to focus on examining the root of alternatives in shared criticism, the emphasis of marginalized knowledge, prominence of localism, and the emergence of alternatives in the context of global transition. As alternatives to development is often associated with the Global South it is important to discuss what the role of the West is in the context of post-development and alternatives to development. This discussion will include a reflection on how the West is portrayed and associated in early post-development writing and a brief overlook of transition discourses in the West such as degrowth and undeveloping the West. The inclusion of critical alternatives arising from the West to post-development thought is important in shifting the thinking around where change needs to happen for increased wellbeing on a global scale, in recognizing power relations and introducing new ontological approaches to contrast Western dominant ones. In the section that follows, I present some ideas on how alternatives to development were present in early post-development writing.

The role of alternatives in early post-development writing: utilizing alternatives to strengthen criticism

While The Development Dictionary can mostly be seen to focus on the problem rather than the solution, existing alternatives are often shortly mentioned in contrast to the negative impacts of development on non-modern ways of living. Many of the alternatives or opposing movements to modern ways of living and economizing environments are brought up in the context of nature and local knowledge connected to these environments. Sachs discusses the influential Indian Chikpo movement as an example of protecting nature in a non-violent manner utilizing local knowledge of their connected ecosystem (Sachs 1992b). Shiva similarly recites examples of ecological movements from India, Malaysia, and Indonesia whose manner of living in sustenance closely linked to proximate natural resources have been threatened due to commercialization of the surrounding environment (Shiva 1992 p. 214).

When specific examples are not used, *vernacular societies* and *grassroot movements* are referred to (Sachs 1992a p.112). Majid Rahnema emphasizes the resistance of indigenous communities and grassroot movements to be made poor by the world economy. In his description, these resistance movements exercise culturally relative alternatives but

simultaneously have the potential to change how poverty is currently defined. (Rahnema 1992 p.176) Rahnema's exploration of alternatives in the context of defining poverty emphasizes resistance, local knowledge, and cultural relativism, all elements which become visible also in more recent explorations of post-development alternatives.

Sachs takes the most elaborate approach to explore an alternative of cosmopolitan localism to developmentalism in The Development Dictionary. The section on it brief, but one of the most elaborate suggestions of an alternative to development throughout the piece. For Sachs "*Cosmopolitan localism seeks to amplify the richness of the place while keeping in mind the rights of a multi-faceted world.* (Sachs 1992a p.113)" His suggestion of an alternative to development is based on values of diversity and localism, without discarding a cosmopolitan value or *common horizon of the one world* (Sachs 1992a).

In the conclusion of Escobar's *Encountering Development* (1994) he focuses on how alternatives to development should be explored in the *Third World*. Rather than focusing on any singular alternative Escobar describes the process of research on alternatives due to emphasis on the danger and impossibility of one alternative for all. He places focus on ethnographic methods, creation of new theory, the grassroots beyond academics, and examination of existing alternatives in local settings (p.223-4). The "*unmaking of the Third World* " (p.225) is declared as one of the key aims for the search of alternatives and simultaneously guides the post-development scholarship in the direction of exploring alternatives. Arturo Escobar in his conclusion sets an aim for post-development critique; finding alternatives to development not development alternatives. He does not specifically outline one image of a post-development era but focuses on highlighting aspects that need to be excluded for such a future and means by which transformation should be sought from an academic perspective, neatly guiding us to the field of alternatives to development.

Growing from criticism

Sachs, Escobar, Rahnema, Shiva, and a plethora of other early writers in post-development establish the soil from which alternatives to development grow. The criticism of development is essential in the understanding of alternatives to development as these alternatives are not strictly guided by any other criteria than their motivation and linkage to critical ideas around modernity, development, and growth. Like post-development, which

does not aim to change the mechanisms of development, but at rejecting the paradigm (Ziai 2017a), alternatives to development continue the conscious effort to work outside the theoretical, ontological, and epistemological frame of development (Hollender 2015). Moving away from using alternatives ways of living as examples in the formation of criticism of development, writing on alternatives, such as Buen Vivir, Ubuntu, Swaraj, degrowth, and post-extractivism, have emerged (Demaria and Kothari 2017; Bendix 2017; Esteva and Escobar 2017; Ziai 2017a). These alternatives are no longer explored to demonstrate the faults of development, but to explore their inherent resistance, diversity, and dedication to social change in manners which are grounded in ontologies and epistemologies outside the West.

Rooted in the local Global South

Alternatives to development as a movement or as theory originate in the Global South. The literature presents existing and historical social movements, philosophies as well as pursuits for wellbeing practically and epistemologically based outside the Global North. In Latin America the Zapatistas, post-extractivist practices, and buen vivir represent existing alternatives to development in countries like Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador (Hollender 2015). In South Asia the Chipko movement and *swaraj* as an idea of "self-rule" based in Gandhism are represented as some of the alternatives (Demaria and Kothari 2017; Shrivastava, 2019). On the African continent Ubuntu has been explored as a concept of humanness, which considers relationships not only between humans but also with nature (Le Grange 2019). Such examples of alternatives to development bring to the forefront knowledge of indigenous people, experiences of grassroots movements, and philosophy based in the Global South. Alternatives are mostly grounded in the experience of currently and historically marginalized groups or at least based on their experiences and knowledge. The Spanish social scientist, José Maria Tortosa, described buen vivir as stemming "from the social periphery of the global periphery" (cited in Escobar 2013) the Abya Yala people of Bolivia and Ecuador. Alternatives to development tend to include a multiplicity of marginal identities in addition to indigenous people for example women through ecofeminism. The search for alternatives is therefore guided by intersectionally marginalized voices.

What is also important to notice here, is that most if not all, alternative suggestions are based in a locality and do not aim at universality: the buen vivir philosophy has been implemented through the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia (Hollender 2015), Gandhism is strongly based in the Indian experience of decolonization and so forth. Such expressions of alternatives are therefore in connection with the wider criticism of post-development, which rejects modern ideas of universality and therefore focuses on local or regional alternatives. Hens, the field does not aim at finding one alternative, but many alternatives.

Localized alternatives imply diversity and pluralism

The locality and contextuality of presented alternatives imply a multiplicity of ideas on wellbeing. Alternatives to development has in its later stages introduced a concept of the *pluriverse*, "*a world where many worlds fit*", in the words of the Zapatistas (cited in Kothari 2018). The concept is key to understanding the purpose of seeking for alternatives, but simultaneously to set exact goals for arising alternatives to development, different from post-development as a whole. To grasp the purpose of the *pluriverse* as a concept it is useful to reverse back to The Development Dictionary and Sachs' writing on *One World*.

Sachs builds the *One World* concept, on a Western ontology compiled from mankind's realization through linear progress, a unifying understanding of humanity over other intersectional characteristics, a single market for all; in short on ideas based in universality. Development becomes intertwined ontologically in this idea of universality (Sachs 1992a p.107). The development – post-development binary is accompanied by this universality – plurality binary. In a recent publication, Pluriverse: A Post-development Dictionary, Kothari emphasizes the role of exploration of alternative worldviews and practices in deconstructing development, deconstructing a single universe into a pluriverse (Kothari et al. 2019). For Escobar the pluriverse carries a similar significance, but in other words he describes the designing of a pluriverse as a means for more sustainable worlds than our current one (Escobar 2013). The concept of the pluriverse compiles ontologies of the marginalized in the Global South without attempting to create a universal theory of wellbeing and in the process links alternative epistemologies with sustainability and wellbeing.

A world in transitions

The following section will move on to briefly describe Escobar's emphasis on alternatives to development as transitional movements. It is worth mentioning here that Escobar distinguishes between alternatives from the Global North and post-development alternatives emerging from the Global South but uses transition discourses to address both. This dynamic of the Global North and Global South in alternatives to development will be discussed in more detail in the following section, which examines the role of the West in post-development and alternatives to development. Non the less, Escobar's remarks on the emergence of transition movements remain relevant here. For him the surfacing of transitional movements such as alternatives to development is related to the "*worsening of planetary ecology, social, and cultural conditions and the inability of established policy and knowledge institutions to imagine ways out of such crises*" (Escobar 2015 p.2). Such emphasis aims to solidify the relevance of post-development and alternatives to development in present-day by linking the dialogue to current global challenges. Escobar in this manner connects the currently dominant ideas of modernity, capitalism, neo-liberalism, and so forth to our current state of crisis and situates these alternative movements as the vehicles of transition towards new ways of understanding the world, organizing and living in it (Escobar 2015).

What is the role of the West/Global North in post-development and alternatives to development?

The scholarship and activism around post-development and alternatives to development originate in the Global South (Kothari et al. 2019). The school of thought principally highlights ontologies, epistemologies, and practices which are critical of Eurocentric definitions of wellbeing or processes of societal change guided by the Western historical experience. Why is it then necessary to discuss the Global North in the context of a school of thought which aims to highlight the marginal not the dominant? For this graduate thesis, it is important to understand how a theoretical background of post-development can, could and is understood in the context of the West. The following sections will first examine how the West emerges in post-development writing, how Western alternatives have been included in the discussion on alternatives to development and have a brief look at some alternatives emerging in the West which are seen to share founding in criticism of growth, modernity, and development as well as contribute to the conception of the pluriverse.

The Global North = development?

The Global North or the West became mostly synonymous with the values of development within the post-development literature. Core concepts of development such as standards of living are associated to dominant Western paradigms by Serge Latouche (Latouche 1992 p.254); Gérald Berthoud links the ultimate impact of development to the destruction of forms of sociality in the West (Berthoud 1992 p.85); Wolfgang Sachs uses the western model of society as a synonym for development (Sachs 1992 p.111); Arturo Escobar (Escobar 1995) and many other post-developmentalists (Esteva 1992; Sachs 1992a) build the core analysis of development as a discourse on the genealogy of western history of societal change. While the West is very present in the criticism of development, authors have emphasized that post-development does not equate to a criticism of the Western world (Esteva and Escobar 2017).

Post-development has been criticized for its presentation of the West and its modernity in a generalizing manner. Most early post-development writing recreates a development gaze towards the West. In contrast to the attempts of pluralizing and ridding the South of the development gaze the practice of seeing plurality only in the South deeply understates the current goal of seeking alternatives as a main goal of post-development. If development has found solutions only in the Western experience of historical development, the post-development gaze dichotomizes the spaces for problems and solutions, while emphasizing the need for multiple localized alternatives. In its criticism of development the West and development become equated. The West becomes reproduced as a homogeneous entity (Benedix 2017).

This issue has been addressed by post-development writers. Escobar recognizes the homogenizing impact, which has emerged from the criticism of development. In his reflection of The Development Dictionary he acknowledges the plurality and peripheries of the West and aims to shift post-development from a criticism of the West, towards a defense of alternatives. He emphasizes that the current direction of post-development is the focus on alternatives and a common goal of the pluriverse accommodating for all. (Esteva and Escobar 2017 p. 2568) Still, this does not undermine the criticism of post-development and the privilege which the West holds, even in discussing alternatives to development.

What are Western alternatives?

Alternatives deriving from the West are often categorized under one term. A most commonly occurring alternative from the West in alternatives to development writing is de-growth. As the main theoretical background of the thesis is in post-development theory, degrowth is here presented as an example of Western alternatives. Such an approach is required as there are overlapping thematic, theoretical, and practical implications when examining the utopian imaginaries of the individuals interviewed for the study. Some authors discussing the links between post-development and degrowth movements have identified that while there is a connection and often a shared aim of the two movements degrowth tends to lack in sensitivity on global connectedness, hierarchies, and recognizing universalist attitudes (Bendix 2017; Ziai 2014). One of the focuses of such an approach is then to examine how the actors' association with post-development, alternatives to development, and degrowth inform the imagined societal alternatives. In this manner interviews also take into consideration the global implications of societal change in the West, contributing to the understanding of what ideas emerge around global connectedness. By including a diverse set of actors under the umbrella of transition discourses (Escobar 2015) it is possible to bridge alternative actors without disregarding that emerging alternatives can be associated with existing conversations on degrowth or post-development. This section will therefore not closely investigate degrowth as an individual term or movement, but discuss it from the perspective of its links to a globally-minded alternatives discourse; post-development and alternatives to development.

Degrowth originated as a European term in the 1970s in France to describe the concerns of social movements and environmental economists who questioned neoliberal economic development which encouraged consumption and its impact on ecology (Asara et al. 2015). It is not seen as one alternative but in the words of Serge Latouche "*a matrix of alternatives which re-opens a space for creativity by raising the heavy blanket of economic totalitarianism*" (Latouche 2010 p.520). The focus on shifting the importance of the growth economy and the unsustainability of growth in regards to ecological limits connects the substance of degrowth and post-development even though the theoretical background is not identical.

Latouche has contributed to both degrowth and post-development academics with works such as *Farewell to Growth* and an entry on the *Standards of Living* in *The Development Dictionary*. His approach to degrowth recognizes two foundations to the critique based in one, the recognition of the failure of development in the South and two, the increased awareness of the environmental crisis. Such an approach directly links post-development and degrowth with a base of common critique but he emphasizes that alternatives arising from it must be plural. (Latouche 2009; 2004) The stress on plurality and direct denial of degrowth as an alternative to the South (Latouche 2009 p.63) recognizes the issue of Western universalism which strongly prevails in post-development critique on development.

Another point of connection here is the approach which both movements have towards the criticism of the dominant paradigm. Post-development emphasizes that it does not aim to change development but to work outside the paradigm in search for alternatives (Ziai 2017a; Sachs 1992b). Similarly in degrowth literature it is commonly emphasized that the movement does not aim to change growth, but to work outside the concept of growth and shift the emphasis on wellbeing to something outside growth-oriented economic definitions (Latouche 2004). Both movements, therefore, place the search for alternative ways of living in the margins and attempt to shift the dominant organizing principles of globalized societies.

The dominant concepts under criticism, growth, and development, also interlink the two movements. In post-development the matryoshka doll of development holds within it economic growth with specific criticism directed towards its measures gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP). Criticism of growth orientation is again rooted in the historical contextualization of development, beginning in this instance in the 1950s, and its early reduction which mostly equated the measure of development to GDP growth (Esteva 1992). While development as a practice has to this day come to include a plethora of indicators beyond the GDP, the status and use-value of the GDP as an indicator of development and the good-life has not vanished. Berthoud argues in *The Development Dictionary* that growth has become an organizing principle in modern life which implies its desirability in development. As economic growth becomes connected to the material wellbeing of individuals and Western universalism, Berthoud exclaims that the promotion of economic growth through development has been constant even though its means have

changed across time. (Berthoud 1992) In post-development GDP and growth criticism holds within it a twofold concern: a growth-oriented economy threatens ecology globally and GDP growth's association to material wellbeing dominates visions on living well. Similar concerns are at the core of degrowth.

Ecological economics is prominent in the core of degrowth reasoning. Many degrowth writers acknowledge the influence of economist Georgescu-Roegen as founding for degrowth's understanding (Latouche 2009 Kallis et al. 2012 Bonaiuti 2011) of ecological limits and criticism for the continuation of growth economics. Georgescu-Roegen published his work on the law of entropy in 1971, which has influenced environmental economics and environmental thought ever since. The law of entropy emphasized that while energy would not be lost in the process of transformation, the transformation was often irreversible. In other words the energy which is used to produce a good cannot be completely transformed into its original form. He criticized modern economic theory on production due to its inability to recognize the law of entropy in the context of limited natural resources and its negative implications in a growth-oriented economy. (Latouche 2009) Georgescu-Roegen's emphasis on the contradiction of constant growth in a world with limited resources was novel. Drawing on this criticism of environmentally unsustainable growth, a criticism of growth began to form in degrowth based on its implications on other aspects of human life.

In addition to the critical perspective which ecological economics provides towards growth in degrowth literature, growth is also more specifically criticized through its measures: the GDP and its inability to represent wellbeing. In his book, *Prosperity without growth?*, Tim Jackson discusses the impact of economic growth on perceived happiness of individuals and suggests that happiness does not increase without limit even when economic growth is constant, indicating that the positive impacts of growth could hit a point after which the effects are less impactful in the context of good-life (Jackson 2017). A plethora of research indicates similar phenomena in different contexts questioning the connection between economic growth and well-being (Layard, 2006; Hamilton 2003; Diener, Hellliwell, and Kahneman 2010; Lane 2000). There are two key points of reasoning for growth criticism within the movement; the first stemming from the view that environmental sustainability and growth are not compatible and the second being the acceptance of growth as an all-encompassing measure of well-being or good-life in society does not take into

consideration the social and cultural cost of growth (Fournier 2008). The de-growth movement often describes the redefinition of citizenship and the economy within democracy as a movement towards finding a new direction of well-being and the good-life.

There are several points of convergence with post-development criticism, with the simplified degrowth approach presented above. The most significant ones being the criticism of GDP and growth as a measure of wellbeing or development, the unsustainable nature of economic development, and the quest for new ends through alternatives to growth and development. It is important to note that degrowth is not a singular unified movement or school of thought. Rather it is a term that encompasses several approaches towards post-growth alternatives through academics, politics, and alternatives practice. The above presentation is simplistic and does not aim to cover the diversity of degrowth as a whole but to examine some of the strongest common characteristics of degrowth and post-development alternatives at a theoretical level. Degrowth as criticism arising *"from the belly of the beast"* (Kothari et al 2015 p. 366) converges in theoretical themes with post-development through aims of post-development and post-growth societies. Degrowth and post-development alternatives alike are united by their counter identity to the economy at the center stage of defining wellbeing and successful societies. Both aim towards transitions that shift dominant perspectives of material wellbeing. What is still significant here is that the rejection of the economic norm in post-development comes from the rejection of universalism and Eurocentrism while in degrowth the major rejection is due to the inability of current economic production models to consider ecological limits, therefore leading to the unsustainability of growth. The movements reject the same dominant economic model, recognize its impact on local culture and societies, but arrive at these criticisms from different positions affecting how their foundation is formulated.

