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The Role of Collaborative Fashion Consumption and Human Rights in Transitioning Towards a Degrowth Society

Lived Experiences of Dutch Female Consumers

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List of Acronyms

CFC	Collaborative Fashion Consumption
CFCs	Collaborative Fashion Consumption initiatives
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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Abstract

The impact of the Apparel Industry on the environment and people has grown tremendously over the past years. The rising Degrowth movement (in The Netherlands) proposes to lower levels of fashion consumption. The movement argues that we should raise awareness over the false promises of fashion consumption and act structurally accordingly to reduce it. However, the empirical research on Collaborative Fashion Consumption initiatives in The Netherlands presented in this paper shows that fashion consumption is often deeply embedded within local practices and cultural values. Therefore, giving up high consumption levels means that many Dutch citizens will have to make "sacrifices". This paper argues that in order to facilitate these sacrifices, understandings of well-being might have to change (as proposed by the Degrowth movement), but also the feelings of being part of a global community and of responsibility towards it. It argues that Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force might offer a fruitful framework for the Degrowth movement to build these feelings of common responsibility.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research paper is part of the academic debates around Degrowth, Human Rights and wrongdoings in the Apparel Industry. This paper will contribute to development studies by questioning whether solutions to environmental degradation and social injustice can only be sought within developing countries or whether they can also be addressed in industrialized countries. It will show that environmental degradation and social injustice are interlinked through local, national and international practices and that solutions very often depend on whether institutions which cross borders can change. The research will be relevant in the sphere of 'Degrowth' not only by theorizing on what a 'Degrowth-society' could look like but by actually moving towards the visions and practices of people who try to create a different way of understanding our economy. In the literature, many Degrowth solutions, which try to transform Western society, acknowledge that economic and social behaviour is intrinsically related to global patterns and structures. Yet, solutions are often sought at the national level of Western countries (Hoogendijk 1993; Raworth 2017). What the effects of Degrowth-policies will mean for global social justice, therefore, often remains vague. However, in our current way of organizing society national and international (written) law are the clearest and most institutionalized ways in which humans strive for a just society. Nevertheless, until now, the role that (international) law could or should have in a Degrowth society and the potential of international law, and especially Human Rights law, in a transition towards a Degrowth society remains almost unexplored. I will open up this debate by looking at the potential of linking the Degrowth movement with the Human Rights framework.

Keywords

Chapter 1
Introduction

The impact of environmental degradation and Human Rights violations all over the world is one of the biggest social and political concerns of this century. Most countries usually spend a lot of attention on how we can create sustainable and just global societies by using technological solutions and limiting resource throughput (Mont 2004: 136). However, the dominant narrative of a well-functioning economy remains economic growth (Steffen et al. 2015: 94). Nevertheless, many scholars proved that the scale on which we currently exploit natural resources forces us to admit that we need more than just efficient and sustainable products (Demaria et al. 2013; D'Alisa et al. 2015; Kallis et al. 2018). The narrative of unlimited growth doesn't seem to be compatible anymore with our desire for sustainable futures. It has become increasingly clear that we need to address our lifestyles and especially our high consumption levels and patterns (Mont 2004: 136). Various calls for a Degrowth movement have risen over the past decade. Degrowth is a proposal of radical change in the way we live together and organize our society (Demaria et al. 2013: 192, 195). The Degrowth movement proposes various ways of rethinking our economy, introduces different policy solutions, challenges our current understanding of well-being and rethinks the way we can live together to strive for a sustainable and just society in which we can all live happily within the boundaries of our planet (Demaria et al. 2013).

The Degrowth movement strives for sustainable equality and justice and various authors have argued for a potential alliance with the environmental justice movement, especially since they both envision alternative ways of living together (Singh 2019). In our current way of organizing society national and international law is one of the clearest and most institutionalized ways in which humans strive for a just society. Yet, the (potential) role that (international) law, and especially Human Rights law, could or should have in a transition towards a Degrowth society remains almost unexplored. Also, in the literature on sustainable Degrowth futures there is only limited attention for the question how a Degrowth transition will change our understanding of everyday life and our common practices (Shove & Walker 2010: 471). Therefore, in this research paper, I will start to open up the debate about the usefulness of a link between the Degrowth movement and Human Rights. Pogge (2008: 58) explained that Human Rights have the capacity to create moral obligations as well as that they depend on the moral authority to enforce them. Moral obligations and the enforceability of Human Rights law co-exist in harmony (Pogge 2008: 59). Yet, since space is limited, I will focus mainly on the role of Human Rights law as creating moral obligations influencing our hearts and minds. I will do this from the perspective of Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force. I will first explore how Western cultural values, believes and traditions are currently interconnected with high consumption levels in Western societies. Then, I will argue that for a successful Degrowth transition we do not only need to change the way we behave but also the way we think about, give meaning to and understand our society on a very personal level. We will need to make sacrifices based on a stronger connection with the global community and the shared responsibilities resulting therefrom. I will argue that a Human Rights perspective might help to offer a structure for consumers and small initiatives to hold on to, to limit and to connect.

To explore these dimensions, I've chosen to look at consumption levels and behaviour within the apparel industry. I will specifically look at Collaborative Fashion Consumption initiatives (CFCs) in The Netherlands. The apparel industry fits this research well because consumption levels of clothes have risen tremendously over the past decades through a focus on economic growth and profits. This growth has led to huge impacts on the environment and through relocation of the production process Human Rights violations in the industry have risen. Improving the situation on the production side of the value chain won't be enough to make the industry sustainable.

Therefore, the clothing industry seems to be the perfect place to explore understandings of value and culture and the potential of (Human Rights) law in striving for a transition towards a Degrowth society.

1.1 The Apparel Industry in Context

Almost everyone in the world uses and wears clothes. Millions of people make a living off the production and design of clothes. Yet, at the same time, the clothing industry has an enormous impact on the ecosystem and the protection of Human Rights. In the last thirty years, the apparel industry has changed tremendously. Where in the 1950s the United States produced over 95% of its own clothing, now the US contributes to only a small portion of the industry (True cost 2015). Yet, this doesn't mean the apparel industry has shrunk. On the contrary. As the Western fashion industry is part of a neoliberal, capitalistic economy, it needs to constantly increase its profits (Kallis et al. 2018: 4.10). To be able to do this, demand was increased through rapid fashion change and prices of pieces were lowered by cutting on labour costs (Collins 2003: 7-8). Over the past 30 years, the industry has moved overseas, starting to outsource and subcontract orders to be able to set lower labour prices (Collins 2002: 921).