The relationship between Western alternatives and Post-Development alternatives

While the criticism of development as part of the post-development literature has considered the West in a dominantly homogeneous manner there is variety in how Western movements of societal change are viewed as part of post-development literature. The most discussed connection is one between the degrowth movement and alternatives to development. The correspondence of criticisms between degrowth and post-development

alternatives will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but first is it essential to establish to what extent connections between them can be made.

The matter of post-development and degrowth's association or connection is not a straight forward matter. Scholars from both schools have attempted to offer views on this relationship (Ziai 2014; Escobar 2015; Kothari et al. 2019; Benedix 2017; Latouche 2004). Let's begin with Escobar's position which has already previously been referred to. Escobar connects both alternatives to development and degrowth under the concept of *transition discourses* (Escobar 2015). For him alternatives to development are rooted in post-development and the Global South. While degrowth originated in the West, it shares much of the substantial similarities of critique of growth, capitalism, materialism, and economics as a general organizing principle of social life. Escobar does not emphasize any kind of hierarchy, umbrella theory or positionality for the relationship of these movements, but suggests that transition discourses, such as these, are common in times of crises. In addition to this he does connect degrowth and alternatives to development with a common goal of the pluriverse. (Escobar 2015)

Ziai (2014) takes a different approach when exploring the role of Ubuntu and degrowth as post-development concepts. He sees a strong connection in the focus of ecological limits in both post-development alternatives and degrowth but simultaneously points out that degrowth often excludes any kind of recognition of cultural difference or epistemological criticism inherent in post-development. Non the less Ziai concludes that degrowth could be viewed as an especially European post-development concept "*secular, science-based and oblivious to the problem of universalism*" (Ziai 2014 p.150). Ziai's position highlights the importance of localism and criticism of growth or development as the uniting characteristics of post-development alternatives. Simultaneously he highlights the core conflict of recognizing universalism, but does not see the lack of recognition as an excluding factor.

Escobar and Ziai recognize some fundamental similarities and differences when attempting to understand the dynamic between post-development and degrowth. However, while Escobar recognizes their connection under the umbrella of transition discourses, he separates the two based on their theoretical and epistemological differences. Ziai recognizes similar differences, but does not emphasize the importance of a shared

theoretical background, but emphasizes criticism of development, growth, and ecological limits. Both Escobar and Ziai see degrowth as a possible contributor to either alternatives to development or the post-development goal of a pluriverse.

In 2019 a dictionary was published continuing the legacy of The Development Dictionary and aiming to broaden the discussion on post-development alternatives. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* is structured as a collection of various alternatives that relate to post-development through ideas of post-capitalism, post-growth, and post-patriarchy (Demaria and Kothari 2017). The geopolitical or geographical location nor the theoretical foundation is used here to distinguished between or categorize different alternatives, but rather they are united through an idea of *"an emergent post-developmentalist epistemic-political field towards a pluriverse"* (Demaria and Kothari 2017 p.2589). Again, here the goal of the pluriverse seems to unite alternative movements regardless of geopolitical location or even epistemic roots for several post-development scholars. In addition to the three *post-* imaginaries which the editors underline as parallel to post-development, alternatives are required to be counter to *"the currently dominant processes of globalised development, including its structural roots in modernity, capitalism, state domination, patriarchy, and more specific phenomena, like casteism, found in some in parts of the world"* (Demaria and Kothari 2017 p. 2589). Such a definition of alternatives contributing to the pluriverse is broad and simultaneously post-development founded. It can unite a broad set of alternatives seemingly under one goal and completely erases the hierarchy or dynamic of the Global North and Global South. Erasing such divisive language in the discussion on alternatives diminishes common geopolitical and geographical association often utilized in post-development and more mainstream development studies. What the editors here come to emphasize is all marginality over the marginality of the Global South. (Demaria and Kothari 2017)

Latouche approaches the dynamic between post-development alternatives and degrowth as a scholar associated with both. He has contributed in a versatile manner to the academic base of both schools (Latouche 2009; 1992; 2004; 2006) and therefore clearly also associates the critique of development to degrowth. In a short article in La Monde Diplomatique in 2004 Latouche attempts to answer the question: *"how should "degrowth" apply to the South?"* (Latouche 2004). Latouche connects degrowth and post-development alternatives through the criticism of GDP as a measure of development or societal success

and economics based on growth as a single organizing principle of societies (Latouche 2004; 2009). He does not aim to suggest a degrowth model for the Global South but in line with post-development suggests the importance of locally rooted alternatives which defy growth-oriented societal planning leading to the breach of ecological limits. Simultaneously he views the role of degrowth in the North as a necessity for the move towards alternatives in the South. (Latouche 2004).

Benedix (2017) explores a similar approach where the responsibility for the North to change for post-development alternatives is recognized. He approaches the discussion from a degrowth perspective and arrives at a similar conclusion through a very different route. In his view examining the degrowth movement as a Northern approach to post-development alternatives contributes to diversifying the homogeneous conception of the Global North within post-development writing, but more importantly shifts the dynamic between the North and the South often prominent in non-critical development scholarship. He suggests that the act of including degrowth or Northern alternatives into post-development discussion, breaks the narrative of the Global South needing to change and comes to suggest that the West or "the developed" in fact are a *development problem*. (Bendix 2017)

The term *development problem* does not directly fit into the post-development terminology as it continues to utilize the images created by the development discourse, but the thread which Bendix weaves between non-critical development discourses, post-development and the West's role as an actor in development is novel and important. From this perspective the West becomes the entity requiring intervention and transformation due to excessive wealth creation and ecological harm, both of which in some strands of degrowth are recognized and criticized due to their global impact. Bendix concludes clarifying that historical conditions of development or growth, such as modernity and colonialism, are often absent in especially the German degrowth initiatives. Still, he argues that by including Northern alternatives into post-development there can be an impact in re-evaluating development thought and practice and a needed addressal of Western ways of life which are globally harmful. (Bendix 2017)

Intertwining alternatives: The process of unmaking

Before moving on from post-development and alternatives to development, I would like to discuss one more thought process which has guided me throughout learning and writing about post-development and its connection to the West and its alternatives. The process is introduced by Escobar in the final chapter of *Encountering Development* (1995) in the context of the Global South. He discusses the process of *unmaking the Third World* – an approach that is deeply rooted in the concept of development as a discourse. The discourse of development utilizes language which categorizes a diverse selection of countries, individuals, and practices into categories of *developing*, *underdeveloped*, *Third World,* and so forth. All these concepts categorize based on differences from the developed signifying distance and defining the other. The language does not only categorize but signifies a specific way of interpreting the world on which the practices of development are based. The process of unmaking then can be understood as the process of getting rid of the definition and glance provided by the development gaze. For Escobar this includes the "*reconceptualization of what is happening in and to the Third World*" through empirically founded alternatives research (Escobar 1995 p.226).

To Escobar this process of unmaking is founded in the recognition of cultural difference and the multiplicity of alternative narratives based in the Global South. He does imply that the process of unmaking is necessary for the West as well by recognizing its difficulty. (Escobar 1995) As examined in the previous section the West is often equated with capitalism, oppression, homogenization, cultural degradation, and so forth in post-development literature. The West becomes synonymous with the concept of development. Now we can attempt to answer Escobar's questions from a different perspective: "*Where, then, lies "the alternative"? What instances must be interrogated concerning their relation to possible alternative practices?* (Escobar 1995 p. 223)" in the context of the West. To continue this train of thought the process of unmaking could be expanded to the West to explore critical alternatives emerging from within it. It is important to note that the positionality of the West for its unmaking is more privileged and begins not, from the aim of liberation from someone else's definition, but to explore new definitions of what the West could be in degrowth, post-development or other future. Such an approach of self-examination could be connected to the writing Bendix and Latouche (Bendix 2017;

Latouche 2009) both of whom argue that a post-development transition is not possible without the recognition that the West also has to change.

Concluding remarks on the use of post-development theory

Post-development and alternatives to development are rooted in perspectives, practices, and criticism stemming from the Global South. Critical discourses arising from the West, especially degrowth, have come to be associated with post-development through a variety of ways some of which were presented in the previous section. Throughout this thesis the Finnish actors associating to post-development, post-growth, or specifically degrowth will be addressed as *individuals associating to transitional movements*. This terminology is based in Escobar's bridging of post-development alternatives, alternatives emerging from the West, and specifically degrowth under the term of *transition discourses*. Beyond establishing language, the theoretical background will be considered throughout the study, especially in informing sampling, the context of methodology, and in presenting analysis findings.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Utopia as a method

The previous chapter introduced the thesis' theoretical context in development studies and this section will delve into the theoretical formation of the concept of utopia and its characteristics as a method. The Western tradition of utopian studies is often rooted in Thomas More's *Utopia* from 1516 (Levitas 1990). Still, the utopian scholarship is not only limited to the study of the literary genre of utopia but as Sargent categorizes it also encompasses the study of communitarianism and social theory (Sargent 1994). This thesis roots itself mostly in the Western tradition of utopian studies, but it is important to note that utopias cannot be merely considered as a Western phenomenon even when they have not extensively been integrated into the scholarly tradition with some exceptions (Sargent 2010). This examination of the utopian method will mostly engage with scholarship stemming from both utopian literature and social theory in the West. While the method thinking of utopia is strongly related to the social theoretical field of utopian studies, it

utilizes much of the literary utopian conceptualization in its furthering of the method concept.

First this section will shortly introduce some of the contrasting views of utopia as a concept. Then utopia will be discussed in the context of its function to make way for an understanding of it as a heuristic method. By discussing the critical, exploratory, and transformative functions of the heuristic utopian method, the chapter will lay out a framework for the understanding of its utilization throughout the study. The conception of utopia as a heuristic method is utilized to explore the potential role of the West in the search for global transition alternatives. The data collection process is built around the concept of utopia and it is utilized to gain knowledge about the views on the West's prospective role in contributing to alternatives to development with a specific focus on the Finnish context.

Everyday utopias and their reflections in academia

In mundane conversation, while often implying positive connotation utopias also carry a strong sense of unattainability. Utopia is used to described far-fetched ideas or desires which seem too far away from our current society to ever be realized. Ideas, societies, and desires that are too good to be true. In pop-culture utopias can sometimes be seen in a dystopian context; the film *Downsizing* (2017) presents utopian societies within a dystopian setting of ecological destruction; the children's animation Wall-E (2008) presents a dystopian setting where humans have found their utopian home despite the effects of overconsumption and degradation of the planet. In everyday language and pop-culture utopias are often framed either in the context of a dystopia, their impossibility, or even danger. Such rhetoric is not only present in the everyday use of the word utopia, but also in the academic debate of the concept. But before delving into utopians and anti-utopians lets briefly have a look at the commonly perceived origin of utopia in the context of Western utopian literature.

The concept of utopia is often placed in the context of fictional literature and the etymological origin indeed lies in Thomas More's book *Utopia*, published in 1516. More coined the term and it has been interpreted by most as a play on the Latin words eutopia, *good place*, and outopia, *no place* (Kumar 1991; Levitas 2017). This play on words

highlights the desirability of the non-existent, which is usually associated with the concept of utopia. Similarly, while More's intention in presenting an imaginary society cannot be known exactly, the elements of desirability of the non-existent and mirroring of the author's societal context are characteristics that have carried through the genre and concept of utopia in fiction and social theory (Kumar 1991). This kind of open and simplistic conception of utopia as an inherently positive imaginative formation is a common base for the elaboration of contemporary conceptualizations of utopianism, but non the less the definitions and perceived function of utopias vary vastly in social theory.

Many anti-utopians who associate utopianism to totalitarianism and violence, define the element of good society inherent in utopia in terms of a defendable perfect society (Sargent 1994). Anti-utopians range from classics such as Marx and Engels, for whom undesirability of utopias lies in the aspect of distraction from transformation (Chrostowska and Ingram 2017), to Popper who is most well-known for his characterization of utopias as blueprint-like holistic ideals to be implemented for a perfect world (Freeman 1975). For him this implementation of utopian blueprints is conducive only through concentrated power of the few and neglect of critics or alternatives leading to violence. The association of holism to utopias drives him further to isolate utopianism in total from sociology or the sciences in general (Freeman 1975). John Gray similarly roots his criticism of utopias in an understanding that connects the implementation of a perfect model – utopia – to totalitarianism (Levitas 2013). Such critiques on the dangers of utopia are founded on a definition of utopias as realizable detailed plans of a perfect society and echo the impact of the Second World War on the idea of societal planning (Eskelinen et.al 2020; Moylan 2006).

The linkage made between utopias and totalitarianism which has been present in the anti-utopian scholarship is manyfold, but in its most simplistic interpretation it often associates utopias with the violent protection of the perfection of utopian plans for society (Sargent 1994). Such a definition of utopian perfection is not common amongst writers on the utopian method as it could be seen as incompatible with method thinking. When a utopia is treated as a perfect blueprint it is framed as a goal. It is in character solid, ready, singularly defined, and at least perceived as desirably attainable. In contrast the utopian character for the utopian method is dependent upon a contextual relation of utopia, which gives its critical character and its reflective function. Some scholars even go on to state that utopias

should in definition not be realizable for their inherent value not to be lost (Sargisson 2013; Suvin 1990; Abensour 2008).

A contrasting alternative for the utopian blueprint or road map metaphor is presented By Erik Olin Wright. He describes the role of utopias in the search for emancipatory social change as compasses, which can guide towards a direction but during the journey challenges and changes can redefine the direction and final destination (Wright 2010 p. 70-71). The compass does not define the destination, but it can provide guidance and signal change from the current state. Utopias will not be treated as blueprints or detailed plans for societal planning in this thesis, but the concept of utopia will rather be utilized from the perspective of its flexible and reflective function. Such an approach is based on utopian social theory where utopias are defined as means, not goals. Such approaches emphasize the utility of utopias as compasses for social transformation, criticism of current society, and their role in the education of desire for a different society. The following sections will provide insight into defining utopias as a method rather than goals for society and present the variety of functions associated with utopias.

Defining utopia

There are many ways to conceive utopias as a method and even for scholars who emphasize the function of utopia as a method for social theory and sociology the processes vary largely in defining the aim of the method and its pragmatic formation. What often unites method treatment of utopia is the thinking of utopias as a process rather than ends and broad definitions of utopia.

Sargent defines utopias as social dreaming and connects the act to the core of the human experience to desire better life (Sargent 2006 p.1). Such a definition highlights utopia as an outcome of the process of desiring. In his defense for utopia, Sargent emphasizes the need for social dreaming and connects its potential to demonstrate alternatives (Sargent 2006 p.15). Here the definition of utopia not only describes a process of social dreaming, its function as able to demonstrate something different to current society, and connects the process to the core of the human experience.

For Levitas utopia is also defined by the concept of *desire*. She utilizes Abensour's distinction of *systematic* and *heuristic utopias* to distinguish between the goal and process-oriented definitions of utopia to root her utopian method in the latter (Levitas 2013 p.113). Utopias express "*the desire for a better way of living and being*" (Levitas 2013; Wright 2010). The distinction of desire as the core element both connects and separates Levitas from other utopian writers. Its most important connection is to the *education of desire*. Abensour discussed the *education of desire* in the context of his doctoral thesis on More's Utopia, as the outcome of disorientation and strangeness experienced through the interaction with utopia which could lead to more critical and creative means of experiencing once current world and society (Holland 2017).

Edward Palmer Thompson expanded upon this idea by specifying that the education of desire " *... is not the same as 'a moral education' towards a given end: it is, rather, to open a way to aspiration, to 'teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way"* (Thompson 2011 p.145-146). The *education of desire* addresses the difficulty of imagining something radically different from one's surroundings; it gives alternatives to the dominant aspect of the mundane. By creating and engaging with utopias individuals can better imagine possible different futures.

Levitas connects the *education of desire* to Bloch's bases for utopia in hope. Bloch views the purpose of utopias as *expressions of hope* as well as *cognitive acts* with the opportunity to direct action (Levitas 1990). In this manner both hope and desire are expressed through utopias and have the potential to *educate desire*. But by distinguishing desire as the core for utopias Levitas creates an emphasis on the nature of utopia's realizability in comparison to Bloch. Desire does not imply realizability as a requirement for utopia (Balasopoulos 2010) emphasizing the use-value of utopias beyond their realizability.

Both definitions of Sargent and Levitas highlight the human capacity to imagine, dream, or desire, and utopia then becomes the outcome of this capacity. In both definitions also the function related to the utopian outcome is tied to its definition, be it exposing of alternatives or the education of desire. The thesis will utilize such definitions of utopia as social dreaming and expressions of desire for better living. The following sections will elaborate on what the method of utopia can be when it is defined as a vehicle for the expression of desire.

The utopian method as a heuristic tool

The definition of utopia as a heuristic tool is present in much of the writing on utopia as a method (Eskelinen 2020; Levitas 2013; Sargisson 2013; Wright 2010). It contrasts utopia's role as a tool for social imagining or in the words of Sargent "*social dreaming*" (Sargent 1994) to its criticism as perfection-seeking plans for a future society. Here utopia is not treated as a goal but as a means of reflection and imagining of alternatives. Eskelinen et al. suggest that the heuristic utopian method could be examined in the epistemological category, rather than as an ontological category (Eskelinen 2020). Such a specification is interlinked with the emphasis of the heuristic capacity of utopia, but locating utopia in the context of the possibilities of knowledge acts as an affirmation in separating utopia from defining existing realities. A heuristic distinction emphasizes the use-value of utopia as a conceptual reflective aid for scientific inquiry. Utopias in a heuristic sense become vehicles for an inquiry into criticism of current society, desires, and alternative futures.