1.1.1 Human Rights Violations and the Impact on our Ecology

Currently, the clothing industry produces over 35 billion kilograms of clothing annually and accounts for over 600 million US dollars of import value. The five biggest clothing producing countries are China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, India and Italy (Super Goods 2017; WITS 2017). The industry has grown gigantically. While the clothing industry is one of the most polluting industries in the world, consumers in Western countries buy on average 60% more clothes than 15 years ago (Genaaid episode 1). The production of cotton uses 2,5% of global water use (Awareness Fashion 2019). Enormous amounts of pesticides and chemicals are used in the production and dyeing of cotton and the processing of leather (Genaaid episode 1 and 2). These chemicals very often end up unfiltered in the surface water and soil of low-income countries (Genaaid episode 2 and 3). The production and transport of clothing contribute significantly to CO_2 emissions. At the same time, almost all garments end up on a garbage dump. This happens while of all waste streams recycling garments offer most CO_2 reduction. But these environmentally destructive processes do not stand on their own. They are closely related to Human Rights violations in the industry. Child labour forced overtime, low wages and the prohibition of labour unions are common practice in the apparel industry. The use of chemicals and pesticides within the production and colouring of cotton leads to irritations, inflammations, respiratory problems and cancer (Genaaid episode 2). The WTO estimates that 1 million labourers end up in the hospital annually due to the use of pesticides (Genaaid episode 1). Also, the spaces in which workers operate are often unsafe. Between 1990 and 2016 different incidents in Bangladeshi clothing manufacturing factories led to the death of 1626 workers and over 5000 people were injured (Hasan et al. 2017: 195). Also, many (female) workers have to deal with intimidation, discrimination (of pregnant women) and sexual harassment (Genaaid episode 4). Various Human Rights of which most are included in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) (for example article 7 on conditions of work and article 8 on trade union rights) are violated (Banning et al. 2004: 4).

1.1.2 Protecting Human Rights

The abuses within the fashion industry are hidden within long chains which move through many different countries. The enormous number of actors involved within the industry and the way in which the industry is part of neoliberal globalization and ideologies make it hard to improve the situation. Yet, Human Rights violations in the industry and the impact of the industry on the environment did not get unnoticed. Through media attention, Human Rights violations became more and more visible and the (consumer) pressure on big corporations grew. To meet the demand

of the public many multinationals designed Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies and 'codes of conduct' (Ballinger 2008: 93). Even though more successful examples exist, very often CSR methods are only used to show consumers that the corporation is doing the best it can, while in reality the situation is just being monitored (Appelbaum & Lichtenstein 2014: 60). On the other side of the spectrum, Human Rights organisations and NGOs struggle to spark real and effective change. Even though it is hard to hold specific actors accountable, the work of some non-profit organisations has nevertheless resulted in some promising agreements. For example, 'The Accord', which emerged after the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh, legally binds over 200 Western fashion labels to improve the safety standards in their factories. However, this Accord struggles as well to stay alive and is facing a lawsuit to end the inspections that came with it (Oude Elferink 2018). It becomes increasingly clear that we might have to question the role of Western consumers and countries in fighting Human Rights violations and environmental degradation in the apparel industry. In the next section I will explain how CFCs emerged as a reaction to the impacts of the industry.

1.2. A proposed Degrowth Solution: Collaborative Fashion Consumption

In The Netherlands, consumers are more and more asked to consume fashion in a responsible manner (Wheeler 2019: 272). This has led to many consumers seeking new ways of fashion consumption and stimulated different entrepreneurs to start and offer alternative ways of fashion consumption. A rising trend that (as I will explain later in more detail) fits into the Degrowth paradigm is Collaborative Fashion Consumption (CFC). CFC is defined as:

> "a consumption trend in which consumers, instead of buying new fashion products, have access to already existing garments either through alternative opportunities to acquire individual ownership (gifting, swapping and second hand) or through usage options for fashion products owned by others (sharing, lending, renting or leasing)" (Iran et al. 2019: 314).

In The Netherlands, CFCs are becoming more and more popular. From clothing swaps to fashion-libraries, individual and collective initiatives are popping up on all sides of the country. In this research paper I will explore two sites of CFCs. I used these spaces to discover how ideas of consumption are recreated but also to figure out how these initiatives struggle to get rid of hegemonic ideas and behaviours around consumption. To see whether their struggle could be supported by the Human Rights framework I asked myself the following, more general, question:

> What role could Human Rights law play in a Degrowth transition taking the example of Collaborative Fashion Consumption in The Netherlands?

1.3 Research Location and Context

The locations which have been chosen for conducting this research are located in The Netherlands (mainly in the 'Randstad').[1] In 2015 over 300 million pieces of clothes were sold in The Netherlands (Awareness Fashion). That means that on average every person in The Netherlands buys 18 pieces of clothes a year. At the same time only 1% of the 75-million-kilogram textile which is collected in The Netherlands is being recycled into new pieces of clothes (Genaaid episode 3). Dutch people consume apparel at a high level. The Dutch government is aware of the impact of the polluting effect of their economy and it is therefore dedicated to green growth (Rijksoverheid (2)). The government believes that sustainable growth will both protect the society and the environment, whilst at the same time increasing well-being. In 2015 the Dutch government signed the Paris

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[1] Concatenation of four of the biggest cities in (the Western part of) The Netherlands.

Climate Agreement which tries to keep the temperature rise of the earth under 2 °C (Soudagar 2019). At the end of May 2019, the Dutch government signed the Climate Act (klimaatwet) as a first step to keep its promises (Soudagar 2019). The act, however, does not include policy directions since these will be included in a Climate Accord (Klimaatakkoord). A concept of this Accord has been presented in December 2018 and the final Accord was presented at the end of June 2019. The Accord is mainly focused on the transformation of current polluting practices into sustainable practices by using renewable energy. It does not, however, critique the high consumption levels of Dutch citizens (Rijksoverheid (1)). Until now, the Dutch government refuses to take hard and impactful measures which would affect Dutch lifestyles ('Kabinet gaat': 2019). Yet, over the past years, bottom-up actions against policies of the Dutch government and the cultural behaviour of Dutch citizens have grown tremendously. Dutch NGOs like Urgenda, *Milieudefensie* and the Clean Clothes Campaign advocate for both individual and political action. Only this year, various protests have filled the streets of big cities (Van Dongen: 2019). Various actions by individuals and small organizations stimulate consumers to stop buying clothes for a particular time. Also, the range of stores in which FairTrade or second-hand clothing is available has grown tremendously. The Dutch society is a clear example of a situation in which top-down structures stimulate liberal understandings of well-being, while bottom-up initiatives start to challenge this pathway with alternative strategies. The Netherlands seems to be a perfect place to try to understand what impact these bottom-up initiatives could have on a Degrowth transition and what struggles need to be overcome.

For the purpose of this research, I reached out to different CFCs in The Netherlands. In the end, I was able to collaborate with two CFCs to perform fieldwork. The first initiative is *Appel en Ei,* which is a second-hand clothing initiative which was created in Leiden. The founder of *Appel en Ei* started with one store but now has franchised the concept in 13 other Dutch cities. [2] It is possible to buy second-hand clothing in *Appel en Ei,* but it is also possible to sell your own (old) clothes at the store. You can hand in your clothes at your local *Appel en Ei.* Then the owner of the store will search through the items and select the ones she wants to sell. After selection, your items will be displayed in the store. After eight weeks you can return to the store and collect the money from sold items (40% of the sale). The concept works the same for all the different stores, yet the different locations are owned by different franchisee who come from the neighbourhood and can put their own ideas, visions and creativity into the concept.

The second initiative is the concept *BijPriester* which is a fashion-library in The Hague. Originally the place was owned by a family who sold and repaired leather goods. Amanda (the owner of the fashion-library) learned how to work with leather at this place and decided to take over the space when the family retired. Two years ago, she changed it into a fashion-library but still does repair work for leather goods. Now, you can become a member of the library and borrow different items of (FairTrade and sustainable) clothes from Dutch designers. You pay a monthly fee of €20-60,- for 1-3 items a time, which you have to return within two weeks. After returning the item, Amanda takes care of washing the item. You can come by as much as you want. It is also possible to buy a particular item. Aside from the library, Amanda organizes different workshops to learn customers or interested people how to repair and take care of clothes and to educate them on the impact of fast fashion.

1.4 Methodology
In the process of defining my main research question and building up my research design, I started from a deductive approach in which I theorized different concepts (Degrowth, Human Rights, Consumption). This helped me to gain ideas about what I could expect in the field and what

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[2] See Annex 3

questions I should ask (Bryman 2012: 24). However, once I was in the field, I turned to a more inductive approach in which I was led by the concepts and ideas from my research participants through which I could test and challenge my old ideas creating the opportunity to come to new insights (Bryman 2012: 24). This way of doing research was inspired by grounded theory. In grounded theory, coding empirical data and constant comparison between theory and practice are key components (Bryman 2012: 568). This also meant that the definition of the research question, the theoretical sampling, the collection of data and the process of coding went hand in hand during the research period (Bryman 2012: 571). My understanding of the different concepts and my research question changed multiple times until the final writing. The goal of using grounded theory was to let the empirical data guide the answers to my questions as much as possible. However, due to the small scope and time restraints of this research I was not able to continue this interplay between theory and practice until complete empirical saturation. At some point I had to choose to focus more on the theory and building up a strong argument instead of being able to go back into the field and test my first findings. So, even though I have attempted to let my data be guiding for the creation of theory, I am very aware that the influence of relevant theories has defined the outcomes of my research and observation in a deep manner.

1.5 Methods

To find my research locations I made use of generic purposive sampling (Bryman 2012: 422). This means that I looked for specific cases which could help me answer my research question (Bryman 2012: 422). When I found the locations described above I used several qualitative research methods. First of all, I made use of participant observation at *BijPriester* (two afternoons) and at *Appel en Ei* (two days). Using participant observation allowed me to see who came into the stores, understand the daily affairs and ask spontaneous questions to the owners of the stores. Doing participant observation also allowed me to build rapport with the owners of the store. This was very helpful to gain access to their customers. I always made sure to immediately write down my experiences within fieldnotes. After finding my research locations I used snowball sampling to find other participants (Bryman 2012: 424). My key-informants at the initiatives helped me to get in contact with their customers and other interesting informants. With these new participants I performed semi-structured interviews (Bryman 2012: 469). All the interviews were conducted in Dutch and in person (except for one which was by telephone) and took about an hour. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to prepare the interviews well, have some commonality between the interviews and to ask questions which would help me answer my research question. Yet, it also allowed me to adjust my interview style and the types of questions towards the personal story and character of my respondents. Using a qualitative interviewing style allowed me to have specific attention for the interviewee's point of view and to gain rich and detailed answers (Bryman 2012: 470). The interview guides and a short description of my interviewee's (16 respondents) can be found in annexes 1 and 2.

To find out more about the place of Degrowth activism in The Netherlands I made use of snowball sampling to find actors involved in the Degrowth movement. My supervisor provided me with a few names and through recommendations of these respondents I could meet several other Degrowth-activists. In the end, I performed 7 semi-structured interviews with Degrowth-activist of whom 2 were working in academia and two were working in politics. The interview guides and a short description of these interviews can be found in Annexes 1 and 2. Aside from the interviews I also attended the first Degrowth symposium in The Netherlands.

During my fieldwork period (June 2019 – August 2019) I already started to transcribe the first interviews I had performed. This allowed me to think about my data, write down my first thoughts in memo's and compare it with already found theory whilst also being able to ask about these new findings during new interviews. After all my interviews were transcribed, I analysed them in Atlas-

ti through 'open coding' in which I used the 'sentence by sentence technique' (Flick 2009: 301). Then I sought relationships between codes and clustered them in 'code groups' which helped me to compare different interviews and allowed me to build theory (Flick 2009: 310).

1.6 Positionality, Ethics and Limitations

Babb (2006: 7) explained that the characteristics and history of a researcher influence the way a research and analysis is performed. Reinharz (1997 in Babb 2006: 7) argued that a researcher is not able to just play the role of 'researcher' but also always brings his/her own thoughts, feelings and experiences into the field. It is therefore important to consider my own role in constructing this paper. Yet, the influence of a researcher is not necessarily an obstacle to perform 'objective research' but also creates opportunities, especially to connect with your participants (Babb 2006: 7). One of the most obvious personal characteristics that influenced my research is my Dutch nationality. Being born and raised in The Netherlands allowed me to communicate with my respondents in their native language. It made me able to understand the context they are living in and allowed me to have an eye for the broader social and national structures whilst focusing on the micro-level. At the same, time my Dutch background might have made me blind for actions, expressions and assumptions within my interviews that are natural to me. I also believe that my personal interest in the effects of the fashion industry has influenced my research in a great matter. Being familiar with the Dutch field of sustainable fashion helped me to speak the language of my respondents and to find rapport with my key informants. Yet, it also meant that I was biased. I don't believe that the way in which we currently consume fashion is sustainable, fair or morally acceptable. Even though I tried to keep my beliefs out of my interviews I could sometimes feel that respondents sensed this opinion. They might sometimes have responded in a way that they would not feel judged. My personal beliefs have probably also steered the way in which my findings are formulated. I might have missed opportunities within high consumption level behaviour whilst focusing on understanding how we can stimulate Dutch citizens to consume less fashion.

Because in qualitative research you work intensively with people who have lives outside your research I wanted to work in an ethical way. First of all, I always made sure to be in touch with my respondents before the interviews. I explained the purpose of the interviews and what I expected from them. I made sure I made appointments upfront (which is common in The Netherlands) and always asked permission for recording the interviews. I also explained that we could stop the interview at any time, that answers could be retreated and that (if someone had doubts after the interview) particular answers could be left out. Secondly, something that always deserves careful consideration is whether respondents are described in a recognizable way in the research. It is important to protect respondents from possible unintended consequences of the research. On the other hand, I also wanted to give my respondents the opportunity to choose how they are represented within the research because they are the owners of their stories. Therefore, I made sure to carefully explain what would happen with this research and who would read it. Most participants decided they wanted to be represented with their first names. However, some respondents preferred to be anonymized. I have given these respondents a different name. Lastly, since the interviews were conducted in Dutch and this paper is written in English, I had to translate the answers of my respondents to English. Especially when certain Dutch expressions were used this was a hard task. I decided to search for English expressions that had a similar meaning as the Dutch expression. However, unfortunately, in every translation some parts of the original meaning get lost.

This research has several limitations. First of all, the research had to be performed within a limited time frame which didn't allow me to thoroughly investigate several other CFCs in The Netherlands. Also, even though not intended, all the respondents I interviewed were female. There could be several reasons why this happened (e.g. a bias in the snowball sampling), yet from the data I gained

throughout my research I couldn't conclude whether there was a real distinction between the way women and men consume fashion, although this is likely the case. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration that the data on which this paper is founded is based on female respondents and that the findings might have been different if male participants would have been included. For this paper, I decided to leave aside the plenty of research which links gender and clothing consumption. This study should be regarded as an ethnographic study of behaviours, worldviews and values of mainly Dutch, white, middle-class women. Future research will need to expand the effects of social categories in the Netherlands and analyse their interactions. Thirdly, space within this paper to analyse the findings from my interviews was also limited. I decided to mainly focus on consumer behaviour and therefore couldn't fully incorporate all the interviews (for example the ones with the policymakers) in the analysis. Lastly, the environmental and social problems within the fashion industry are spread widely and are complicated. Finding easy answers to improve the situation isn't possible and solutions must come from all kinds of actors. This paper is therefore limited and can only offer one way of looking at the situation whilst searching for solutions.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper consists of six different chapters. The first introduces the topic and then moves to the design of the research. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical background of the topic and introduces Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force to support CFCs. In the third chapter, I focus on the cultural background against which Human Rights are to be implemented. In the fourth chapter, I explore the ways my respondents overcame the cultural obstacles to change their consumption behaviour towards consuming less. In the fifth chapter, I explain how Human Rights can successfully be implemented to support the goals of the Degrowth movement. In the last chapter, I will give the conclusion of the paper and answer the research question.