The utopian method for criticism

The critical nature of utopias unites many scholars on the utopian method (Levitas 2013; Sargisson 2013; Moylan 2006). In the study of literary utopias it is commonly interpreted that textual utopias hold within them a criticism of the context within which they have been created, in the words of Levitas a critical "sociology of the originating society" (Levitas 2013 p.75). Manuel and Manuel describe this contrast through the idea of counter-images, which are common in utopian fictional literature, as an antithesis to reality (Manuel and Manuel 1979). Suvin terms the opportunity of a utopian possible world as being dependent upon some elements of the empirical world for support but in definition not being identical to it (Suvin 1990 p.78). This tension inherent to utopias is created through the utopian *locus* and the utopian *horizon*, where the *locus* is the location of the agent moving towards the utopian *horizon* (Suvin 1990 p.77). As Suvin's analysis is mostly concerned with literary utopian theory, still with consideration to the unification of a utopian understanding in utopian studies, the empirical world which the utopia is surrounded by is metaphorically considered the original text to which all *horizons*, utopian discourses, are viewed against (Suvin 1990 p.78). The conception of *locus* and *horizon* also hold within them a comment on the attainability of utopias. Suvin explicitly encourages utopias where *locus* and *horizon* never meet (Suvin 1990 p.82). Such an

position on the value and inherent character of utopias as unrealizable emphasizes the importance of distance to the critical character of utopias, but simultaneously recognizes their relativity and guiding function.

The critical character of utopia in the study of literature translates to the sociological and social theoretical understanding of the concept of utopia as well as utopias as a method. Gorz and Bloch associate the critical character of utopias in their inherent distance from the present giving space for judgment of that reality (Levitas 2013 p.xvii). The critical nature of utopias in a literary sense seems to be inherent in much of the literature on utopia as a method as seen in for example Sargisson and Levitas. Sargisson describes utopias as Janus-faced (Sargisson 2013 p.126), one critically gazing at the present another toward the future. She connects this with the utopian function as an analytic tool, an idea which she attributes to De Geus (Sargisson 2013 p.126). As the utopian, the creator, or consumer of a utopia is rooted in a specific place and time the imagined utopia is necessarily bound not only to the future through imagining but to the present of its creation and consumption. The contrast of the imagined potential to the now forms the critical capacity of the utopian method.

Levitas recognizes the critical function of utopias amongst other functions of compensation and change (Levitas 2000 p.28). She similarly describes a *double-vision* and an element of distance created by the utopian standpoint allowing a non-physical distance between our present and newly gained utopian base (Levitas 2017 p.12). As noted through Levitas' view of multiple functions, the critical utopian character is not often the sole defining method. It is one characteristic of the utopian concept which is utilized in the method understanding of utopia accompanied by various other functions.

Utopia as Imaginary Reconsturction of Society

Levitas identifies her utopian method, *the Imaginary Reconstruction of Society* (from now on IRS), as a re-interpretation of 19th-century utopian theory and in this manner reconceptualizes utopia as a tool for speculative sociology (Levitas 2013). IRS holds within it three modes: *the archeological*, *the ontological,* and *the architectural mode* (Levitas 2013). The modes highlight ways for analyzing different forms through their utopian capacity. For this thesis the *ontological* and *architectural* mode will be more

thoroughly discussed. The archeological mode emphasizes the investigation of views on desirable society in existing political programs and policies (Levitas 2013). It makes the integration of existing utopian components in society to be investigated through the method, but this emphasis is not directly relevant for this thesis.

The ontological mode focuses on the need to analyze the inherent claims of better ways of being and forming in utopias (Levitas 2013 p.196). As utopias inherently hold what is desired or what is conceived of as better than now, the claims about how we will be or could be also express alternative conceptions. Such claims about being and wellbeing can be both implicit or explicit (Levitas 2013). The ontological mode is of direct relevance to the treatment of utopias for the research question.

It can be argued that different conceptions of wellbeing are and always have been present in theory and practice of international development and therefore also movements criticizing it. Whether development aims at reducing poverty, improving health, bettering access to services, or satisfying basic needs, all measures are not aimed merely at *development* but also an inherent assumption of the increase in wellbeing. The views on wellbeing in development have changed over time. An example of this could be how definitions of poverty have changes from merely income measures to full fill most basic needs of nutrition and shelter to more comprehensive measures considering culturally dependent social implications on requirements on income. The requirements for wellbeing changed to include a wider set of requirements. The critique of post-development and alternatives to development can be viewed from the perspective of criticizing the inherent normative conceptions of wellbeing held in development theory and practice as well as offering alternatives to such conceptions of wellbeing. Post-development directly criticizes the emphasis on economic and individual material wellbeing as benchmarks for understanding all human wellbeing in conventional development (Berthoud 1992 p.72). The criticism targets the inherent assumption of the relation of economic growth and an increase in wellbeing.

When looking at alternatives to development contributing to the pluriverse alternative conceptions of wellbeing are highlighted. Alternative views on wellbeing often highlight locally rooted conceptions of wellbeing and above all the multiplicity of views on wellbeing and living better (Demaria and Kothari 2017). To understand better what kind of

shape a transformed alternative society in the West could take, the inherent conception of wellbeing in the utopian alternatives need to be considered. As post-development and alternatives to development highlight the plurality of conceptions of wellbeing, inherent assumptions on being and wellbeing will be examined in the context of Finnish utopias. Levitas' ontological mode provides a frame through which utopian expressions can be analyzed through their ontological claims about better being.

The third mode of IRS described by Levitas is the architectural one. She compares the architectural mode to the literary occurrence of utopia where utopian imagining of societies and social institutions prevail (Levitas 2013 p.197). Inherent in this mode of societal imagining is the critical function of utopia parallel to the proposal for future alternatives (Levitas 2013 p.libid). Examining utopia through an architectural form, therefore, provides a way to open avenues again to the *education of desire* in the context of social imagining of the future. The architectural mode makes possible a kind of experimentation of societal imagination which is always bound to the present. Levitas emphasizes that such imagining is always "*necessarily provisional, reflexive and dialogic*"(Levitas 2013 p.218).

Such an emphasis is required as the architectural mode can be viewed as tip-toeing close to the conception of utopias as blueprints. The architectural mode is subject to criticism, also recognized by Levitas (Levitas 2013 p.214). The criticism stems from the association inherent in the thinking of the architectural metaphor directly associated with planning, specifically in this context societal planning or blueprints for the future. Levitas' response to this criticism and doubt is not comprehensive. In a scholarship on the utopian method which attempts to distance itself from conceptions of utopia involving totalitarian social planning, such a lack of care for the defense of the choice in metaphor is precarious and due to receive criticism. There is indeed an inherent contradiction in the definition of the character of utopia and Levitas' architectural mode. This incoherence, I would argue, is based on the disconnect between Levitas' open definition of utopia, its reflective function, and the choice of a metaphor of architecture, which points to a much more solid purpose of utopia on the present-future continuum. In her defense, Levitas attempts to associate architecture with Coleman's historic understanding of architectural flexibility as well as Adam and Groves metaphoric thinking of artisans or sculptors of the future emergent space with inherent respect and understanding of the material at hand (Levitas 2013 p.214). Such

an association fails to comprehensively justify the choice of metaphor and to an extent weakens IRS due to its inconsistency between defining and operationalizing utopia.

Levitas' utopian method is strong in its definition of utopia and in the manner by which it can include differing utopian forms equally under one method: existing utopian fragments in politics and policy, ontological inquiry of all utopian manifestations and the utopian societal narrative without restriction to its traditional literary form. The architectural mode deals with the most traditional function of societal imagining, but its metaphors' incoherence to the definition of utopia situates it in an uncomfortable space between utopia as means and ends. For this thesis it is still relevant to explore further conceptions of how imagined utopian societies can be included in the thinking of utopia as a method.

The utopian method for exploration of alternatives

As said, the definition of utopias as alternative better future societies is a common understanding of the literary genre and social theory. What remains to be examined is how such imagined societal alternatives can be utilized as methods for ends other than blueprint planning, without their future potential left untapped. One such method characteristic was criticism, but this function focuses on the utopian function in analyzing our current society. The ontological mode identified previously also provides a way to examine desires for better being through utopian manifestations. Overall the heuristic character of the utopian method is essential in the analytical capacity of utopian functions. This is also crucial for utilizing societal utopias for the exploration of alternatives.

Sargisson's understanding of the utopian method underlines the heuristic, critical and exploratory functions of utopia (Sargisson 2013 p.125). For her the exploration of utopian alternatives is not primarily valued as a call to direct action, but as a space for the investigation of alternative societies through thought experimentation; the trial and error of ideas (Sargisson 2013 p.126). Treating utopias as thought experiments focuses on the method function of utopia in its reflective and elaborative capacity. She treats the space created through utopian imagining as one where ideas can be explored "*in the round*" in other words where different parts or fragments of living can be examined in their relation and impact to each other (Sargisson 2013 p.126). Utopian experimentation then becomes

both partial and whole simultaneously, providing the possibility to explore the interconnectedness of alternative social elements.

There is a brief but notable aspect to Sargisson's treatment of the utopian method that requires further discussion. She suggests, in the context of working toward solving problematic treatment of nature in politics, that several attempts to answer such questions "*can help to shift the parameters of what is conceivable* " (Sargisson 2013 p.132). This suggests the recognition of value in the plurality of utopias. This is an important recognition in itself as it emphasizes the contextuality and subjectivity of even societal utopias, moving away from a totalitarian conception of a single or dominant utopia. Such recognition is also important for the coherence with the background of the thesis in post-development and the emphasis within it on pluralist solutions for transformation.

Together with Sargisson's definition of utopias as always unrealizable, the recognition of value in plurality suggests an interesting dynamic with utopias and the real world. Utopian imagining in such a definition does not aim at materializing, but it has the potential to shift the conceptions of what is seen as possible to materialize in the origin society. The examination of societal utopias through recognition of plurality emphasizes the utopian method as a heuristic tool that offers space for reflection and development of alternative societal ideas. Such an understanding of utopias will be strongly present throughout this thesis.

4. METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

4.1. Methodology

Research methodology acts as a bridge connecting the philosophy of social science to its methods (Schwandt 2007). Such a definition is useful to a novice researcher as it defines the role of methodology as connecting the abstract to practical and simultaneously acts as a reminder that the practical means by which data is gathered and analyzed are not only tools but can inherently hold epistemological and ontological assumptions. The application of a specific research methodology is impacted by both the researcher's positionality and the requirements of the research question to be fulfilled appropriately (Mills and Birks 2014). The approach and acknowledgment of my positionality as a researcher was already

somewhat discussed in the context of the formation of the research question. Both the emphasis on the role of the researcher in social research and the aim of a deeper understanding of the actor's perceptions on desirable alternatives for society suggest a reflective qualitative approach to best suit the research inquiry at hand.

Qualitative research is not a single or uniform way of conducting research and qualitative methods are associated with varying philosophical views (Mills and Birks 2014). Therefore it is essential to more specifically identify some methodological stances, which tie together the whole of this thesis research from the research question to the analysis of data. Before discussing more exact ways of conceiving methodology in this research, I would like to highlight the significance of the novice researcher's role as a *bricoleur* in the process of identifying suitable connections between philosophy and method. Mills suggests that the perceived *messiness* of qualitative research should be dealt with by a novice researcher as a *bricoleur* (Mills and Birks 2014); an amateur who attempts to connect and mix various matter. The researcher here takes on the role of bricoleur in attempting to mix and match between methodology, methods, theory, and concepts to create a comprehensive whole respectful to philosophical underpinning of qualitative research, which is carried throughout the different stages of the research process.

This research identifies the influence of social constructionism and reflective qualitative research in the attempt to pin down the underlying assumptions of the researcher's role and the methodological foundation on which the research question is based. Social constructionism is treated here as the ontological and epistemological base of the research. The methodology is also influenced by elements of reflective qualitative research, which aligns with the base of social constructionism. It is again worth noting that social constructionism is not a singular philosophy, but carries within it a wide array of views and specific ways of perceiving reality and knowledge production. As this thesis is not solely concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of methodology such sensitivities of diversity will not be discussed in depth. Rather social constructionism will be discussed in broader terms, emphasizing common denominators present in most understandings of the term.

Social constructionism often holds within it the epistemological assumption that knowledge and meaning of the real are constructed amongst humans (Burr 2003). The

stance of collective construction of meaning and reality becomes clearer when contrasted. In broad terms, positivism bases scientific inquiry on the understanding that there is an objective reality that can be understood by specific scientific methods (Lichtman 2014 p.14). Social constructionism defies this understanding of objective reality and emphasizes that how we currently together understand the realm of the real has been co-constructed by humans and is influenced by historical and cultural relativism. This leads to an epistemological stance that emphasizes the relativism of knowledge, emphasis on language, and co-creation of knowledge (Burr 2015), which can then connect social constructivism to specific ways of doing research.

As said social constructionism recognizes the constructed experience of reality and this has implications on the relationship between the researcher and participant. If we view reality as constructed, it is essential to also recognize the researcher's perception of reality as constructed and the researcher's inquiry for knowledge as influenced by not merely the object of study. It is common for constructionist researchers to emphasize the co-construction of data in data collection (Mills and Birks 2014) and such an approach highlights the role of the researcher as a recognized influence in constructing data. Constructionist researchers recognize that the researcher and the participants influence each other continuously (Howell 2013). This has two major practical manifestations in this thesis research: the emphasis on the reflexivity of the researcher and the co-construction of data in the interview process. The aspect of co-construction is essential in the process of data collection for this thesis and this will be discussed in relation to the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews as the sole data collection method.

Social constructionist notions of relativity are also broadly aligned with the background of post-development as theory. There are strong links in the epistemological views of constructivism and post-development. I would argue that these are most visible in both post-development's critique of the meta-narrative of development and wellbeing as well as in the emphasis on relative and pluralistic knowledge production in the search for alternatives to development. A constructionist approach also allows for the examination of development as a co-constructed culturally relative concept rather than an objective reality. This highlights post-development theory's concentration on alternative practices linking the need for pluralist conceptions of society and wellbeing to practice.

Reflexivity in qualitative research

The recognition of subjectivity and the researcher's role as an actor in the research process has been problematized in paradigm and methodology debates that reference positivist or quantitative methodological requirements of objectivity as the measure of validity in the social sciences. Still, qualitative research does not need to do away with subjectivity. Lichtman suggests that qualitative researchers need to move beyond the objective-subjective dichotomy by embracing reflexivity (Lichtman 2014). The researcher is most often present at all stages of the research; in question formulation, research design, data collection, and analysis. The researcher is in this sense a constant tool in the research process and the qualities of that tool need to be known to understand what kind of interaction and possible influence it can have on the research process and outcome. Reflexivity acts as a way to recognize the researcher's influence in the research, not to delete subjectivity, but to offer the researcher and the reader the opportunity to make judgments about how positionality has impacted the process (Lichtman 2014).

Reflexivity can have many practical implications for the research process. During this research process I kept a research journal for reflection. The notes took the form of both text and voice notes recorded on the phone. Notes were taken at different stages of the research with varying intervals and were utilized as a tool to anchor and compare thinking when analyzing data and writing up the research. The use of the notes was demonstrated in the context of the research question formulation where I found it essential to recognize what influenced the choice of the research question and motivated my research interest. Here the notes where used to identify *selves* of the researcher which were present in the formulation of the research question and therefore also in the further research process. Such an approach is based on Peshkin's understanding of the need for the researcher to find personal subjectivity during the research process (Peshkin 1988). The emphasis on reflexivity is essential for the validity of qualitative research. In this thesis the purpose of reflexivity is treated as twofold: 1) to ensure that I as a researcher, attempt to keep track of the influences and assumptions which are inherent in me to clarify the research process and to 2) provide the reader with adequate information about the positionality of the researcher for further judgment.

Positionality of the researcher

The identified selves can also be used in the context of the methodological discussion to understand the researcher's role beyond influencing the choice of the research question. Two selves of the three; "*climate concerned*" and "*individual interested in development alternatives*" suggest some personal and professional affiliation and closeness to the subject of study and the critical theory within which the research question is based. In terms of action research the positionality of the researcher is often discussed through recognizing the insider-outsider status of the researcher. Herr and Andersson discuss this in terms of an insider-outsider continuum upon which a researcher's positionality can be situated (Herr and Anderson 2005). Insider research is characterized by a degree of familiarity and closeness to the research topic, setting, or the participants of the study. It often involves some kind of examination of the practice or organization within which the researcher is located (Herr and Anderson 2005).

The *selves*, which I identified earlier suggest some degree of insider status of my researcher positionality. My concerns and motivations towards the research question resonate with the theoretical field chosen as the area of study. This again connects these concerns to the participants of the study, who identify with similar theory or practice which resonates in their knowledge or way of living. On the other hand the thesis' theoretical base in alternatives to development and engagement with academics in data collection also suggests an insider status based on contribution to the critical discussions within the academic setting within which I as the novice researcher and the more established participants are part of. Still, there is an outsider element when looking at my relation to the social movements or communities of some participants. While the theoretical connects the participants and myself, I am not engaging directly within the communities of practice to which some of the participants associate. In this manner I would suggest that it is appropriate to consider the positionality of me as a researcher as that of semi-insider.

The thesis research takes the form of reflective qualitative research, which aligns with a social constructivist approach that visible throughout the study. Such an approach is especially highlighted in the emphasis on the role of the researcher, the selection of the research area, and its alignment with the theoretical concepts and background of the study.

It's relevance to chosen methods for sampling, data collection, and analysis will be discussed in the following sections on chosen methods.

4.2. Sampling method

As Emmel puts it "*qualitative researchers make decisions about who or what to sample from the outset*" (Emmel 2013 p.48) of the research process. The research area from the very beginning was influenced by the interest to contribute to the inclusion of the West in the discussion of alternatives to development. The West is treated here as the old industrialized areas, such as Europe and North America. The initial formation of the research question considered the object of study as *alternatives for the West* and possible participants as *alternative actors within the West*. But as the research progressed, through initial interviews, further reading, and researcher reflection it became apparent that the said location of research needed to be specified for alignment with the theoretical background and methodological considerations.