Chapter 2
An Introduction of Degrowth in The Netherlands

In this chapter, I will start with some theoretical background of CFCs, Degrowth and Human Rights. I will then explain how ideas of justice are already present within the Degrowth movement. However, I will argue that what ideas of justice mean for specific Degrowth action is less clear. I will then explain that some CFCs struggle to make their initiatives both 'sustainable' and 'just'. I will argue that making an initiative 'sustainable' and 'just' does not only depend on the way initiatives are organized, but also on the way customers use these initiatives. I will then move to introduce the Human Rights framework and explain in what way the Human Rights framework could support the initiatives.

2.1 Explanation of CFCs

The idea that environmental impacts in the fashion industry are not only the result of 'bad practices' of huge companies but also of 'bad habits' of Western consumers, is already agreed upon by many scholars and activists (Becker-Leifhold 2018: 781; Iran et al. 2019: 313). A proposed and already active alternative to this consumer behaviour are Collaborative Fashion Consumption initiatives (CFCs). CFCs include the initiatives in which second-hand clothing is traded, swapped, and redistributed and in which ownership is shifted. Other CFCs are the ones in which first-hand clothes are shared, lent and rented and in which the ownership of the clothes remains with the owner of for example a fashion-library (Becker-Leifhold 2018: 781; Iran et al. 2019: 314). Characteristics of CFCs are a long-term contact with customers, the emergence of large collaborative networks and low capital intensity (Armstrong et al. 2015: 31). In the introduction, I explained that this research focused on two different CFCs (*Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester*). To explain how these initiatives fit into the Degrowth paradigm I will first introduce the theoretical background of the Degrowth movement.

2.2 Explanation of Degrowth

2.2.1 The Narrative of Growth

Over the past century, the dominant narrative about what a good economy should look like was unlimited growth (Steffen et al. 2015: 94). Even the recent financial crisis and the current ecological crisis didn't get in the way of this narrative (Raworth 2017: 44-45). The relationship between environmental degradation and the modern economy is often even seen as a "possibility for a new era of growth", in which sustainable development and green technologies are the norm (Brundtland report 1987: 11). Absolute limits do not exist in this narrative (Brundtland report 1987: 15). However, many scientists claim that especially natural limits do exist. Steffen et al. (2015: 82, 93) explained that the human impact on our earth system created a negative variability in the Holocene era which can result in irreversible negative effects (Storm 2009: 1013). Yet, progress to stay within these natural limits has been very slow and many limits have already been crossed, especially because of this dominant narrative of growth (Vira 2015: 764-765). The neoliberal assumption that above a certain level of growth "technique and composition effects will outweigh scale effects" appears to be very wrong (Esty 2001: 115). Instead of resolving the issue, green growth and lifestyles based on consumption turn out to be the main drivers of environmental degradation (Crate 2008: 589). It seems to be less and less possible to fight environmental degradation whilst striving for growth.

2.2.2 Challenging the Growth Narrative

To challenge the idea of infinite growth the concept of 'Degrowth' [décroissance] was introduced in the 70s and coined by the French political ecologist André Gorz (Kothari et al. 2014: 369). His understanding of 'Degrowth' foremost critiqued unlimited access to natural resources (Kallis et al. 2015: 30). Inspired by knowledge from 'the South' many other scholars broadened the meaning of 'Degrowth'. Kallis et al. (2018) explain that 'Degrowth' is now seen as "a process of political and social transformation that reduces a society's throughput while improving the quality of life" (Kallis et al. 2018: 4.2). Even though the understanding of what Degrowth means is still changing and improving, there are still several commonalities within Degrowth proposals (Cosme et al. 2017: 323). First of all, it is fundamentally a critique of unlimited (economic) growth and capitalism (Kallis et al. 2015: 37). Yet, it is also a proposal to transform the way we live together. Degrowth scholars propose a voluntary and democratic transition towards a society in which we have more inclusive and equal views on our social relations and live in closer relation to nature (Cosme et al. 2017: 327; Kothari et al. 2014: 369). It is important to note that not all sectors need to shrink. Some sectors, like education, medical care and renewable energy will grow, yet the power of the market will become less important (Buch-Hansen 2018: 159-160).

2.2.3 Degrowth and Social Justice

Demaria et al. (2013: 199) explained that an important part of the Degrowth movement is the strive for more sustainable equality. Various actors, therefore, argued that a link between Degrowth and the environmental justice movement could be very fruitful (Singh 2019: 139). Agyeman et al. (2003: 1-2) explained that the environmental justice movement emerged in the 1990s out of the realisation that issues of justice and environmental degradation are interlinked. The environmental justice movement argues that a sustainable society cannot only be focused on ecological protection and should include notions of equity. We should recognize that Western values and consumer lifestyles are not only at the core of environmental degradation but also at the core of social injustices (Rees & Westra 2003: 101). We should envision a society in which questions of social needs and welfare are related with ecological concerns (Agyeman et al. 2003: 2). By linking Degrowth and environmental justice a fruitful reciprocal relationship could emerge through which a stronger foundation for the way we could redefine life could emerge (Singh 2019: 139). Still, this combination of justice and Degrowth is focused on recognizing the relation between the growth-paradigm and social injustice and ecological degradation but then jumps to envisioning alternatives without offering a framework which could help Western Degrowth activist to build sustainable and just policies during a process of transformation.

2.2.4 Degrowth in The Netherlands and Justice

This lack of practical guidelines for thinking about Degrowth and social justice all over the world is also visible within the emerging Degrowth movement in The Netherlands. In The Netherlands, the Degrowth movement is still at an early stage, even though more and more academics and students are working on the topic. In the past year, a small group of (mainly) academics launched an online platform *ontgroei* (Dutch for 'Degrowth) to provide a place for Degrowth ideas to evolve and through which interested people could meet and discuss ('Mission & Goals' 2019). Alongside this, they organize places and spaces in which people can come together and discuss the topic ('Mission & Goals' 2019). In June of 2019 the first Degrowth Symposium in The Netherlands took place at the University of Utrecht. That the interest in the idea of Degrowth is slowly growing in The Netherlands was visible through the more than 300 people who attended the event ('Overview of' 2019). There wasn't much attention in the event on what the idea of social justice would mean for a Degrowth transition. The event focused mainly on explaining why growth-led economies aren't sustainable anymore and unmasked the false promises of growth on well-being. There was also much attention to how we can make the idea of Degrowth part of our minds and part of the thoughts of policymakers. Also, the role of the Global South was discussed. It was explained that

various Degrowth ideas originated in the Global South and that it is even possible that a transition to sustainability could start from the Global South. Degrowth was proposed as a collaborative movement. Yet, what this would mean for Western citizens who try to live in a Degrowth way and how they can include the Global South in a fair and equal way appears to be a hard question. This also became visible through the conversations I had with various Dutch 'Degrowth' activists in The Netherlands. Miriam (Assistant professor at the University of Maastricht – interview 11) explained for example:

> "It's about declining material throughput (…) focusing on producing less. (..) We have to think about how we can live differently while using less. (..) it often has an element of redistribution. (…) We need institutions that would allow us to produce less, but at the same time keep a certain quality in our society."

The explanation of the Degrowth-activists focused mainly on the 'sustainable' side of the story, proposing solutions which would impact the Dutch way of living together. They found it hard, however, to see how this would impact lives all over the world. Even though they would describe the relationship between social injustice and growth as unjust, they were not able to explain what this would mean for Degrowth policies. They would go back to explain what they could do on the local level, assuming this would automatically work out in the best interest of all people. During a conversation with Tonny, a PhD Student from Bangladesh, she expressed her concern about this missing element (interview 26 - paraphrased):

> "Even though some Degrowth scholars try to recognize the ideas that already exist in the Global South, many Degrowth policies are still super Eurocentric. Degrowth initiatives have the tendency to not take into consideration the global relations that currently exist and are a lived reality to many. For example, what would the proposed Degrowth policies (in the clothing industry) mean to our current trade relations, what would it do to trade in general? We shouldn't ignore these global relations when we think about Degrowth solutions."

The fashion industry is an industry with very global chains. If we think about how we can transit towards Degrowth in an effective way in which old systems, culture and institutions are really transformed we should not only look at what effect such a transition would have on the well-being of people in Western countries but also to what this would do to the current global relationships that already exist. How can we think about a transition towards Degrowth in a fair manner? In the next section I want to argue that *Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester* can be seen as part of the Degrowth movement. Yet, they both struggle, at the same time, with organizing their initiatives both in a sustainable and just way while at the same time still promoting Degrowth consumption. I will then propose that using the already existing system of Human Rights could potentially be fruitful to help Degrowth actors to develop sustainable and just transition patterns for all humans on the earth.

2.3 Initiatives as part of the Degrowth Movement
Finding initiatives in The Netherlands that completely fit into the Degrowth paradigm is hard, especially because the idea of Degrowth is relatively new in the country. Many Dutch citizens who disagree with Dutch growth policies have never heard of, or looked into, the concept. Yet, as I explained in the introduction, bottom-up action against the Dutch government and cultural behaviour is rising. This leads into many (emerging) initiatives that could (at least partly) fit into the Degrowth movement. There are many reasons why I understand *Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester* as being part of the Degrowth movement. First of all, both initiatives intend to reduce material consumption by making the lifespan of clothes longer. Second of all, both initiatives promote

changes in consumer behaviour. They educate and prove to consumers that individual ownership of clothes isn't necessary and they stimulate consumers to take care of their clothes. Through sharing clothes, a clothing item becomes less an individual possession and more a common good. At *Appel en Ei* the conditions under which franchisee agree to take in particular items are strict. The only way in which a customer can make some money out of 'old clothes' is by taking care of the clothes they currently own. At *BijPriester* this narrative of taking more care of clothes which are used in common seemed to be even stronger. Many participants explained they were much more careful with items from the library as opposed to individually owned items. They didn't want to risk a fee or discredit the owner of the store. Lastly, both initiatives stimulate local production and consumption of clothes. Both initiatives function best if you live in the neighbourhood of the initiative. Amanda (owner of *BijPriester*) explained that she only works with Dutch designers who work with FairTrade and sustainable materials and preferably produce the clothes in The Netherlands (at least in Europe). Yet both *Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester* are still part of the market and you might wonder whether these initiatives are truly anti-capitalistic. They might rather fit into activities that Gibson-Graham (2013) called "alternative capitalist". However, first of all, I need to emphasize that both initiatives struggled with being part of a global market which idealizes growth. In the next section, I will go deeper into this. Yet, I also want to indicate that even though Degrowth is always a critique of capitalism this doesn't mean all proposals should necessarily be anti-market: social enterprises like small-scale local cooperatives are for example likely to have an important place in a Degrowth economy. They would make clear social and environmental contributions to our society and served the local community through local ownership (Buch-Hansen 2018: 160).

2.4 Struggle of changing Consumer Behaviour

During my fieldwork I discovered that managing CFCs in a way that would make them support the Degrowth of consumption isn't as simple as it seems. The mission of *Appel en Ei* was foremost to improve the image of second-hand clothing and to make second-hand clothing more approachable to all layers of the society. They make sure that the clothes they sell are clean and attractively organized, while at the same time still being able to charge low prices for the items. The result is that the selection of clothes which is sold at *Appel en Ei* is not sustainable or produced in a just way. Yet, a very broad public (rich, poor, men, women) gets in touch with a different way of consuming.[3] For *BijPriester* the sustainability and fairness of the production of the clothes they own is much more important. Yet, this also meant that in practice *BijPriester* lends more extraordinary and exclusive items for a fairly high fee. This makes the initiative only approachable for a more specific audience (middle- and upper-class women with an interest in fashion). The result is that whether the initiatives, in fact, are truly more sustainable and just depends on the actual behaviour of the customers. Until now there's not much research on consumption behaviour in CFCs (Iran et al. 2019: 313). Most research that exists is based on quantitative data founded on behaviour theory (Iran et al. 2019; Becker-Leifhold 2018; Armstrong et al. 2015). This research explores personal motivations to get involved in CFC. Becker-Leifhold (2018: 787) explained that "neither biospheric nor altruistic values have a significant effect on the intention to engage in clothing rental" even though you might expect this. Instead, the level to which people seem to be interested in fashion and the level to which they long to show status through fashion consumption seemed to be strong indicators to participate in CFCs (Armstrong et al. 2015: 38; Becker-Leifhold 2018: 787).

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[3] Both Sanne, Maria and Mirjam expressed that in their experience their customers come from a very broad public. During my participant observation at Leiden and when I was in the *Appel en Ei's* in Gouda and Zutphen my experiences were the same.

These findings suggest that the rise of CFCs might do more harm than good. If consumers engage in CFCs to increase their fashion opportunities whilst at the same time sticking to their old fashion habits of consuming fast low-quality and cheap products the positive effects will be close to zero (Becker-Leifhold 2018: 789). This led Martin (2016 in Becker-Leifhold 2018: 781) to describe collaborative consumption as the "nightmarish form of neoliberalism". Esther (organisation advisor at *Appel en Ei*) explained the effects of the link between the initiative and the actual behaviour of customers:

> "We don't want to be a hypocrite. (…) We are not slow fashion, though it is the ultimate 'point on the horizon'. (…) It is continually a dilemma (…) If we tell our customers they cannot hand in regular unsustainable clothes anymore we would be pulling the rug out from under our own feet. (…) [For us it is important] that our customers start to buy clothing more consciously so that our input becomes more sustainable as well."

This research warns us to be careful with indicating CFCs as automatically being sustainable, just and as part of the Degrowth movement. However, we have to realize that the non-existence of a causal correlation between intend to participate in CFCs and biospheric and altruistic values doesn't mean these values don't matter. Also, these researches don't evaluate the actual behaviour and experiences of consumers involved in CFCs. Therefore, I will look specifically at the actual behaviour and experiences of consumers within CFCs to understand how this struggle can be overcome. This research also indicates that we might have to think of ways to support these small-scale initiatives to help their customers to change their (overall) shopping behaviour for a successful Degrowth transition to be possible. In the next section, I will explore how a Human Rights perspective might help to fulfil this task.