As the research question is informed by its background in post-development literature and constructivism there was a need to align the research location to correspond with the question's founding. The research area was then narrowed to Finland. This meant the search for alternative images for Finnish society by individuals associating to transition movements, discussions, or academics in the context of Finland specifically. Transition movements are defined here through Escobar's *transition discourses* (2015), which bridges discussions emerging from the Global South, post-development, and alternatives to development, and from the Global North, such as degrowth and more widely post-growth discussions. This narrowing down of Finland as the research location was essential to reflect the valid criticism received by post-development literature in the homogenous treatment of the West and to emphasize the contribution of locally grounded relativist knowledge of alternatives to the dialogue on global transitions.

As the research question is concerned with a specific way of associating to societal transformation, the sample was chosen through purposive sampling to gain a sample that best suited to provide relevant information. The sampling of participants consisted of two sampling methods: key informant sampling and chain sampling. Connecting the intellectual framework and the research question to the desired sample and sampling

method was initially done by recognizing an initial sampling quota (Emmel 2013 p. 49). As discussed in the previous paragraph the characteristics of the quota were *alternative actors associating to transition movements.* The sampling quota then came to include association to post-development, alternatives to development, degrowth including local variants and post-growth including varying emphasis such as post-consumption critics. The quota aimed to include both academics and practitioners such as activists and intentional community members.

Initial key informants were identified and contacted, after which additional key informants were sought out. This was done based on either researcher's identification according to the characteristics of the quota set or through chain sampling based on recommendations of key informants. Chain sampling or snowball sampling is based on the key informant information on other relevant individuals concerning the research topic (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). In addition to researcher identification of participants and chain recommendations, all participants self-identified to one or more of the characteristics of the quota either as they were or with a specification of their personal preference of terminology. Self-identification was often based on either theoretical emphasis in the participant's work as academics or as influencing discourses in activism or intentional living of individuals or a mixture of the two with varying emphasis. The basis upon which initial identification of participants was done and self-identification of participants is presented in the below figure.

	Initial selection based on interviwer identification to:	Interviwee self-identification:
Interviwee 1	Academic utlizing post-dev. theory and research on alternatives to development movements	Post-development and alternatives to development as an academic
Interviwee 2	Academic and activist in organizations dealing with alternatives to development	Many roles as professional and volunteer in post-development stream of international solidarity movement
Interviwee 3	Actor in Finnish degrowth -movement	Degrowth activist and educator
Interviwee 4	Actor in regional degrowth -movement	Degrowth and consumption critical civil activist and author
Interviwee 5	Researcher of degrowth and post-growth in Global North	Ethnographer researcher in post-growth and activism in reginal degrowth movement
Interviwee 6	Actor in regional degrowth -movement	Member of regional degrowth movement aiming at self-sufficient living
Interviwee 7	Development critical activist and actor in regional degrowth -movement	Post-developmentalist and founder of ecocommunity
Interviwee 8	Academic researcher and author on post-growth economy	Researcher in the areas of post-growth economy, consumption critical theory, degrowth and new economy

Figure 1: Sample identification based on association to transition movement

4.3. Data collection method

The thesis research utilized qualitative data from semi-structured in-depth online interviews, which were collected between spring 2019 and spring 2020. The data consists of eight interviews that lasted between 45 to 70 minutes each. Interviews were conducted in both Finnish and English. This amounted to a total of 499 minutes of interview recordings, which were then transcribed. After transcription interviews conducted in Finnish were translated to English. All transcriptions combined formed a 71-page body of data for analysis.

In accordance with the sampling quota constructed, potential participants were initially contacted through email. This email provided basic information on the purpose of the study, its aims and methods as well as offered the possibility to acquire additional information. After expressing initial interest participants were sent further information on the interview format, the use of the utopian concept as well as the interview question. Online interviews were scheduled and the platform of choice agreed upon based on the available resources to the participants. Due to a lack of access to online discussion platforms one interview was conducted over the phone. All other interviews were organized using either Skype or Google Hangouts and recorded on both phone and computer recording devices.

Online interviewing decreases location constraints, which can be present when organizing face-to-face interviews (Allen 2017). Due to resource constraints the ability for me as a researcher to physically travel across the country from the capital area was limited. The ability to include individuals outside the capital area in Finland was integral for the thesis question as alternative living movements or academics are not solely based in the region. For the interviews conducted later in the data collection process, online interviewing was also compulsory because of social distancing due to the coronavirus. Online interviewing can have many benefits such as a decrease in scheduling, travel, and cost but it can also pose challenges in terms of non-verbal communication and technical skills (Allen 2017). For this thesis the use of online interviews was necessary to serve the regionally distributed sample and later to abide by national restrictions of movement. In one case the use of online interviews was not possible as mentioned due to lack of access to devices and therefore the interview was conducted on the phone. Online interviews made it possible to

establish a connection with participants through video and audio. Even though the data transcription did not include visual transcription, the video component was important to establish a connection with the participants. This lack of visual connection was compensated in the phone interview with thorough introductions and more emphasized verbal affirmations.

The online interviews took the form of semi-structured in-depth interviews. As mentioned the interview questions were provided for the participants beforehand, but it was also clarified that the broad questions would be used as a base from which to build the conversation. In such a semi-structured style it is possible to treat an interview outline as both a check-list or outline of topics to be covered during the interview (Corbetta, 2003 p.270). In this case the interview outline acted both as a way to familiarize participants with the method and a checklist for me as a researcher. As the aim of the interview was to gain in-depth knowledge on the participant's perception through a process of imagining an alternative way of organizing society based on the experience and professional capacity of the participant, it was important to rely on an interview method which allowed the freedom to move from topic to topic as most appropriate to the process of the participant themselves. Semi-structured in-depth interviewing allowed for a flexible structure where the interviewee has the freedom to follow their thought process for the most fitting expression of their perception (Morris 2015 p.3).

The constructivist approach to interviewing highlights the interview as a collaborative process (Morris 2015 p.13). The interviews were treated as a process of co-construction between the researcher and the participant "*to uncover the essential nature of a phenomenon*" (Brinkmann 2007 in Brinkmann and Kvale 2018 p.14) and therefore can also be described as a conceptual interview. To embrace the process of interviewing as a possibility to gain in-depth information, a rapport must be developed between the interviewer and interviewee (Morris 2015 p.79). This is also crucial when an online element is added to the interview setting. To establish a bond with the interviewee significant attention was paid to breaking the ice before the formal interview. Tools such as introductions, explaining the purpose of the research, explaining the format of the interview, why the participant was approached, and expressing gratitude for dedicating time to the session where used in line with Morris' in-depth interview approach (Morris 2015 p.79). It was apparent with most interviewees that already the choice of topic for the

research, which was dear to all participants, indicated some familiarity between the interviewer and the interviewee. This was evident in the enthusiasm of the participants to share their perceptions and interest in the research process as well as researcher positionality.

The interview was divided into three topics of discussion: introduction and identification, imagining a Finnish utopian society, and global linkages to the utopian society. The introduction and identification section focused on gaining an understanding of what the background of interviewees was to the research topic and how they identified to transition movements in specific.

The second part of the interview utilized the utopian method by asking interviewees to imagine a utopian Finnish society from the position of their identification to transition movements. The process of imagining society was framed by categories of social, political, economic, and environmental aspects to society. These categories were used as a springboard for conversation and aimed at assisting the participants in initiating imagining of such a broad and wide-ranging concept as a society. While these categories were provided it was emphasized that interviewees could move between and across the categories freely without having to worry whether their utopian imagining fit a specific category. The categories, therefore, were used more as a starting point to the conversation and as a means by which different aspects of utopian societies could be looked at. Different participants placed different emphasis on categories of society based on their professional background. The categorization was viewed by some interviewees as helpful and non-restrictive, while a few found it constricting or challenging at first. The emphasis of the interview process was modified according to how the interviewee related to the categories and some consistent probes were created to assist interviewees in situations where the format felt difficult. The categories also acted as a means for the researcher to encourage the imagining of utopias from different perspectives and to have a shared format for all interviewees even though emphasis varied according to the interests of the interviewee.

While this section of interviews focused on the possibilities of utopian imagining, it became very clear through initial interviews that the format was suitable to also gain an understanding of criticism. This was because interviewees often began to describe the

issues of our current society to create an understanding of why they wanted some aspects to be different in the imagined society. Therefore the process of imagining utopias was strongly rooted in the current understanding of the interviewee's society. The emergence of critique was natural and necessary for the establishment of a baseline for the interviewee and interviewer.

The last section of the interview focused on understanding what kind of global relations imagined utopias would have to other countries specifically in the context of development.

During the interview probes were used to gain a fuller understanding of the interviewees' perceptions. This was done by asking for examples, clarifications, and additional questions (Morris 2015 p.87). Interview notes were kept to record topics of interest for probing further information in the course of the interview. As an interviewee there was a delicate balance to uphold as an active listener, which gave the interviewee freedom to express, but simultaneously making sure the topics were discussed and that interviewees were also encouraged to go further in their expression. In addition to actively listening and probing, I found that giving space or even sometimes short moments of silence were useful to prompt the interviewee to expand on their views. The interview session in a sense was one that required both self-investment, engagement, reflection, and restraint on the part of the researcher.

4.4. Ethical considerations and rigor

This section will briefly discuss ethical considerations in relation to the thesis. Such considerations are present in all social research. Considerations can vary vastly dependent upon the research topic, but non the less research is expected to strive towards dignified, consensual and respectful process. Such process is anchored in some commonly shared procedures as obtaining informed consent and respecting participant privacy (Lichtman 2014 p. 58-61). Informed consent needs to obtained from research participants and consent should be given based on adequate information on the research and its aims. In this thesis information of the research was provided before and during the interviews in which the aims, topic and use of the data was again explained to the interviewee. The interviewee was also informed about the recording of the interview and its use solely for purposes of

analysis. After confirmation from the interviewee, the actual interview process began. The protection of participants privacy was secured by removing information based on which interviewees could be identified all files and transcriptions. Audio recordings, which hold identifiable information are deleted after the completion of the thesis.

In regard to the reflective research approach it is relevant to shortly discuss its connection to the rigor or trustworthiness of the study. The term rigor is used here to signify how trust can be associated to the findings and the research process in qualitative research (Eileen et al. 2011). This terminology is used instead of validity, which while used in qualitative research also is often equated to an extent to the validity claims of quantitative research (Barret et al. 2002). The reflective process was upheld across the research through keeping a reflective journal. In addition to recording the process, it included constant critical reflection of how the process was developing. The reflective procedure is treated here as way to support rigorous and trustworthy research by making it possible for the reader to follow the reasoning of decisions made in research. First, recording of progress allowed for exposing weaknesses, which could then be improved upon throughout. The thesis aimed at utilizing the record of research to create dependability (Eileen et al. 2011): explaining the process and decisions made as carefully as possible so that there is transparency between reporting and the decision making processes which have gone into the creation of the thesis.

4.4. Data analysis: approach and process

Braun and Clarke treat thematic analysis as a method that can be utilized across qualitative research methodologies and epistemological standings (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.5). Here thematic analysis is linked to the social constructionist understanding of knowledge production. Therefore the decision-making process of the researcher is made explicit and the analysis operates under the umbrella of how images of better society are collectively constructed across the data items.

The thesis research utilizes thematic analysis to analyze interview data items per the six-phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis aims to identify common patterns or themes across data items but still allows for the incorporation of tension or contrast in the thematic map – the outcome of the analysis. Such an approach

aligns with the research questions' emphasis on utopian criticism and opportunity. As the research questions aim to understand how criticism emerging from Western alternative actors' perceptions align with post-development and alternatives to development criticism, the analysis of data must identify essential patterns of criticism across the items to then be examined in contrast to theory. On the other hand the identification of patterns of utopian opportunities across items allows us to better answer the question of what could a utopian Finland look like when imagined from a transition alternatives perspective. It is also important to emphasize that while thematic analysis focuses on patterns across data items, codes which contribute to the construction of themes should not exclude conflicting data (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.19). This especially important to this research as the sample includes individuals who identify with varying emphasis under the umbrella of transformation alternatives. Thematic analysis allows for identifying reoccurrence across interviews but also does not demand disregard of codes which create tension within themes.

The above manner of relating the theoretical and conceptual backgrounds, through an emphasis on research questions, in the process of analysis is described by Braun and Clarke as a theoretically oriented thematic analysis. In contrast to such an approach thematic analysis can be treated as inductive, where the analysis process is not guided by the theoretical approach of the researcher but by the content of data items (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.12). As the emphasis of the utopian method's critical and exploratory capacities are guiding the analysis process the theoretic thematic analysis approach is then applied. The relevance of theoretical emphasis was distinguished through the positioning of the research questions as well as through the reflective process during data collection through research notes. Throughout the data collection process it became evident that both the aspects of utopian criticism and opportunity were strongly present in the description of utopias and thus adequately could inform the analysis process.

Another decision which Braun and Corbin highlight should be made explicit in regards to the type of thematic analysis applied is that of *semantic* and *latent* analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.12-13). Semantic analysis focuses on treating the data on the level of what is expressed explicitly while latent analysis includes the level of assumptions and underlying meaning associated with what is said. This research utilizes both semantic and latent analysis. The initial coding is conducted semantically to encourage an initial understanding

of the range of codes and possible themes. The following steps concerning the organization of codes into themes and reviewing themes in addition utilize both a semantic and latent approach. This allowed for interpretation of underlying assumptions in relation to the explicit data extracts and an additional level of contribution in the process of constructing themes.

The first phase of Braun and Clarke's step-by-step approach to thematic analysis deals with familiarizing with the data (2006 p.16). Familiarizing took place over several different activities while treating the data: transcribing, translating, and reading. The transcription and translation processes were very slow and time-consuming but simultaneously acted as a very thorough way of learning what the content of the data was. After transcription and translation an additional reading of all data transcripts was conducted. Some initial notes were made during this process of reading through the transcripts to record initial ideas concerning the reoccurring content.

After the data is familiar to the researcher initial coding is the second phase of thematic analysis. Codes are a way to organize the content of data items into smaller units, which could be meaningful in the understanding of the phenomenon under research (Boyatzis 1998 and Tuckett 2005 as sited in Braun and Clarke 2006). The theoretical approach to thematic analysis is of explicit relevance here as the capacities of the utopian method are guiding the analysis of data through concepts of utopian criticism and opportunity. The categories of criticism and opportunity were not stringently applied to initial codes, but they were present in guiding the process analysis. What this means is that while the research questions were kept at the back of the mind of the researcher during initial coding, also codes that seemed relevant in other ways were coded and not left unattended. Relevance outside the initial research questions was considered in content that reoccurred across data items but did not necessarily directly relate to criticism or opportunity.

The initial codes were identified manually on soft-copies of data items and distinguished applying color codes. As each data item was being coded notes were simultaneously taken to record the thought process and initial ideas. As the initial coding process progressed more initial codes were generated and some codes identified in previous transcripts were applied to seemingly relevant instances. After data was coded, codes across the data items were collated. The raw data of the codes were organized coherently into a single

document. If codes across data items were very similar but had been named differently their correspondence was evaluated by referring back to the data and it was determined whether the codes should be combined or remain separate. The outcome of the collation of codes was an extensive list of raw data organized under more than 80 initial codes.

The following step in Braun and Clarke's approach is the generation of initial themes. At this stage of the analysis process the focus is shifted from small units; codes, to larger compilations; themes (Braun and Clarke 2006 p. 19). I wanted to utilize a visual means of generating themes so I wrote each initial code on a piece of paper. I then proceeded to organize the initial codes into piles which seemed to connect, after which I laid out each pile to review what kind of patterns could be generated. I decided at this point to separate piles and codes which critically described society from those that imagined a potential society for organization. If some codes seemed to fit both the code was used in both categories and a note was made of connection. Some codes were reviewed during the process if their label did not seem to be descriptive enough to place into a connection or if it seemed too general. The occurrence of codes in the data impacted the highlighting of some themes over others. On the other hand some codes became significant because of their ability to connect other codes to each other. In such cases it was relevant to go back to the data and examine whether the content of the code actually captured what it was made to be in the theme. Within the broader categories of criticism and opportunity, connections were examined and some major themes and possible subthemes were generated. The first formation of the initial thematic map of opportunities is presented below.
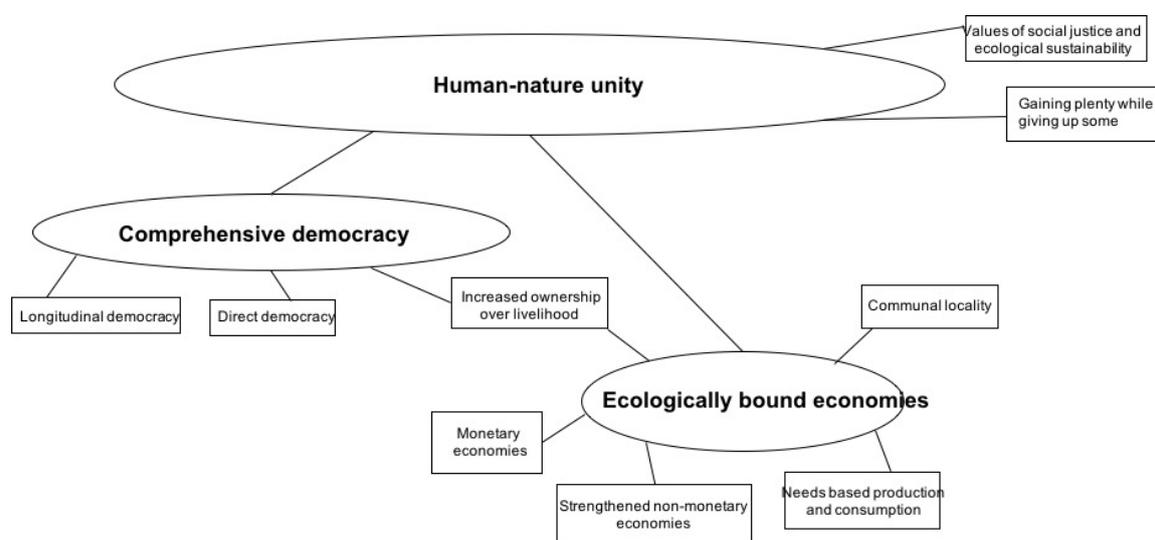

Figure 2: Map of initial themes

After generating initial themes, these themes are reviewed on the level of the relevance of codes to the data and the whole data set to the proposed thematic map (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.20-21). This means that data connected with each code which had been generated was compared to the proposed theme. Through this process some codes connected to the themes were questioned and placed on hold. This was especially the case with the subtheme of "communal locality" under "ecologically bound economies". The subtheme seemed to compile too many codes with varied meaning and some subthemes within the theme of "ecologically bound economies" seemed to overlap. This indicated to me that some themes and subthemes were not refined enough and the theme as well as subthemes need to be reviewed.

This lead to a reorganization of several codes and utilization of the same process as when identifying initial themes. After revision and reorganizing new themes were generated and simultaneously some subthemes were collated. Now the codes across the themes seemed to better match the themes associated to. Following the comparisons of code content to themes, the themes generated were then compared to the whole data set. I read the data set and attempted to evaluate how well the themes communicated the full data and simultaneously recoded some excerpts which now fit the themes created. At this stage when the data was already so familiar it seemed latent analysis of data items became easier.

After recoding and checking the themes against the data set, I was quite satisfied with the proposed themes. The fifth phase of the process then involved the defining and naming of themes. At this stage I went back to the coded items which I had collated under each theme and wrote an outline of what that theme and its subthemes encompassed in their most essential. While outlining the content of themes, I also attempted to outline their connections and hierarchies as well as identify appropriate direct quotes to each theme. Outlining the essence of themes also assisted in the naming and renaming of themes in an informative manner. During the naming process I also referred back to the raw data collated under each theme to make sure the names captured the content of the theme. Five themes were defined at this stage and the reporting of these themes is presented in the findings section of this thesis accompanied by the final thematic maps for both criticism and opportunity, which align with the research questions set.

The themes generated refer to theory in the extent that the analysis process was informed by the utopian method, where broadly to functions can be identified as criticism and opportunity. At the stage of generating initial themes codes were organized based on criticism and opportunity. Beyond this the themes which emerged within this separation were based on patterns recognized within the data. The separation of opportunities and criticism is therefore based in the theoretical concept utilized in the thesis, while it corresponded well with the content of the data.

5. Outcome of analysis

The following section will discuss the outcomes of the thematic analysis process in light of the research questions and theoretical background of the study. The results are compiled through two thematic maps: one focusing on the themes related to utopian opportunities and the other to utopian criticism. This organization is designed with the first two research questions in mind and reflects the utopian method's capacities. The last research question which aims to evaluate utopian imagining in the light of post-development and alternatives to development theory will be discussed in concurrence within the exploration of utopian possibilities and criticism.

Five major themes were generated through the analysis process, some of which encompass subthemes. The themes generated in relation to utopian criticism of current society are expressed in two major themes: *Instrumentalizing impact of economy* and *the concern over state of democracy*. The theme *instrumentalizing impact of economy* focuses on the perceived loss of inherent value of the environment, human experience and global interaction. *Concern over democracy* on the other hand encapsulates dissatisfaction with the functioning of current democratic process in relation to the subthemes of: *representation*, *short termism* and *loss of power*.

The themes generated relating to utopian opportunities are: *Unifying human-nature ontology*, *emphasizing social sustainability* and *emphasizing ecological sustainability*. *Unifying human-nature ontology* encapsulates an overarching ontological base for a

transformed society. The themes *emphasizing social sustainability* and *emphasizing ecological sustainability* present how this ontological premise is present in the imagining of different societal functions such as politics and economics.

All themes and subthemes will be described in more detail across this section and are connected to theoretical discussion of post-development theory at the level of each theme. Each theme's content will first be presented and data excerpts are utilized in this presentation section. After the theme and equivalent subthemes have been presented in relation to their content, the theme will be synthesized and related to theory. The synthesis section presented at the end of each theme will draw connections to theory and reflect upon its relevance in context to that particular theme.   The first part will discuss the themes relating to utopian criticism and the second part reports themes related to imagined utopian opportunities. This order allows for understanding of what utopian visions are a counter-image of in the words of Manuel and Manuel (Manuel and Manuel 1979).

5.1. Themes presenting patterns of criticism in utopian imagining
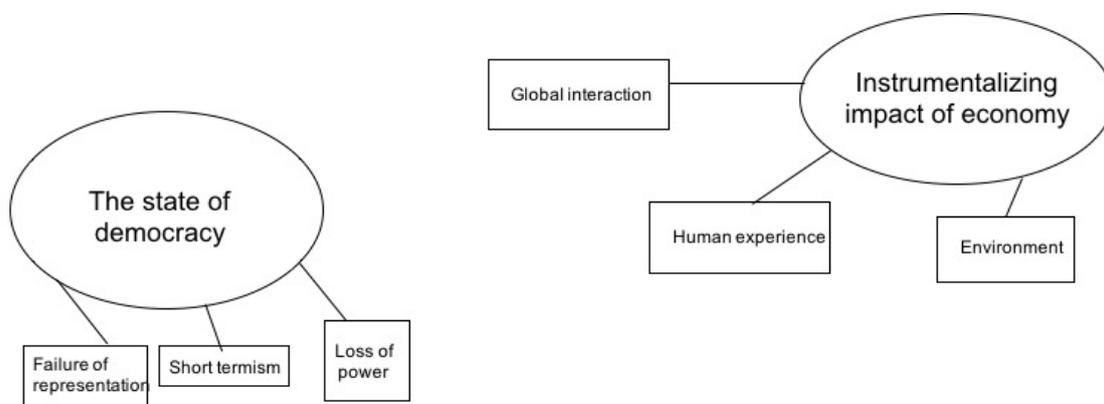
Figure 3: Thematic map of utopian criticism

The above figure represents the generated themes of criticism inherent in the utopian imagining of alternatives. Such critical reflection of the participants' society were strongly present in the imagining of alternatives. Most of the time they were presented as a baseline from which imagining could start or as background information on the participants' perspectives. Strong patterns across data items constructed two major themes: *The state of*

democracy and *instrumentalizing impact of economy.* Each theme has three subthemes which break down the finer representations of the criticism.

Theme 1: The state of democracy

"*Currently one of the key issues that everyone must be worried about is the state of democracy. And the mm.. The rising authoritarianism all over the world including the West, key Western players. So electoral democracy, why is it such a big problem now?*"
Interviewee 2

"*Before it somehow worked that we had this representative democracy. We voted for people and then these people had knowledge. They could make decisions. The cycle was somehow slower and calmer. In a way… There they could… Well, they could make good decisions. Or good and bad decisions, but people were able to adapt to them and people saw some of their impact. And then there was again time to react to them. But somehow now we are in a strange pressure situation, where everyone is an expert at the same time…*" **Interviewee 3**

The criticism of the current state of democracy was present in all of the interviews and often encapsulated a feeling of concern in regards to its functioning. This theme condenses this concern. While the theme cut across all data items, the emphasis of concern varied. This is reflected in the three subthemes of: f*ailure of representation*, *short-termism* and *loss of power*. The democratic criticism was also reflected in the emphasis which democratic processes were given when imagining alternatives which will be examined later in this section. While this demonstrates the intertwining of criticism to social imagining inherent in the utopian method, it also indicates that the concept of democracy is not questioned as a whole. Rather, the criticism points to the democratic challenges which are present in our time.

Subtheme: Failure of representation

Some of the concerns voiced were based on the experience or perception of the failure of representative democracy. This failure of representation was reflected upon both through

personal experience and on a general level. This is demonstrated through the following excerpts:

"I think that when there is no development critical party or any party that openly question the impact of constant economic growth I can't even vote. It becomes harder all the time to find someone to vote for." … "So as a civil activist I really feel that I don't exist. That I also feel I have become marginalized because I'm not in city council or other politics… When I'm not represented in these official systems, then I don't really exist." **Interviewee 6**

Here interviewee six expresses a discontent with the current options available in representative democracy. What is exemplified here is the experience of marginalization due to lack of representation in representative democracy due to the absence of growth critical discourse in the political arena. Interviewee seven on the other hand describes the emergence of exclusiveness inherent in how representative democracy is currently organized:

"And I think that like, when we speak about representation (in democracy) that when representation changes so that it in a way becomes a profession… Or a role in a way, that representatives don't need to be in direct contact with who they are representing and their habitat and their conditions then it starts to form as some kind of elite system." **Interviewee 7**

The lack of representation and detachment of representation described criticize the functioning of representative democracy in Finland. While both interviewees frame their criticism through differing expressions, both describe a lack of representativeness. This lack of representativeness questions how well intermediaries come to represent the interests of their electorates. These aspect contribute to the overall concern of the state of democracy and are reflected in the imagining of more direct forms of democratic participation in the utopian images.

Subtheme: Short-termism

Another contributive factor to the concern over democracy which was brought up by three

participants was the short-termism of current democracy. This short-termism was often framed by the concern that current global issues have such far reaching effects that the current election cycle was unconducive to the handling of such issues. Interviewee four described this discrepancy of scale of issues and structure for dealing with them in the following way:

"*The large problem with democracy now is that it tends to be so sort sited. We have also discussed this in our publications. For us the four year election cycle is in no way sufficient. For example for the issues of species extinction and climate change we have to look so much further when we make decisions.*" **Interviewee 4**

As is described in this excerpt, issues of climate change were the main reason why the four year election cycle for parliament was seen as insufficient by individuals who perceived sort-termism in democratic processes. The magnitude and longitude of climate change impact was seen to highlight the inability of current democratic structures to address issues which require longitudinal attention.

In addition the structural short-termism of the democratic process, climate change was also seen to reflect the political shortsightedness of government spending:

"*Another thing I can't understand is this kind of spending of public funds on strongly supporting destructive and harmful industries* (aviation and fossil fuels)." **Interviewee 5**

Interviewee five describes another aspect of political short-termism through emphasizing how the politics guiding public spending are short sighted in the light of measures required by climate change. Short-termism is then perceived to reflect both the political structure of election cycles, but also the content of political decision making as shortsighted.

Subtheme: Loss of power

The final subtheme dealing with *the state of democracy* is that of a perceived *loss of political power*. This subtheme describes perceptions according to which the ability of the democratic government to exercise its power has been limited. Interviewee 3 describes this through their experiences as a lobbying activist:

"For example now that we have lobbied them (parliamentary members) *with this local degrowth group and we have asked: What support do you need in the process of decision making? Because we have these ideas about sustainable society. And with some representatives.. They are so stuck with the feeling that there is no possibility to make an impact in parliament. There is just fighting and this and that.. Then suddenly we are in a situation where no-one has power."* **Interviewee 3**

Interviewee three describes from personal experience how in their encounters with some parliamentary members, who are traditionally perceived to be in positions of power, they express the concern that they have lost belief that they have the power to accomplish and influence political outcomes. While this perception encapsulates the concern over whether holders of power believe they have to opportunity exercise that power, other interviewees highlight that political power is restricted in its scope.

"Like now there is this image that we live in democracies, but mm.. It is just a minimal version of democracy, of running elections. Mm.. because the parliaments are not really allowed to alter these ownership structures, economic structures… So that is why what we have now is.. Is capitalism as a political system. Where the capital and corporations have supreme decision making powers and some aspects of society are.. are given for democratic processing." **Interviewee 1**

"Democracy should also be included in economics.. In a way that there would be more direct decision making power over issues relating to the economy." **Interviewee 8**

Both interviewee one and eight describe that currently democratic power does not extend completely over the sphere of economics. Interviewee one later describes that they perceive that lack of regulation and corporate liability gives economic actors freedom to act outside the reach of democratic power. Such perceptions suggest that there is some tension between the reach of democratic power and power held by economic actors. The *loss of power* then can be perceived as a two-fold subtheme: one which addresses the limited reach of democratic power and the perception of inability to exercise power.

Synthesis: The state of democracy

The state of democracy ties together the concern over the current functioning of Finnish representative democracy. This concern was widespread across all data items and was exemplified through the *failure of representation*, *short-termism* and *loss of power*. When viewing this criticism in the light of post-development critique it can surely be said that representational democracy is scrutinized, but the approach and association is based in differing contexts.

Within post-development theory representative democracy is sometimes criticized as an institutional outcome of modernity, which has been incorporated into a universalist perception of what development is (Demaria and Kothari 2017). Ziai bases such criticism on the perception of inherent elitism of representative democracy and its conflicting organization in the pursuit of Southern self-determination (Ziai 2004). The criticism over current representative democracy present in the theme also recognizes to an extent the failure of representation, but such a position does not dominate all concerns over representative democracy. The concerns distinguish some challenges which current representative democracy faces, but there is no call for extermination of representative democracy all together. The concern from *the belly of the beast*, does not in a similar manner seem to associate representative democracy to universalist modernity. Rather the concerns are strongly reflected as opportunities to better representative democracy in the utopian imagining which will be demonstrated in more detail in later. The opportunities give more place for comparison of alternative images and alternatives to development discussions relating to other forms of democratic action such as direct and comprehensive democracy.

Theme 2: Instrumentalizing impact of economy

The second theme encapsulates a critical pattern which focuses on the scale and impact of the current economy through its instrumentalizing effect. The *economy* described here is recognized by different participants in different ways but common descriptions of the current economy were: a *capitalist economic system*, *growth oriented economy* or

competitive market economy. At the core of the theme there is an expression of concern over the reach and scale of growth centered economic structures and what it does to the inherent value of things. Interviewee eight directly describes this concern:

"Now we have in a way instrumentalized relationships between humans as well as between organizations too much. And this instrumentalization… It is always connected to some kind of relationship of gaining. We should strive to move away from it and it would not mean that it could not take place in some contexts. But that this narrow economic instrumentalizing relationship has now been taken to places where it does not belong. So because of this… It is one central thing that rather than us being consumers and executors of a task, we would become producers of wellbeing for ourselves and others."
Interviewee 8

Interviewee eight highlights how human and organizational relationships have been instrumentalized. They then compare the instrumentalized definition of humans as consumers to a vision of another way to conceptualize the human experience through production of wellbeing. Here the interviewee links the loss of inherent value associated to experiences or connections when their purpose and value is defined by how instrumental they are for servicing economic goals. The instrumentalization of the human experience, environment and global relations are explored in the subthemes.

Subtheme: Human experience

Some participants highlighted the instrumentalizing effect of the economy in the context of its reductionist definition of human value. In such perceptions human identity or value is currently viewed through consumption as definitive of individuals or populations.

"And we are told, which is really unpleasant when we have been trying to live in accordance with nature for 50 years, so then people say: "If everyone lived like you this society would collapse immediately." So in other words because we don't consume almost anything." … "But consumption… Buying things… Humans have become consumers and I think that it's completely degrading to human value." **Interviewee 6**

"...well at least we should not define or use terms like consumer citizen where it is suggested that our identity as humans is somehow especially defined by consumption."
Interviewee 4

Interviewee six recounts through personal experience how they perceive that their ways of living sustainably has been criticized due its non-consumptive nature. The comparison indicates that the criticizer's comments are interpreted as a statement on what is essential to the functioning of society – the consumptive individual. Both interviewee six and four criticize the reduction of human value to consumerism.

Beyond the reduction of human identity to consumerism, some participants describe the limiting effect which economic goals have on social interaction between individuals. Interviewee three describes this in context of regulation set for time banks and communal work:

"One example is time banks. Their central issue became that we weren't ready to allow for diversity as the tax collector forces time banks into the same economic logic that it needs to be monetized so that time can be taxed. And then a decision was made by the tax collector which basically destroyed the functioning of time banks. But so we weren't ready to accept that time banks could compete with monetary economics. And then in a way communal work is also banned. So communal work cannot be organized if its value exceeds a specific monetary value or they become exchange, but then it becomes part of tax regulation. That I think is quite saddening. And it also prohibits the formation of our social relations." **Interviewee 3**

Interviewee three highlights how economic logic expressed through tax regulation limits certain forms of non-monetary interaction. By limiting non-monetary interaction due to their non-compliant economic logic it also impacts the formation of social relations or human experiences.

The subtheme describing the instrumentalization of the human experience encompasses the perception that human identity is reduced to consumer identity and simultaneously human experiences or social relations are restricted when it comes to some non-consumptive or

non-monetary forms of socializing. Both perspectives emphasize the experience that current economic logic is reductionist in its treatment of human experience.