2.5 Introducing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Even though the idea of Human Rights has been present throughout history, the legal documents as we know them today came into existence after WOII (Bantekas & Oette 2016: 15). They stem from the idea that all human beings have basic rights (Patomaki 2008: 14). The existence of a legal document should support the creation of harmonious and just societies all over the world for all humans (Bantekas & Oette 2016: 6-7). Historically, the Human Rights system has, however, not only been seen as legal guidelines for countries to protect and take care of their own citizens. It has also been a way for the west to stimulate development in the Global South (Marks 2005). However, most of the time the focus is on changing institutions and practices within developing countries without critically accessing the role of Western and international institutions in Human Rights violations (Marks 2005: 27). The many conventions on Human Rights aren't, therefore, left uncriticised. An often-proposed critique is that Human Rights have a very Western and liberal character. They are deeply related to the protection of individual freedom and absolute sovereignty over property (Sunstein 1995 in Steiner et al. 2008: 484). The globalisation of liberal law has not only spread liberal norms and values but was also about spreading the Western legal culture (Husa 2018: 48). In fact, the spread of international law supported the economic growth narrative of Western countries. Even though the UDHR emerged originally for a different reason: protection of people against their states (as a reaction towards the cruelty of the people's own states), the UDHR did, nevertheless, develop alongside the idea of the positive effects of the globalisation of liberal law, and was created within the context of liberal values (Husa 2018: 72). Human Rights have often been used by Western states to support this purpose of liberalisation and economic growth rather than effectively addressing socially unjust situations (Oomen 2013: 43). The Human Rights system has been used as a way to critique postcolonial and soviet regimes, instead of critically assessing the impact of Western behaviour on Human Rights violations (Slaughter 2018: 758).

2.6 Human Rights as a Counter-hegemonic force

The negative aspects described above foreclose that a fruitful collaboration between the Human Rights movement and Degrowth movement might not be easy (especially since international law and Human Rights have been used to promote economic growth). Yet, at the same time, the positive benefits might be too big to propose to get rid of the system altogether. Even though Human Rights have mainly been used by the West as a way to exercise power over other countries, Human Rights can still be used as a tool to counter the hegemonic way in which Human Rights have been used (Falk 2008: 81, 91). Rajagopal (2006: 786) explained we shouldn't reject Human Rights all together but instead "search for the radical democratic potential in Human Rights that can be appreciated only by paying attention to the pluriverse of Human Rights, enacted by counter-hegemonic cognitive frames" (Rajagopal 2006: 768). Using Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force isn't new and has been done many times in the Third World (Rajagopal 2003). Yet, using Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force to specifically challenge Western behaviour, culture and understandings is less visible. Therefore, in this research paper, I would like to argue that Human Rights could be used effectively as a counter-hegemonic force challenging the way Western countries like The Netherlands used and incorporated (moral) notions of Human Rights. From a counter-hegemonic perspective, Human Rights have the potential to help to form politics, policies, ideas and understandings in a way that transcend individual and sectoral interests for it forces you to focus on the interests of a particular group in relation to all people (Wills 2014: 65-66). Rights have an equalizing character for no one has to deserve any right. Anyone is a rights-holder from the very fact of being human, which does not depend on gender, economic position, sexual orientation, belief or background (Bantekas & Oette 2016: 17). Rights-based approaches, therefore, from a counter-hegemonic perspective automatically have specific attention for the effects of certain policies on all individuals and groups of people (Marks 2005: 28). In addition, Human Rights are powerful for many rights have been transformed into legal rights in various treaties which have been ratified by many countries all over the world (Bantekas & Oette 2016: 5). The potential of the strong obligations resulting from these treaties supports the use of Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force. Thinking about social justice and proposing solutions through a rights-based lens is therefore not only recognizable by many humans all over the world they are also able to be backed up by enforceable legal and moral standards (Wills 2014: 67). Finally, even though Human Rights have often been used for growth, blind pursuit of growth has also been a key driver to many Human Rights violations (especially social, economic and cultural rights) (Bantekas 2012: 30, 32). In fact, it becomes increasingly clear that Human Rights can never be effectively implemented in a system that depends on exploitation. Using Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force allows us to critique the hegemonic ways in which Human Rights have been used whilst at the same time opening up the opportunity for the Degrowth movement to connect to a powerful framework which might help to improve Degrowth initiatives so that their effects will be sustainable and just.

In this chapter, I have explained that the emerging Degrowth movement seems to be mainly focused on developing policies and actions which would decrease material throughput but fails to incorporate the effects this would have on issues related to social justice more broadly. I, also, showed that current CFCs struggle to stimulate Degrowth in consumption whilst at the same time seeking to be just and sustainable because the effects of their initiatives highly depend on the actual behaviour that their customers perform in their lives. The Degrowth movement and the rise of CFCs in The Netherlands are still at an early stage and such a critique might seem harsh. Yet, it is important to note that the foundations laid down now, will impact the way Dutch citizens and policymakers will adopt and use Degrowth and CFC strategies. Human Rights could potentially successfully be linked with the Degrowth movement to create a framework to actively incorporate issues of social justice in Degrowth strategies if they are presented as a counter-hegemonic force. An important step for Human Rights to become a counter-hegemonic force in The Netherlands is that individuals should understand their own rights (and interests) as being part of, interlinked with

and even depended on the rights of others (Wills 2014: 66). Individuals should start to "realise that their interest must become [part of] the interests of others as well" (Wills 2014: 66). In the rest of the paper I will explore in what way the Degrowth movement could use Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force to effectively support change of consumer behaviour.

Chapter 3
Why do we Consume More and More?

If the Degrowth movement wants to use the Human Rights framework as a counter-hegemonic force for the purpose of lowering (fashion) consumption in a fair and sustainable way, the question becomes how such a link could be made in a fruitful way. Merry (2006: 1) explained that the implementation of Human Rights isn't a straightforward task. She explained that the existence of law is not enough. Human Rights "need to be translated into local terms and situated within local context of power and meaning" (Merry 2006: 1). In other words, Human Rights need to be implemented in such a way that the culture into which these rights should be embedded is considered. Merry explained that when behaviours related to violations of Human Rights are deeply embedded in culture, changes require "major social changes in communities, families and nations" (Merry 2006: 2). To be able to implement Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force, effectively, we need to understand the culture in which they will be implemented. In the next section I will examine the role of fashion consumption in Western countries. I will specifically look at how my respondents understood the meaning of consuming clothes with respect to their daily lives. I will explain how consumption of clothes is not a behaviour on itself but is part of different practices we perform. Then I will move to the role of rights and how rights are seen in The Netherlands.

3.1 Consumption Culture

3.1.1 Growth and Well-being
In chapter 2 I explained that a growing GDP is seen as necessary for a well-functioning economy. A growing GDP is, however, also often seen as equivalent to an increase in well-being (Muraca 2012: 441). Nevertheless, Victor (2008: 125) explained that growth only to a certain level leads to an increase in well-being. Thereafter, this increase stagnates. Victor (2008: 128) explained that one of the most important reasons for this is that utility from possessions depend highly on how much others have. This phenomenon is called 'conspicuous consumption' and refers to the purchase of 'status' goods which supposedly increases our status and makes us happier (Victor 2008: 131-149). Brown (2010: 122-123) explained that the constant comparing of each other's status leads to conforming and competition. We do not compare ourselves to people who are completely different but to the ones similar to us (Brown 2010: 123). We constantly conform ourselves to be part of a social group while at the same time we compete with the ones in our social group to be the best in this group (Brown 2010: 123). And because we all do that, we have to continue to adapt and compete. Growth in GDP and consumption levels can, therefore, even start to reduce well-being because this constant competition leads to a growth in inequality (Muraca 2012: 442).