Subtheme: Environment

Other participants noted the instrumentalization of the environment for purposes of serving economic goals rather than recognizing the inherent value of the environment. These descriptions were usually in contrast to a desired for a different way of relating to nature. Interviewee eight describes this in the following manner:

" I think that that our relationship (with nature) should form towards one where we are a part of nature. That humans are part of nature. That humans are not somehow outside of nature, but that we are a fixed part of nature and in a very big way. From that perspective ecological thinking is somehow broader. That it is not… That ecology should not… is not only some natural resources for us, outside of us, like it is usually described in mainstream discussions..." **Interviewee 8**

Interviewee eight suggests that the human nature dichotomy should be undone and notes that currently ecology or nature is often discussed by refereeing to it as natural resources which are outside the human for their use. Other interviewees referenced how nature was currently understood through a similar distancing or a purpose outside of its inherent value. For example interviewee seven criticized how compared to cultures that live in diverse environment we have differing understanding of nature:

"My perspective to development is in a way one where we should try understand those cultures who live in diverse environments and understand things that we don't understand. Like they don't understand nature through our measurement systems that measure by how much we have exceeded our consumption… But they live in a way that does not create that danger of environmental degradation." **Interviewee 7**

Interviewee seven suggests that our understanding of nature is limited to understanding our consumptive impact on it. In this view the logic of consumerism can be conceived as shaping our understanding of nature. Interviewee six on the other hand describes an

encounter in their activism, which describes the contrasting values which can be associated to nature in the context of forestry:

"*So in these forest conversations… We have been in dialogue last winter with the forest industry. And often we talked about that birds should be given nesting peace in the spring and there was an idea that all forestry machines should be quieted down a bit and it would be recommended that employees would use their holidays then in May – June when there is most nesting taking place in nature. But they said this is completely impossible. There is no way it can be done. That it is economically completely impossible.*" **Interviewee 6**

Interviewee six describes their activism with the Finnish forestry industry, where they had attempted to protect nesting activities of birds in forests. The initiative to quiet down foresting activities was seen as impossible by the industry representatives due to its economic impact. Here again what can be noticed is the treatment of the forest based on its economic value not its value as a diverse nesting ground for species.

The subtheme encapsulates more latent concerns related to the instrumentalization of nature by the ways in which the value or purpose of nature and the environment is perceived. The pattern arose often in situations where interviewees contrasted what they desired for the treatment of ecology to what they perceived it was now.

Subtheme: Global relationships

For interviewees associating directly to the scholarship of post-development the instrumentalization of global relations was perceived through direct development criticism and the association of development to capitalism. Interviewee two describes this in the following manner:

"*If we consider that development was as a concept was very intimately interlinked with the construction of capitalist society in itself and the capitalist mode of production. So, detachment of development must also mean detachment from that kind of capitalist mode of productions where a surplus is created.*" **Interviewee 2**

Interviewee two associates development as an instrument of capitalist society and capitalist mode of production. Here any change in conceptions of development are associated to the need to disassociate from capitalism, which highlights their interlinkage in this perspective. Further in the interview they emphasize the harmful impact they view this linkage has.

"In international, in global politics it (development) has been so, it's too intimately associated with, first of all colonialism and then of course with the developmentalist capitalist system that we now know that is not sustainable. So I think in a few decades time we will be ashamed that we have associated development with something that has destroyed our capacity to carry on as a human species. Or not only us as humans, but all the other species " **Interviewee 2**

Here, global relations executed through development are conceived as associated to capitalist economy and the association implies a connection with the destruction of species. In this kind of perception global relations are instrumentalized though harmful development. While the pattern was not identified across all data items it was represented strongly amongst individuals associating to post-development directly.

Synthesis: Instrumentalizing impact of economy

This themes unites patterns across the data, which highlight the dominant effect of the economic system on different areas of society. The subtheme of human experience captures the concern of participants that human value is equated to consumerism and that economic structures have a limiting impact on specific types of social relations. The subtheme of the environment on the other hand highlights how participants describe our current relation to nature or the environment often through its perceived economic function or possibility. The final subtheme of global relationships highlights a narrower and more radical pattern in the data, where participants emphasize the role of development as an instrument of capitalist logic. The instrumentalizing impact of economy is seen across the subthemes to redirect the appreciation of inherent value of things to their value in relation to their economic capacity.

This kind of criticism questions the values which are implied through current economic structures and how this valuation effects differing ways of conduction society and human

life. To an extent commonalities from such criticism can be drawn to post-development. The perceived reduction of human value to consumption resonates with post-development's critique of the market presented by Berthoud. He describes that the search for wellbeing has been overtaken by the logic that it can primarily be achieved through material wellbeing (Berthoud 1992 p.72). Latouche argues that "*the economic paradigm has succeeded very well in reducing our perspective to a single point of view. It has resulted in one-dimensional reductionism*" (Latouche 1992 p.255). The pattern across the theme resonates to an extent with the view that current economic logic is reductive and dominates some perceptions of human, ecological and global interactions.

5.2. Themes presenting patterns of opportunities in utopian imagining
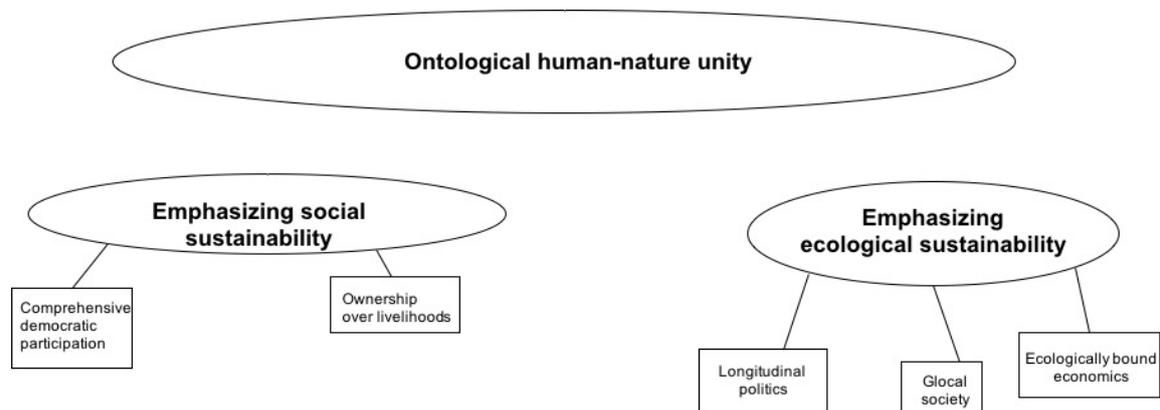

Figure 4: Thematic map of utopian opportunities

This section focuses on presenting research findings in relation to the societal opportunities or alternative images presented through utopian imagining conducted in the interviews. In relation to utopian opportunities the thematic analysis process generated three major themes, which are presented in the above Figure 3. In this section all three themes will be reviewed together with their subthemes and contrasted to post-development theory. The aim of such a comparison is to understand whether transformative alternatives emerging in the global North, in this case Finland, would coincide with alternatives emerging from the South and their theoretical underpinnings.

As mentioned, three themes were generated to communicate the patterns across data items in relation to utopian opportunities. These themes aim to answer the research question: What kind of societal alternatives do utopian explorations present? When data was analyzed a clear dominant pattern across all data items was generated. The theme: *Ontological human-nature unity* acts here as the umbrella theme informing the two other themes in their logic. As previously discussed the ontological mode of Levitas' utopian inquiry recognizes the presence of ontological assumptions for better being (2013) and this was clearly present in the data set regarding utopian opportunities. All participants in the sample emphasized such an approach with some variance. Participants both described the need for such a fundamental ontological paradigm shift and some also directly pointed to its hierarchical position as foundational in the imagining of societal alternatives.

Theme 3: Ontological human-nature unity

"Well in this utopia what I hope has come to the center is the thought that we would genuinely see our linkage to nature. That we are not separate from nature." **Interviewee 3**

The dynamic between human and nature emerged as a conversation topic in all interviews and the pattern that was generated thought the data items was a call for society where human activity was valued equally to nature and an emphasis that human's unity with nature would be recognized. The recognition of human-nature unity was described as total shift of thought by some:

"So some kind of awakening and total reorientation would be needed. And here I think the sciences… We have this argument that science based policy making, but I think there is this misconception that people are rational. It seems we are not. So probably some kind of spiritual and emotional drivers have to be there as well so that we would not ruin the ecosystems around us and within us. And what it would mean and also then the basic conceptualization: Because we have this idea that humans and nature, but it is a silly idea because we are in nature and nature is in us, 100 percent. So, these kind of reorientation of the world view and belief system as well." **Interviewee 1**

"We need a similar kind of revolution in thinking about the nature-culture divide and in this we can draw from indigenous peoples experiences and traditions. In which human and

non-human are thought of as the same cosmology and not so separate in an ideal world."
Interviewee 2

Interviewee one and two both describe the need for some king of change in world views or even cosmology as the base of alternative society. Interviewee two highlights that such traditions of though can be associated to some forms of indigenous ways of life. On the flip side of this some interviewees associated separation of human and nature to a specifically Western way of understanding humanity:

"*Also otherwise that we would respect nature and our connection to nature as a source of power much more than now. Even though many do appreciate it now as well, but it is somehow in Western culture that we have alienated ourselves from nature and this is relevant to us Finns also to an extent.*" **Interviewee 4**

Interviewee four recognizes our current separation from nature and attributes this way of thinking to the tradition of Western culture, which Finland is impacted by also. The conceptions of unity between human and nature drew upon a wide range of philosophy and theory across the participants:

"*Yes, I myself use or call myself an ecofeminist. And this is because.. This kind of solidarity between species and by species I now mean that humans are one species amongst other species. That is the philosophy.*" **Interviewee 5**

"*I would really highlight two values, which I think is the bases for all activity. So this living… The planet and… Well, in addition to maintaining earth as livable also human value. So in a way these two are very difficult to treat unequally. In a way which is more important? Because then we start to wonder into really difficult philosophical questions… But if we really genuinely are part of nature then those two start to merge together. So, we would see the value of natural life but we would also see inherent human value that all have been born equal and that humans have inherent value just because they have been born in to this world.*" **Interviewee 8**

"We have made this pamphlet which describes this: The two legged revolution. These two legs are on one hand ecological sustainability and social justice on the other."
Interviewee 4

While most participants have their varying way of conceptualizing the values which arise to guide society through a more unified conception of humans belonging to nature, most participants emphasized that the inherent value of both nature and human need to be recognized. Like interviewee four, some participants reflected this through the need for ecological sustainability and social justice as founding principles. Interviewee five on the other hand emphasized an ecofeminist approach where species were consieved as equal, humans included. What was recognized as a commonality in between these conceptions was that there was equality between human value and ecological value. As described by interviewee eight in the previous excerpt, when humans are seen as part of nature it becomes difficult to prioritize either human or natural rights over one and other.

While there was perceived equality of values within the ontology of human-nature unity its position was clearly described as being a foundation or guiding principle for the functions of society. Interviewee eight describes that when ecological bounds are recognized a hierarchy between functions can be seen:

"*Well the hierarchy is born through the realization that all human activity has to be executed within economic bounds. If we again understand ecology as these limited natural resources then we really have nature as a foundation for everything. …. Human activity is a part of natural activity and therefore keeping nature's health is the beginning and end of everything."* **Interviewee 8**

Interviewee two describes a similar hierarchy in which society's functions are outlined through what purpose they serve to the aims of environmental and social sustainability:

"But one for me is the environmental and social sustainability, social justice are the cornerstones and then the economy has to mm.. Be adjusted to serve those aims and then democracy is sort of the means of how we put the economy in its place." **Interviewee 2**

This sense of equality amongst human and nature in their unification is therefore held as the ontological bases upon which the functions of an alternative society are imagined from or what values they serve.

Synthesis: Ontological human-nature unity

A call for a more integrated understanding of human's relation to nature was present across the data items. Participants emphasized that closeness and unity of humans to nature should be realized to guide more ecologically and socially sustainable societies. The current separation of humans and nature was to an extent attributed to the Western philosophical tradition. Post-development literature tends to be critical about modernist Western relations to nature and their manifestation in development. Beyond separation from nature the Western tradition has been described through its consumptive approach to natural resources; enforcing ownership over land and as disrespectful to nature's limits to include some views (Sachs 1992).

Some participants referenced indigenous or Southern alternatives to development movements (Interviewee one, interviewee seven, interviewee five) as a examples of how more unified ontologies can guide more sustainable communities and action. As said, alternatives to development movements and practices often place emphasis on a more integrated way of conceiving human and non-human relations. Demaria and Kothari frame the search of alternatives through the frame of post-development as guided by a "*collective search for an ecologically wise and socially just world*" (Demaria and Kothari 2017 p.1). This in a broad sense coincides with the guiding values desired through the utopian images. The emphasis is placed on social and ecological sustainability at the level of societal guiding principles.

Alternatives to development highlights a plurality of ways to conceive human and non-human relations and wellbeing as the emphasis is also on highlighting multiple voices over universal narratives (Demaria and Kothari 2017). A set of perspectives which is often described in the context of alternatives to development is Buen Vivir, based in South America. Buen Vivir encompasses a variety of views, but rejects the notion of human and nature being separate. Rather such perspectives emphasize inherent value of non-human

entities and simultaneously human and non-human rights are recognized in unison. (Chuji et al. in Kothari et al. 2019)

The utopian desires for a more unified perception of human and nature guiding society provides a linkage with the alternative visions desired and alternatives to development perspectives. As emphasized by the participants such connecting desires could connect alternative movements arising from Finland or the West in general to learn from different ontological perspectives already existing. From a post-development perspective, in such learning it is essential to recognize the locality of alternatives and not treat a local solution as one which can be universalized, but rather one which can inspire understanding of one's own context.

Theme 4: Emphasizing social sustainability

This section will discuss the content of the theme Emphasizing social sustainability. As mentioned in the previous section the following themes are guided by the umbrella theme *Ontological human-nature unity*. This theme captures the patterns across data items which emphasize the reflection of inherent human value as guiding societal functions. The subthemes emphasize the patterns of *comprehensive democratic participation* and *economic ownership* as a means of recognizing inherent human value in societal functions. Social sustainability is here treated through imagined practices which increase human participation and ownership in society; in other words societal practices which emphasize increased agency of communities and individuals.

Subtheme: Comprehensive democratic participation

Most participants emphasized the importance of comprehensive and participatory processes in utopian democratic societies. This theme reflects the critical theme *The state of democracy* by addressing some of the concerns over current democracy. It was clear across the data that democracy occupied political space in utopian imagining:

"We probably don't have a better utopia than democracy, but it should work as comprehensively as possible and from the bottom up. Listen to civil movements and so on.." **Interviewee 4**

"Well, there would have to be or should be some comprehensive democracy."
Interviewee 1

"Yea, in addition to representative democracy I think that different forms of direct democracy will increase. It can of course happen in several ways…" **Interviewee 8**

There is a uniform understanding across the data that democracy is present in Finnish utopian society. But what can be derived from the above interviewees' comments and the earlier democratic criticism, is that democracy should not merely rely on representation but that it is imagined to be more comprehensive and include forms of more direct democracy. Democratic comprehensiveness was conceived in the following ways:

"And then another things: cultural democracy, people having equal say regardless of religion or languages. And political democracy, through participatory democratic processes that have much greater say by the people to introduce things like right to recall and referendum and so on. And electoral funding has to do with this also. So it elections are privately funded then the money power undermines real democracy. And gender aspects also, gender democracy… So this kind of comprehensive democratic society can be organized and should be organized." **Interviewee 1**

" I see that the political dimension and democracy are included in this economic, in a way that decision making power in regards to economic affairs is also more direct."
Interviewee 8

Comprehensive democracy is here conceived as reaching to several levels and aspects of life. Interviewee one emphasizes that democracy should be understood in a plurality of ways such as having equal opportunity to democratic process regardless of cultural background, gendered democracy and monetary democracy. Interviewee eight also highlights the democratization of the economy, where democratic principles have power also on the sphere of economics. Democracy is viewed as a more comprehensive and

rooted in more areas of society than for example electoral processes in representative democracy.

What is also present in the above excerpts is the element of direct democracy. Interviewee one brings up referendums and the right to recall as possible ways of increasing direct democracy. The emphasis of direct democracy was also brought up through the desire of more inclusion of citizens in the democratic process:

"Well I would hope that in that future society there would be more.. That there would arise more forums and inclusivity where ministers would invite citizens to contribute… While it can sometime be kind of democracy-white-washing, but anyway like we are now able to suggest contributions to the climate program." **Interviewee 6**

Here interviewee six suggest more direct interaction between politicians and citizens in ways which would allow for citizens contributions. They also note that such means are to an extent already in use through their own experience, but that such possibilities should be more present in a utopian society. Some participants emphasized the role of technology in utopian democracy, which allow for more direct involvement:

"… how the democratic outlook has even in Finland like a hundred years… or it has gotten stuck in its form from a hundred years back and that now we would have the technological means by which make more flexible surveys and like take into consideration more opinions and in different instances more flexibly. Compared to this kind of think that only happens every four years." **Interviewee 6**

Interviewee six emphasizes that technology could be one tool for more direct and flexible democracy. It is important to note here that while some interviewees emphasize the possibilities of technology in the future utopias in connection democratic processes and other contexts, there are also skeptical voices within the data set about the role of technology in general. Technological criticism did not emerge as a major theme, but its opportunities and skepticism where in some instances brought up by interviewees.

Subtheme: Ownership over livelihoods

This subtheme contributes to the theme of *emphasizing social sustainability* by presenting patterns in data that that focus on increased ownership over livelihoods, both of individuals and communities. Livelihoods are here discussed in both monetary and non-monetary terms. Therefore livelihoods can be labelled here as means of acquiring what is needed for living, be it money or non-monetary for requirements of life. This approach highlights the plurality of livelihoods imagined in utopias that increase human ownership.

One way this increase in ownership was described by some participants was forms of organizing monetary income or work, where the role of the employee as an owner is increased:

"So, the economy would need to be organized in cooperatives and small enterprises and then public production." **Interviewee 1**

"Cooperatives is one good example of this. And I think or as a business economist I know that these kind of forms are set by humans and I believe that there will be new.. in a way new ways of doing things which resemble cooperatives. So this kind of employee owned.. There is many ways to do this in practice. So right now the one we are most familiar with is the cooperative. But I believe that within it there are different variations, like what kind of form of ownership is suited for which community and it varies." **Interviewee 8**

The interviewees describe forms of employment that are employee owned. Both mention cooperatives as an example of this, but interviewee eight highlights that this is just the most known form in our current society and more nuanced conceptions might be developed. This is a very direct expression of how ownership over monetary livelihoods could be organized in a utopian society. Interviewee eight presents another example of a less known employee owned form which utilizes non-physical currencies:

"One of my favorites is this kind of thinking of commons based peer production. So it is this kind of area where new forms of activity and ownership forms are constantly created. Like new currencies, complementary currencies. That you can… That communities can

through technology create complementary currencies through which communities can exchange within a locality." … "In this context I understand money as a digital platform where people can negotiate what kind of qualities they want we want to put into rewarding within our community. In this can be done in very small groups also and the expand to larger communities. It is up to the community to decide. So through this technology we can collectively decide how.. in a way.. these tokens or money is gained within that community and we can even go to the level of voting about who wants to reward what kind of use.." **Interviewee 8**

This example highlights again the technological opportunities which can provide alternatives to national monetary currencies. Here the increase in ownership is noticeable on a more communal level. The community could together negotiated what kind of values or qualities the complementary currency would encourage. In this way communal ownership over exchange and livelihood be more directly defined by the community at hand.

In the previous examples increased ownership over livelihood was conceived through ownership over defining the form of monetary labor or communal exchange through digital currencies. Other participants highlighted the plurality of ways in which non-monetary livelihoods could be organized.

"So, the use of money or currency is not central, what is central is that people find each other's skills and can support each other with those skills. And this is the perspective and many forms of livelihood are associated to it. So that we get by ourselves and we understand our needs and get by together with our neighbors. This is the conception of livelihood by which we will get further rather than talking about economics. So livelihood… In order to get by we need some form of economy, but this economy can also be self-sufficiency for example." **Interviewee 7**

Interviewee seven emphasizes non-monetary forms of livelihood in the utopian conception of Finnish society. They also note that self-sufficiency can be seen as a way to create one's livelihood. Self-sustained living was emphasized by other participants also, but almost always there was a disclaimer connected to its meaning as follows:

"A kind of closeness to nature and self-sustained living, which is a bit dangerous as a word. Self-sustained living should not be in anyway perfect and it does not need to be in this day and age, but I have strived for this kind of self-sufficiency…" **Interviewee 6**

Interviewee six sees the role of self-sustained living with nature as a possible utopian vision, but exclaims that self-sufficiency should not be seen as complete. This was common amongst all participants who highlighted the possibilities of self-sufficient living. Self-sufficient living then did not come to mean isolated living where and individual or family would strive for complete sufficiency, but it was described on the level of communities or localities. Self-sustainability presents a form of ownership over livelihood which is less based on monetary exchange but more based on communal ownership over the ways in which livelihood is created.

Finally some participants emphasized basic income as a supportive mechanism for livelihood, which would support individual livelihood and free time for other livelihood activities:

"So then there would be some kind of universal basic income. I'm currently involved in feminist discussions here they talk about care-income." … "So when people don't use 40 hours a week into some insignificant monetary labor… Or it is not at all insignificant, it is completely significant because of the wage, but the content of the work… Then they have time to do other things which are essential to life that they do now also. They acquire food, they take care that there is heat and in the house, that they have some property, whatever it is.. children and the elderly and so forth. So such things would be taken care of differently." **Interviewee 5**

What is highlighted in interviewee five's statement is that a distribution of basic income could free up time to secure others livelihoods, such as children's and the elderly people's in a different way to now. Here basic income is seen as means to support livelihoods, but simultaneously as a way to free up space for care work or other desired or required aspects of livelihood. In this way the ownership over livelihood can be viewed as an increased ownership over time available to determine how other's livelihoods are secured.

Synthesis: Emphasizing social sustainability

The theme *Emphasizing social sustainability* complies patterns which amplifying inherent human value in utopian imagining. The functions which increase social sustainability are communicated though increased participation in democratic decision making and in forms which emphasize individual or communal ownership over livelihoods. The theme's first subtheme demonstrates how participants view democracy as an integral function in utopian society, when it is defined through more direct and comprehensive democratic measures. The second subtheme on the other hand explores the plurality of ways in which livelihoods were described across data and connects these descriptions with the unifying concept of increasing ownership over how livelihoods can be conceived.

In context to post-development the conception of livelihoods will shortly be discussed. The subtheme *Ownership over livelihoods* presented a plurality of ways in which livelihood could be conceived and some perspectives of participants suggested that these livelihoods are formed through the needs of the individual or community in question. This emphasis of plurality of livelihoods suggest a plurality of economies: monetary, non-monetary, care economies, barter economies, self-sustained economies and so forth. Again this plurality of ways of organizing livelihoods and economies resonates with the remaking of development. As Escobar exclaims "*not only does the idea of a universal model of the economy have to be abandoned, it becomes necessary to recognize that forms of production are not independent from the representations of social life in which they exist*" (Escobar 1995 p.118). This fulfills the notion of production beyond its process and contextualizes it into a social world. Therefore recognizing that a uniform conception of the economy can be seen as inadequate if social life is to be understood to be plural. In context to the plural livelihoods imagined, the recognition of multiple economies is to go hand in hand with character and context of the individuals and communities who practice within them. From this perspective there is also a link to be made to the criticism of the economy's limiting capacity on social life, which was discussed in the context of time banks and communal work. Therefore while production is not socially hollow, economic also have the capability to regulate or encourage different forms of sociality.

Theme 5: Emphasizing environmental sustainability

This theme emphasizes how the inherent value of nature when realized could be reflected in more environmentally sustainable societal functions. The theme consists of three subthemes: *longitudinal politics*, *ecologically bound economics* and *glocal society*. The subthemes will be presented together with data which demonstrate the generated patterns. Finally, the theme as a whole will be synthesized and reflected upon in the light of reference to post-development and alternatives to development theory.

Subtheme: Longitudinal politics

Longitudinal politics emerged as a pattern from concern over current democratic process as well as in connection to the challenges proposed by climate change.

"*The large problem with democracy now is that it tends to be so sort sited. We have also discussed this in our publications. For us the four year election cycle is in no way sufficient. For example for the issues of species extinction and climate change we have to look so much further when we make decisions.*" **Interviewee 4**

Like interviewee four, some participants in their critiques highlighted that the four year parliamentary election cycle was insufficient to deal with specifically issues of climate change, which potentially have such far reaching effects. The insufficiency of was therefore conceived directly in relation to the structures inability to serve ecological sustainability.

Interviewee three's utopian imagining suggested an addition to parliamentary politics, which could better address issues which require longitudinal political attention:

"Then I suggested that we could establish this kind of Future Parliament. Its function would be that it is only allowed to make decisions which come into effect only after ten years. And they are in effect from there onwards. So this short-term parliament could make short term decisions, decisions in the ranging a maximum of ten years. But then the current parliament would have to take into consideration that in ten years we'll have this situation. So for example in regards to climate change. So then the law would come into effect and it

is in effect from then onwards. So we would have this long termism. It would calm down many situations. It would give us direction and purpose. " **Interviewee 3**

Here interviewee three highlights the need to strengthen longitudinal decision making processes, which allow for more long term planning and coherence beyond the four year parliamentary elective cycle. Again specifically climate change is mentioned as an issue which would require such long term political planning. Here the current parliamentary system would be seen complementary to a more long term *Future Parliament*, which legislative power would only in long term decision making. The interviewee later describes that such a division could allow for more contemplation testing of different operative directions before actual decisions are made.

The call for more longitudinal politics directly reflects the desire for political structures which better work towards the goals of ecological sustainability. While some participants emphasized the need for more longitudinal political process either through describing its opportunities or through criticism, there were few suggestions for structural manifestations of how this could be imagined.

Subtheme: Ecologically bound economics

Ecologically bound economics was a major pattern across the data items and again reflect the hierarchy of ontological human-nature unity as a guiding principle for utopian society. Ecological sustainability again acts as an aim which the economy is bound to. Here the economy is positioned as inseparable from ecological limits:

"Ecological and economic intimately interlink that they cannot be, in my opinion, they cannot be discussed separately." **Interviewee 2**

"It (economy) is strongly functioning within ecological bounds. So it is ecologically sustainable. So we do not exceed the earths boundaries of sustainability." **Interviewee 8**

Interviewees two and eight exclaim an integrated understanding of the economy and ecology. This to an extent reflects the current criticism of the economy as instrumentalizing the environment for its goals. The ecologically bound economy reverses

the goals: where the environment is currently seen to service economic goals, in a utopian conception the economy would be bound to ecological limits and serve the function of preserving ecological sustainability. This contrast is present in interviewee one's description of the desired economy:

"Make the scale suitable with the environmental limits and aims. So, the overall throughput of the economy in material terms would have to be like 90 percent of the current volumes. Mm.. And so like for me economy primary counting should be in kilograms and joules and only thirdly as money, because biophysical base is the critical one and it is by and large ignored by the mainstream economics. So, it would have to be downscaled as it is and then sort of the needs based, because now much of our economies are greed based." **Interviewee 1**

Interviewee one discusses ways in which the ecologically bound economy could measure its activity when its primary purpose would be to serve environmental aims. They contrast the new economy and the current economy with the terms: *needs based* and *greed based*. The characteristic of a needs based economy was strongly present in interviewees' imagining. An ecologically bound economy was described as one which served actual human needs. The servicing of actual needs as one aim of the economy implies a link between the unsustainability of current consumption:

"So this system (economic system) aims at serving the basic needs of every individual on Earth. And the needs are specifically primary needs. So it is not an economy which serves artificial needs like the current economy does. On the contrary, it serves physical and spiritual human primary needs." **Interviewee 8**

"That we would learn to see that we will never rid ourselves from consumption. We need food, we need energy, heat, all of this. But this basic principle of deep ecological thinking has been eye opening for me. I can't remember it word for word, but… The principle would be that we can utilize nature to fulfill our primary needs. And these primary needs also only to the extent that it is necessary. And the defining of primary needs is then a complex thing, because we have become used to thinking that our primary needs include flying to Bali and things like this. But this is somehow distorted." **Interviewee 3**

Interviewees eight and three both note that our current consumption does not serve only basic needs, but a lot of what they call artificial needs. Interviewee eight describes and economic system which globally serves the basic needs of all individuals on Earth. They view the content of basic needs as both physical and spiritual. Interviewee three on the other hand emphasizes that consumption is part of human life, but that is should be directed to serve primary needs. They view that nature's resource can be utilized to fulfill only those needs which are primary. It is important to note here that interviewee three to an extent problematizes the defining of primary needs. The reduction of consumption to the level of primary needs is connected here to serve the aims of ecological sustainability.

Subtheme: Glocal society

The subtheme of *glocal society* brings together images of future society which is simultaneously strongly based in locality but simultaneously encourages global learning and connectedness. Locality and globality was emphasized by most participants, but the subtheme also reflects the tensions which arise from currently living in a globalized world and the emphasis of more local transitions. Locality was often emphasized as a necessity for ecological sustainability:

"Well localization is one sort of which follows from the reduction of material impact. But basically.. energy use… So even if fossil fuels and nuclear and other unacceptable power sources would be put aside then to be sustainable the system would have to be much smaller than now." **Interviewee 1**

Interviewee one describes localization as a effect of reducing material of consumption and in this way reduction of consumption and material needs is again seen to link to ecological sustainability. In this view such reductions direct human actions towards locality and a smaller scale in general. While this element of localization is common amongst participants it is perceived in very different and even contrasting ways:

"Hmm.. and urbanization would have stop and people would stream out of the cities. So cities would become much smaller. People would live at a walking or cycling distance from each other and local nature. Hmm… and yea I think people would live in village communities." **Interviewee 6**

Interviewee six emphasis small scale local community living. They view that in a utopian society increased urbanization would have halted and that society would be constructed though village like units. This is a perspective which some participants share, where living units are perceived as small, communal and mostly distributed across the country. These views are on the other hand strongly contested:

"*I myself don't encourage that kind of... And I can say it here as well because it is very integral. That there are voices in the local degrowth movement in Finland who support transition to pretty small village communitie, where decisions are made. And they are there together and keep contact with other communities". ..."and my big worry here is also that what becomes the role of women, not speaking of sexual or gender minorities? That what comes to define what is good and necessary in these communities where what is appreciated is keeping up the household and growing food. Well, it becomes strength and the abilities of the body. What happens to individuals with disabilities?*" **Interviewee 5**

"There is clearly this kind of tension in my model. Between local knowledge and local organizing and this kind of… Where are the boundaries of locality set?" **Interviewee 5**

This highlights the tension which is present amongst data items in the context of how locality is realized. While there is a somewhat common understanding that the emphasis of locality is required for environmental sustainability, there contrast in what it means. Whether it means the reorganization of physical living arrangements into smaller units or something else:

"*Of course when we live in modern society we equally we need to strengthen local networks. Like social networks where we physically live and the people close to us. That we would increase interaction and trust in these local networks.*" **Interviewee 8**

Interviewee eight does not emphasize locality in the sense of spatially and physically smaller units, but as a strengthening of community networks within lived environments, which is connected to the increase trust and interaction. Locality then could then be perceived as a strengthening of networks in current surroundings rather than change in

physical and spatial organization. Interviewee eight continues:

"But then on the other hand global connections. And technology that we now use offers good opportunities for this. We can be actively present with people who live across the world and simultaneously strengthen this global connection. And actually we can help each other from a distance and exercise these kind of reciprocal relationships. This kind of glocal thinking. That we act locally but we think globally ... That this kind of planetary thinking increases." **Interviewee 8**

They directly bridge this strengthening of local networks to global connection by emphasizing the role of technology in maintaining global connectedness. Interviewee eight emphasizes glocality: acting locally but thinking globally. They draw a connection to planetary thinking. This connection refines the connection to human-nature ontology by tying human value to the platform of the Earth which is shared by all humans. This is one way in which the equal values of human and nature are seen to have possibilities in building global connectedness – through the understanding of a shared planet.

Across the data participants emphasize some form of locality as a requirement for ecological sustainability but global connectedness is still upheld. Participants directly associating to post-development or alternatives to development emphasis the role of globality as connecting or learning from other alternative societies or movements:

"And I believe that the future utopias or alternatives that they are small scale initiatives arising from different avenues, different groups of peoples and movements that can of course align with each other internationally and find commonalities and common strands." **Interviewee 2**

Interviewee two describes the multiplicity of alternatives which have the possibility to connect internationally. Here what is emphasized again is the plurality of locality and their alternative manifestations. Interviewee one on the other hand views the global connections from the perspective of Southern leadership towards sustainable transitions:

"I think the South has so much more potential for this transition to sustainability because there are much more people who have not been fully immersed in this consumerist

lifestyles and I think we see if we look at the demands of Southern environmental organizations they are much more structural and sort of far going than those from the North. There is a huge amount of US professors for example, who understand the big picture but they cannot imagine a future without a car, which means that their solutions will be limited and therefore Southern movements and intellectuals are providing leadership and should provide it more in this transition." **Interviewee 1**

What is emphasized here is the perceived limited capacity for Norther led transformation due to the inability to see beyond development or current ways of being. Finally, interviewee seven views the global connection as mutual learning through physical interaction which directly serves the aims of strengthening ecological sustainability.

"The learning would require time and see the world and help. Like going around doing communal work. Something like this. Learning between cultures about sustainable life traditions and practices and how to develop them." **Interviewee 7**

The subtheme of glocality highlights the tensions which are present in the data in relation to how locality is perceived and what role global connectedness plays. While locality is by most participants emphasized as a requirement for more ecologically sustainable society, there is contrast in how locality is perceived. Simultaneously global networks are emphasized through shared planetary value or through learning sustainability form other movements or societies.

Synthesis: Emphasizing environmental sustainability

The theme *emphasizing environmental sustainability* explores how imagined alternative societies could reflect environmental sustainability through varying societal functions and characteristics. The subthemes highlight how political and economic systems could be adjusted to serve the aims of environmental sustainability as guided by the understanding of human-nature unity. The subtheme *glocality* highlights the tensions arising from data in regards to how locality is emphasized and regarded as necessary for environmentally sustainable living, but simultaneously attempts to capture how global connections could be maintained and what they would entail.

The subthemes present interesting connection and diversion points to post-development and alternatives to development theory. Three aspects will be highlighted in the in the following section: the role of locality, global connectedness and the concept of basic needs.

The emphasis inherent in the theme of locality and its connection to the plurality of alternatives resonates strongly with the aims or principles of post-development. Plurality is at the core of alternatives to development and again challenges universal narratives based in Western modernity though this emphasis. Sachs' writing on cosmopolitan localism (1992) provides an interesting lens for looking at the subtheme of glocality and its perceived inherent tension. Sachs describes the end of desire for universalism and rather a desire for place-centered diversity over space-centered unity (Sachs 1992 p.112). This continues the movement away from universalism and connects localism to diversity which arises when localism is rooted in a plurality of places. Here the strengthening of local languages, economies and knowledges are highlighted are as the root of diversity in locality (Sachs 1992).

The purpose of the emphasis of locality in the utopian images and Sachs' cosmopolitan localism seem to differ slightly. There is an element of emancipation or empowerment in cosmopolitan localism connecting to the recognition of value in place and tradition which due to Western universalism has been devalued. The utopian imaginations of localism here partly focuses on its necessity for environmental sustainability but also when viewed in the light of increased ownership over economic or comprehensive democratic processes can be viewed to have empowering effects on communities and localities. Still the extent of which this emancipatory quality is present varies.

Most participants did not reference local knowledge directly at all or as a link to locality. But two participants did reference local knowledge either in context of cultural tradition around construction or human connection to nature. These codes were recognized, but they did not come to build a pattern. But the acknowledgement of the possibilities to utilize local knowledge in the imagining of alternatives emphasizes an interesting question of what Finnish local knowledge could contribute to conversations on sustainable alternatives. This unfortunately cannot be answered here and such existing perspectives are beyond the extent of this thesis.