3.1.2 Perspective of Degrowth on Consumption
The Degrowth movement calls for the abandonment of high consumption of low-quality products with a high material throughput (Cosme et al. 2017: 323). It invites people to free themselves from the false promise of status goods (Victor 2008: 149). It proposes that we should differentiate the goals we are allowed to achieve in our society. We should be able to consume in a way in which we can reach a point in which we feel satisfied (Victor 2008: 149). Victor (2008: 220) explained that "consumption is a place where people can take action as individuals to effect change in the economy and society". The Degrowth-movement argues that if mass-consumption doesn't satisfy our needs in the first place, we shouldn't try to only reform it but get rid of it altogether (Jackson 2005: 20). This seems to suggest that being knowledgeable about the false promises of consumption is enough to make us choose otherwise. Yet, during my fieldwork, many respondents explained that in the end 'clothes were just clothes' and that the possession of clothes only defined their level of well-being for a minor part. Yet, at the same time, they still found it hard to consume less. So,

if we know growth doesn't increase our well-being, why do we continue to buy more and more nevertheless?

3.1.3 Meaning of Clothes

The Degrowth literature has not offered, so far, a full-fledge theory explaining why people consume the way they consume. It does not seem to fit the reality of the peoples' own experience of why they consume more and more completely. Many respondents in my research explained that the meaning of clothes went deeper. For example, Fenneken (customer at *BijPriester* – interview 13) explained the following:

> "I am a nurse, and when I worked at the hospital, I had to wear a uniform. (..) you had to put your hair in a tail, couldn't wear make-up or nail polish, nothing. It made me feel a little depressed. In my current job, I can wear my own clothes. I noticed that it had a big effect on me, it makes me feel much happier."

Clothes seem to have an impact on how we feel. Amanda (owner of *BijPriester* – interview 1) explained that this also works the other way around:

> "For me, clothing is a way to express how I feel. My clothing closet is like a dressing-up box. Every day, I get to choose what I want to say, who I want to be and what statement I want to make. It represents what I feel and is an extension of who I am that day. I choose my clothes on the basis of my mood. I choose romantic clothes when I feel romantic and 'working clothes' when I feel like moving a mountain of work."

Becker-Leifhold (2018: 783) explained that clothes are not only used as an extension of our identities but also as a way to evaluate our identities and identities of others. Clothes are "signs and symbols, expressions of culture, newness and tradition" (Fletcher 2010 in Iran et al. 2019: 315). They are the bridge between our internal feelings and external symbols which help us to navigate in social life and our culture (Armstrong et al. 2015: 31). Warde (2005: 132) explained that theories of why we consume more are in many ways too simplistic. It almost implies that people do not have an active choice in how they consume. They seem to be victims of consumption, whilst this doesn't align with my findings during empirical research. Many respondents found great joy in the consumption of clothes and expressed that they wanted to buy new clothes. This indicates that there might be deeper reasons behind why we consume so much fashion. In the next section, I will explain how consumption can be understood on a deeper level.

3.1.4 Diving Deeper: Consumption and Practices

Both Røpke (2009) and Warde (2005) started to rethink the theories of consumption patterns from the perspective of theories of practice. Warde (2005: 133) explained that "a practice is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements [of doings and sayings] which are interconnected with each other". To sustain practices, they have to be performed from consensual understanding and therefore practices are always social (Shove & Walker 2010: 473; Warde 2005: 135). We perform practices for various social rewards. Røpke (2009: 2495) explained that doing practices requires skills and capabilities. We are demonstrating those through our practices (Røpke 2009: 2495). Consumption is a part of being able to perform a particular practice because almost all practices need a particular resource throughput (Warde 2005: 137). We don't necessarily buy things we do not actually want, but we buy them as part of performing a good practice: we buy presents to be good friends, we buy nice clothes to be attractive wives and we buy lots of toys to be good parents. Whether we actually need these goods is less important. Consumption, from this perspective, is not standing on its own, but part of the different practices we perform to create a narrative around who we are. Leoni (employee at Party for the Animals – interview 8) explains:

> "What we actually need is not that much, two outfits for example. Yet, in practice, this doesn't work. If I would live my life with two outfits, people would think something is wrong with me. That's just because in our society it is not 'normal' to own little clothes."

From this perspective, it becomes understandable why we are so willing to consume (Røpke 1999: 416). If we understand consumption as being part of the practices we perform it becomes clear that educating on the false promises of consumption won't be enough. In the next section, I will explain how fashion consumption is part of different practices as well.

3.1.5 Buying Fashion to Perform a Practice

Shove and Walker (2010: 471) explained that the way we consume fashion is "co-produced and mediated through practices". Consuming fashion is not just a practice on its own, it is part of many different practices. We consume (new) fashion to be able to perform other or new practices like 'going on a date', 'working out', 'going on a holiday' and many rituals like weddings, Christmas or graduating. All these practices are built up of different elements which tell us how to perform the practice in a rightful and meaningful way. One of these elements is buying new fashion. Within these practices' clothes are not just 'pieces of material', identity markers or conspicuous goods. They become symbols of our activities which help us give meaning and value to a particular event. They are almost a language on its own. They communicate our feelings, our thoughts and our appreciation of others (for example: buying a beautiful expensive dress for a wedding communicates you value the friendship). Sometimes we don't even like this, but we still feel like we have to buy new clothes or stuff to be able to perform the practice. Various respondents expressed their frustration about having to buy something new or even receiving something new. For example, Stephanie (employee at *BijPriester* – interview 1) explained:

> "We live in a society in which we can't wear something more often: if you wore something on your birthday you are not supposed to wear that next Christmas, again. Even though we should be able to do that."

And Miriam (Assistant professor at the University of Maastricht – interview 11) articulated:

> "For example, when people want to give you a present. One way of showing your love these days is to just buy each other stuff. If you, all of a sudden tell people: 'I am a minimalist, I don't think it is sustainable', you are not only saying that you don't appreciate the present, but you are also saying that buying all this useless stuff is bad for the environment. That is not really the message you want to give to someone you love. So, I encounter a lot of problems in trying to realize this minimalist lifestyle."

Buying new stuff and new clothing is deeply intertwined within our practices and our culture. Therefore, abandoning buying new (unnecessary) stuff is not simply a matter of understanding that additional stuff won't make us happier (as proposed by the Degrowth movement). We might understand that 'new clothes' won't help us to increase our status, but they do still help us to maintain friendships, family relations and keep our jobs. Clothes are not just identity markers, they give meaning to and help us navigate within our society. This shows that a transition towards a sustainable and just Degrowth society will be primarily about changing cultural patterns. Assadourian (2010: 3) explained that we are embedded within our cultural system. We only act within the cultural realities of our own lives and therefore these are natural to us. Stopping behaviour which is so natural to a consumer society, therefore, is a hard task (Assadourian 2010: 3). It requires a transformation of the deep cultural structures behind our behaviour. One way of

achieving this might be to have a deeper understanding of how practices and elements within practices can change. I will explain this in the next section.