Sachs acknowledges the need to work towards the goal of *dialogue of civilizations* in the pursuit of cosmopolitan localism. Such dialogue is described as necessary for cohabitation as well as cultural self-examination, which is "*a simultaneous process of confrontation and synthesis*" (Sachs 1992 p.113). Under cosmopolitan localism both confrontation and synthesis are part of the dialogue between unities. In this light, perhaps the tension in the theme glocalism should not be treated as tension which should be solved but tension which could be embraced as diversity.

While there are parallels in thinking about locality as a base for alternatives, there is little problematization of defining the concept of basic or primary needs which were discussed in the context of ecologically bound economics. There was one exception to this in the data and this problematization is integral in light of post-development discussions. To clarify, it is not to say that human basic needs do not exist, but that the process of their definition is not necessarily unproblematic. Escobar highlights this in his examination of the development discourse and suggests that even in regards to satisfying basic human needs there can be a plurality of ways which take into consideration culture (Escobar 1995 p.225).

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of findings and analysis

This section will shortly summarize the findings and analysis presented in the previous chapter. The summary addresses the objectives and research questions guiding the research. The research questions relating to utopian criticism and opportunities will be discussed in said order. The research question pertaining to the utopia's relation to post-development will be addressed in concurrence with utopian criticism and opportunities.

The previous section presented and synthesized the themes which were generated during the thematic analysis process. In total five themes were identified. Two of these themes we grouped to describe the societal criticism preset in the utopian imagining of alternative Finnish society. The first theme collated data items that focused on the concern over the current state of democracy with an emphasis on the failure of representation, short-termism, and loss of power. The second theme concerning utopian criticism demonstrated the data reflecting concern over the instrumentalizing impact on the perceived value of the *environment*, *human experience,* and *global interaction*. Overall the critical themes amount to a call for strengthening and reviving the Finnish democratic system as well as putting the economy in its place and reviving the inherent value of the environment as well as the human experience.

This criticism connects to post-development especially in the fields of the current economic systems with reference to the critique of capitalism, the extent of the market economy, and the unsustainability constant growth. The data highlights the discontent of participants with the role and reach of the market economy at its current state. The dominance of the economy over social, environmental, and communal life is widespread in post-development. As described by Esteva: "*As a conceptual construction, economics strives to subordinate to its rule and to subsume under its logic every other form of social interaction in every society it invades*" (Esteva 1992 p.17-18). The current economic structure is in some aspects of its activity described rather as a setter of common goals towards which societies aim than a tool to serve other aims.

But while the alternative utopias and post-development share common criticism, their root is planted in somewhat different reasoning. Most participants connect the climate crisis to Western or consumptive ways of life recognizing therefore to an extent of the criticism of post-development on Western hegemony. Participants associating directly with post-development or alternatives to development problematized development and Western modernity as its base. Amongst participants who associated with degrowth or other post-growth thinking the danger of universalist modernity, in general, was only partly present. Ziai's characterization of development "*as a Eurocentric and hierarchic construct defining non-Western, non-modern, non-industrialised ways of life as inferior and in need of 'development'*" is at the core post-development criticism. This said post-development has been criticized for its comprehensive disregard for outcomes of modernity which have supported the poor in the Global South (Corbridge 1998). While there is some recognition of criticism of modernity in the data complete abandonment of modernity does fully resonate with the imagined utopia as is reflected by interviewee four "*this means that we should think about our relationship to nature more deeply and see what in our Western modern is good and sustainable and what in it is utterly unsustainable…*" (Interviewee 4). Such an approach is rather evaluative of modernity rather than rejective.

The second set of themes presented the opportunities present in utopian imagining for alternatives societies. The overarching theme across imagining alternatives for society was the pattern of emphasizing the need for a more unified understanding of the human-nature relationship. This ontological stance exclaimed that humans should be considered as part of nature, while the inherent value of both should be treated equally. Informed by this the following themes combined patterns that emphasized social and ecological sustainability as supported by specific societal functions.

Functions serving the aim of social sustainability were presented through the subthemes of *comprehensive democratic participation* and *ownership over livelihood*. Functions serving the aims of ecological sustainability on the other hand were discussed under the subthemes of *longitudinal politics*, *glocal society,* and *ecologically bound economics*. The utopian opportunities present a new society where the understanding of humans as part of nature guides action and societal functions on all levels. The inherent value of humans and nature are treated equally and recognized. Comprehensive democracy increases human agency

and keeps the economy in its place – as a required tool for some of our livelihood while functioning within ecological limits.

There are some strong links and avenues for learning especially in the desire to base society on a more human-nature unity understanding. As said this understanding of unity is in some ways foreign to Western modernist thinking and therefore to understand what such ontological bases entail and how they reflect onto practice, there are voices and movements within post-development and alternatives to development to learn from.

As conceptualized by Sachs the process towards cosmopolitan localism, which shares similarities with the utopian images created, includes dialogue between civilizations (Sachs 1992). This dialogue does not only act as a connection, but as a means by which to establish synthesis, scrutiny, and self-examination. The approach suggests equality amongst civilizations. Such equality could be perceived through the frame of human-nature unity, where all human and non-human are same and equal - where all civilizations are equal in their right to sustain the Earth.

The findings correspond to Escobar's preliminary examination of connections between degrowth and post-development (Escobar 2015) especially in the areas of economic criticism, variance in stance to founding criticism, and the opportunities for cross-cultural learning for more sustainable futures. The findings demonstrate that the utopian visions and post-development share elements of criticism, but simultaneously base this criticism in varying rationalities. Such differences could stem from the differing contextualities from which alternative visions emerge. On the other hand the presented Finnish utopias recognize similar aims as post-development alternatives for a pluriverse: a change towards more ecologically and socially sustainable societies guided by these aims rather than the economy.

6.2. Limitations of the study

Like all research, also this one has its limitations. While the research questions were narrowed down in the process of question formulation they remain broad and conceptual. While they serve the objectives of the research well and are able to utilize the conceptual frame of utopia as a method adequately the scope of the research remains broad. This is

also relevant in the identified sample, which is unified by the conceptualization of transition discourses defined by Escobar (Escobar 2015). The definition acts as a good frame and justification for the selection of participants, but it also inherently includes a diverse definition of discourses. While this makes it possible to observe some variance in imagined utopias based on theoretical association, it limits the generalizability of results for example to the Finnish degrowth movement as a whole. While the generalizability of results is not always the primary concern of qualitative research it is integral to emphasize the impact of this diverse sample. Also it is relevant to question whether a mostly theoretical identification in the selection of the sample is inclusive and representative of the variety of voices in transition movements in Finland.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

This study has presented possible points of connection and divergence between transition movements and discourses arising from the Global South and the Global North. In addition the research experimented with the operationalization of the concept of utopia as a method. In the hope to contribute to further research on social imagining and exploration of alternatives, I'd like to highlight the utopian method in these suggestions.

It is important to note the possibilities of the utopian method in research for alternatives. The conceptual frame is challenging, versatile, and deeply enriching. The operationalization of the concept into methods needs to be carefully thought through as it is unconventional in its abstract form especially in interviews. But, when participants get to engage with the process of imagining and thought experimentation there is a possibility to genuinely engage in a reflective process that generates rich and in-depth data. Several interviewees expressed interest in the method and some exclaimed that through the interview process they had developed their ideas from the process of imagining and co-creation. To conclude in the words of interviewee six: "*I think it would be wonderful if people dared to hold on to their dreams, and not those silly dreams, but actually those great desires which are in all of us. I think this kind of research method feeds that and keeps alive that what we long for and what we strive for and what we want. Then we are going into that direction a little bit better*" (Interviewee 6).

7. References

Allen, Mike. 2017. Online Interviews in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320: SAGE Publications
Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483381411.n396.

Asara, Viviana, Iago Otero, Federico Demaria, and Esteva Corbera. 2015. "Socially Sustanable Degrowth as a Social-Ecological Transformation: Repoliticizing Sustainability." *Sustainability Science* 10 (3): 375–84.

Balasopoulos, Antonis. 2010. "Book Review: Ruth Levitas, The Concept of Utopia." *European Journal of American Studies*, Online, , February. https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/8514.

Barret, Michael, Mayan Maria, Morse M. Janice, Olson Karin, Spiers Jude. 2002 Verification for Establishing Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. International Journal of Qualitative Methods 1(2)

Bendix, Daniel. 2017. "Reflecting the Post-Development Gaze: The Degrowth Debate in Germany." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2617–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1314761.

Benedix, Daniel. 2017. "Reflecting the Post-Development Gaze: The Degrowth Debate in Germany." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2617–33.

Berthoud, Gérald. 1992. "Market." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowedge as Power*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Braun, V, and V Clarke. 2006. "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3 (2): 77–101.

Brinkmann, Svend, and Steinar Kvale. 2018. *Doing Interviews*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529716665.

Burr, Vivien. 2003. *Social Constructionism*. Second Edition. Sussex England: Routhledge.

Burr, Vivien. 2015. "Social Constructionism." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Second Edition. Vol. 22. Huddersfield, UK: Univeristy of Huddersfield.

Chrostowska, S., and James Ingram. 2017. *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*. New York, UNITED STATES: Columbia University Press. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/jyvaskyla-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5276000.

Corbetta, Piergiorgio. 1998. *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques*.

Corbridge, Stuart. 1998. "'Beneath the Pavement Only Soil': The Poverty of Post-development." *Journal of Development Studies* 34 (6): 138–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220389808422549.

Demaria, Federico, and Ashish Kothari. 2017. "The Post-Development Dictionary Agenda: Paths to the Pluriverse." *The Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2588–99.

Diener, E, J. Hellliwell, and D. Kahneman. 2010. *International Differences in Well-Being*. New York: Oxford university press.

Eileen Thomas, Joan Kathy Magilvy. 2011. Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing, Volume 16, Issue 2, pages 151-155

Emmel, Nick. 2013. *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realist Approach*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP United Kingdom: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473913882.

Escobar, Arturo. 1995. *Encountering Development : The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton University Press. http://site.ebrary.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/lib/jyvaskyla/reader.action?docID=10031960.
Escobar, Arturo. 2013. "Draft: Notes on the Ontology of Design." University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Escobar, Arturo. 2015. "Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions: A Preliminary Coversation." Springer.

Eskelinen, Teppo, ed. 2020. *The Revival of Political Imagination: Utopias as Methodology*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Esteva, Gustavo. 1992. "Development." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge and Power*, 306. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Esteva, Gustavo, and Arturo Escobar. 2017. "Post-Development @ 25: On 'being Stuck' and Moving Forward, Sideways, Backward and Otherwise." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2559–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1334545.

Fournier, Valérie. 2008. "Escaping from the Economy: The Politics of Degrowth." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 28 (11/12): 528–45.

Freeman, Michael. 1975. "Sociology and Utopia: Some Reflections on the Social Philosophy of Karl Popper." *The British Journal of Sociology* 26 (1): 20–34.

Guest, Greg, Emily E. Namey, and Marilyn L. Mitchell. 2013. *Collecting Qualitative Data: A Field Manual for Applied Research*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781506374680.

Hamilton, C. 2003. *Growth Fetish*. NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Herr, Kathryn, and Gary Anderson. 2005. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States: SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452226644.

Holland, O. 2017. "Chapter 2: Twentieth-Century Critical Readings of Morris's Utopianism." In *William Morris's Utopianism: Propaganda, Politics and Prefiguration*, XI:337. Springer.

Hollender, Rebecca. 2015. "Post-Growth in the Global South: The Emergence of Alternatives to Development in Latin America." *Socialism and Democracy* 29 (1): 73–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/08854300.2014.998472.

Howell, Kerry E. 2013. *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Jackson, Tim. 2017. *Prosperity without Growth?* 2nd ed. United Kingdom: Routledge.

John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens. 2011. *The Globalization of World Politics*. Fifth edition. Oxford: Oxford university press.

Kolås, Åshild. 1994. Review of *Review of The Development Dictionary. A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, by Wolfgang Sachs. *Journal of Peace Research* 31 (1): 122–122.

Kothari, Ashish, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta. 2015. "Buen Vivir, Degrowth, and Ecological Swaraj: Alternatives to Sustainable Development and Green Economy." *Development* 57 (December): 57–3. https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2015.24.

Kothari, Ashish, Ariel Salleh, Arturo Escobar, Federico Demaria, and Alberto Acosta, eds. 2019. *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

Kumar, Krishna. 1991. *Utopianism*. Concepts in the Social Sciences, II. Bristol: Open University Press.

Lane, R. 2000. *The Loss of Happiness in Market Economies*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Latouche, Serge. 1992. "Standard of LIving." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Latouche, Serge. 2004. "Degrowth Economics: Why Less Should Be so Much More." *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2004. https://mondediplo.com/2004/11/14latouche.

Latouche, Serge. 2006. "The Globe Downshifted: How Do We Learn to Want Less?" *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2006. https://mondediplo.com/2006/01/13degrowth?var_recherche=Serge+Latouche.

Latousche, Serge. 2009. *Farewell to Growth*. Translated by David Macey. 1st ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Latouche, Serge. 2010. "Editorial: Degrowth." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 18: 519–22.

Layard, R. n.d. *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*. New York: Penguin Press.

Le Grange, Lesley. 2019. "Ubuntu." In *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, 323–26. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

Levitas, Ruth. 1990. "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia." *Utopian Studies* 1 (2): 13–26.

Levitas, Ruth. 1990. *The Concept of Utopia*. United Kingdom: Philip Allan.

Levitas, Ruth. 2000. "For Utopia: The (Limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2–3): 25–43.

Levitas, Ruth. 2013. *Utopia as a Method: The Imaginary Reconstruction of Society*. 1st ed. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levitas, Ruth. 2017. "Where There Is No Vision, the People Perish: A Utopian Ethic for a Tranformed Future." Center for Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity.

Lichtman, Marilyn. 2014. *Qualitative Research for the Social Sciences*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781544307756.

Macekura, Stephen 2013. "The Point Four Program and U.S. International Development Policy." *Political Science Quarterly* 128 (1): 127–60.

Manuel, Frank E., and Fritzie P. Manuel. 1979. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Harvard University Press.

Martinelli, Alberto. 2005. "Global Modernization : Rethinking the Project of Modernity." 2005. http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzI 1MTU4MF9fQU41?sid=a26a4523-6187-43f8-a127-578a8e99a408@sdc-v-sessmgr03&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_28&rid=0.

Mills, Jane, and Melanie Birks. 2014. *Qualitative Methodology: A Practical Guide*. London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd. https://methods-sagepub-com.ezproxy.jyu.fi/Book/qualitative-methodology-a-practical-guide.

Morris, Alan. 2015. *A Practical Introduction to In-Depth Interviewing*. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road London EC1Y 1SP: SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473921344.

Moylan, Tom. 2006. "To Stand with Dreamers: On the Use Value of Utopia." *The Irish Review* 13 (Spring): 1–19.

Parajuli, Pramod. 1996. "The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power by Wolfgang Sachs (Review)." *American Ethnologists* 23 (3): 641–42.

Peshkin, Alan. 1988. "In Search of Subjectivity. One's Own." *Educational Research* 17 (7): 17–21.

Petersen, William. 1992. Review of *Review of The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, by Wolfgang Sachs. *Population and Development Review* 18 (1): 194–194. https://doi.org/10.2307/1971880.

Rahnema, Majid. 1992. "Poverty." In *The Development Dictionary*, 1st ed., 158–76. London: Zed Books.

Sachs, Wolfgang. 1992a. "One World." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd.

Sachs, Wolfgang, ed. 1992b. *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. 1st ed. London: Zed Books.

Sachs, Wolfgang. 2017. "The Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si': Varieties of Post-Development?" *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2573–87.

Said, Edward W. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. 1994. "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited." *Utopian Studies* 5 (1): 1–37.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. 2006. "In Defense of Utopia." *Diogenes* 209: 11–17.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. 2010. *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford Univeristy Press.

Sargisson, Lucy. 2013. "A Democracy of All Nature: Taking a Utopian Approach." *Politics*, Political Studies Association, Reserach Article, 33 (2): 124–34.

Schwandt, Thomas. 2007. *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320 United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986281.

Shiva, Vandana. 1992. "Resources." In *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. Zed Books.

Shrivastava, Aseem. 2019. "Prakritik Swaraj." In *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*. New Delhi: Tulika Books.

Suvin, Darko. 1990. "Locus, Horizon, and Orientation: The Concept of Possible Worlds as Key to Utopian Studies." *Utopian Studies* 1 (2): 69–83.

Thompson, E.P. 2011. *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. 1st ed. Spectre. PM Press.

Trebeck, Kathreine. 2016. "Partners in the Fight against Poverty and Inequality: The Relevance of Degrowth for Development | Degrowth.Info." Accessed May 13, 2020. https://www.degrowth.info/en/2016/11/partners-in-the-fight-against-poverty-and-inequality-the-relevance-of-degrowth-for-development/.

Truman, Harry. 1949 Inauguration Speech of Harry Truman (Full) - YouTube." n.d. Accessed February 20, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gytbJo_bmxA.

United Nations. 2015. "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development."

Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. *Envisioning Real Utopias.* London: Verso.

Ziai, Aram. 2004. "The Ambivalance of Post-Development: Between Reactionary Populism and Radical Democracy." *Third World Quarterly* 25 (6): 1045–60.

Ziai, Aram. 2014. "Post-Development Concepts? Buen Vivir, Ubuntu and Degrowth." Degrowth Conference Leipzig 2014.

Ziai, Aram. 2017a. "Post-Development 25 Years after The Development Dictionary." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2547–58.

Ziai, Aram. 2017b. "'I Am Not a Post-Developmentalist, But…' The Influence of Post-Development on Development Studies." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (12): 2719–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2017.1328981.