3.1.6 Can Practices Change?

Change of the way in which practices are performed "lies in the development of practices themselves" (Warde 2005: 140). Stable practices exist, but only because they are constantly reproduced. Not because they cannot change (Shove & Walker 2010: 475). Changes within the elements (technological change, cultural change etc.) of practices result in a change in the practice. Changes in these various elements can become a spiral that reinforces itself when changes are strongly interconnected (Shove & Walker 2010: 473). Røpke (2009) explained that through this reflection it is possible to involve protecting the environment and Human Rights as an aspect of meaning into some practices. The circulation of 'sustainable elements' into existing practices might be the key to create more sustainable behaviour (Shove & Walker 2010: 472). Practices can be actively influenced from the outside, yet you can never know how a particular intervention (in infrastructure, ideology) will be used by practitioners (Shove & Walker 2010: 475). This makes it almost seem like practices "have lives of their own" (Shove & Walker 2010: 475). And yet, interventions that are effective do exist. To have a better understanding of what interventions would work we need to pay close attention to how practitioners themselves create and recreate the structures of the practice in question (Shove & Walker 2010: 475). We have to look at the role that they play themselves in overthrowing everyday practices and understand how transitions towards sustainability are part of broader systemic change (Shove & Walker 2010: 476). The redefinition of practices is already starting in some places. We have to understand how critiques are already "mobilized through practices" (Wheeler 2019: 276). In the next chapter, I will focus on the way in which people redefine their practices. But, before I will do so, I will first explain how Human Rights are understood in The Netherlands.

3.2 Human Rights in The Netherlands

3.2.1 A Short History of Human Rights in The Netherlands

Oomen (2014: 53) explained that her research on the home-coming of Human Rights in The Netherlands suggests that Dutch citizens, in general, have little knowledge of their rights and the rights of others. Historically, having rights is something natural to most Dutch citizens. Oomen (2014: 54) explained that in the 17th century most Dutch already had rights and liberties that their neighbouring countries could only claim later through revolutions. Even though in the 19th century, fights over labour rights and voting rights were present, most rights in The Netherlands seem so natural that it is hard for many Dutch citizens to realize the impact of not having them (Oomen 2014: 55). These supposedly natural freedoms remained present in The Netherlands throughout the 20th century. Secularization and emancipation stimulated tolerance of all kinds of behaviours (from euthanasia to soft-drugs and gay prides) (Oomen 2014: 55). However, in the past years (especially through rising immigration numbers) the debate about these freedoms seems to be polarizing. Populism, which tries to refrain freedoms of especially outsiders wins more and more space in the political debate (Oomen 2014: 64). On the other side of the political spectrum, the left is struggling with the negative effects of tolerance and unlimited freedom.

3.2.2 Human Rights as Individual Rights

Human Rights (as a legal framework) appeared in The Netherlands in a period of time in which ideas of natural law stemming from religion were fading (Pogge 2008: 60). Yet, the Human Rights framework didn't replace religious moral guidelines. Rights were presented as having an individual character (Sunstein 1995 in Steiner et al. 2008: 484). The result is (especially with Civil and Political rights) that individual protection transcends social protection. The focus lays on the individual as

the owner of the right. This leads to the owners of rights (people) also experiencing rights as individual rights (Sunstein 1995 in Steiner et al. 2008: 487). Many Dutch citizens understand rights as anti-social and without any responsibilities for themselves: the government should guarantee them (Sunstein 1995 in Steiner et al. 2008: 487). Oomen (2014: 62) explained that many Dutch do attach responsibilities to the rights they do know. Yet, they tend to put these responsibilities on the government and on outsiders (e.g. immigrants). They should respect the rights within the Dutch nation (Oomen 2014: 70-71). Kennedy (2004 in Steiner et al. 2008: 492) explained that simply educating people on what their rights are (for example environmental rights) could, therefore, work counterproductive: people could become reluctant to act because they understand the protection of the environment as a sole task for their government. We will, therefore, need to pay attention to the Dutch perspective on rights in order for Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force to be effective.

In this chapter, I explained the importance of understanding the culture in which Human Rights are to be embedded before defining Human Rights-based policies for the purpose of decreasing fashion consumption (as part of a Degrowth transition). If we want to use Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force, we need to take into consideration that fashion consumption is part of our everyday practices and that simply educating people on the false promises of consumption won't be enough. We also need to understand that rights in The Netherlands are often experienced as natural and that obligations stemming from rights are usually put on 'the other'. These are obstacles we need to overcome to use Human Rights effectively as a counter-hegemonic force in The Netherlands. I will return to these obstacles in chapter 5. In the next chapter, I will focus my attention on the customers of the CFCs (*Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester)* within my research who, despite all obstacles, made a great effort to change their consumption behaviour.

Chapter 4
What can we Learn from People who Changed their Shopping Behaviour?

It is increasingly becoming clear that we might need to make sacrifices if we want to keep living in a liveable world (Maniates & Meyer 2010: 2-3). This has led to an increased debate among academics to understand how the idea of sacrifice could contribute to a transition to a sustainable and just society (Maniates & Meyer 2010: 1). A good way of starting to understand this is by looking at people who actually already sacrificed or try to sacrifice consumption. Despite the fact that Dutch practices involve high fashion consumption levels, I still met quite a few people who were willing to give up high consumption levels. When I interviewed respondents who were involved in CFCs I could make a distinction between two types of narratives. One group [the less-radical group] (consisting of 11 respondents) expressed that they made use of CFCs because they liked clothing and the initiative, but they would also still buy at regular 'fast-fashion' chains.[4] The other group [the more-radical group] (consisting of 12 respondents) expressed that they made use of CFCs because they liked clothing and the initiative, but more importantly, it also fitted within their longing to consume less and more ethically.[5] They were willing to consume fewer clothes for the sake of the environment, well-being of others and their own well-being. The purpose of making this distinction is to get a better idea about the characteristics which are important to stimulate a radical change in fashion consumption. Yet, I want to emphasize that all the respondents in my sample were quite knowledgeable about the negative effects in the fashion industry and that they all already made conscious choices. The categories are not perfect and sometimes respondents could fit into both or neither. The findings of this chapter, therefore, need to be carefully considered and need to be seen as starting points (not as comprehensive answers) to understand change in fashion consumption behaviour. I will start this chapter by exploring the concept of 'sacrifice' and then move on to the way my respondents made sacrifices.

4.1 Making Sacrifices

4.1.1 Defining Sacrifice
Meyer (2010: 15) explained that to understand what sacrifice means we first have to look at what we understand by self-interest. Self-interest is often seen as purely living for yourself without any duties towards others (Meyer 2010: 15). If you see self-interest in this narrow way you cannot see sacrifices as something else than giving up your self-interest for the needs of others (Meyer 2010: 15). He argued, however, that in reality there also exist more "equitable forms of self-interest". Hall (2010: 63) explained that sacrifice is per definition voluntary and involves agency: we give up one value for the sake of another. A sacrifice is an expression of the relationship which exists between values (Hall 2010 63). You decide to give up the one because you value the other more. If we understand self-interest and sacrifice as being interwoven with our values and our feelings of responsibility (instead of a sacrifice as pure self-abnegation) acts of sacrifice become more common (Meyer 2010: 18). These more familiar and ordinary ones (as opposed to heroic sacrifices) help us navigate between egotistic values and altruistic values (Meyer 2010: 20). In fact, "society itself cannot be sustained in the absence of acts of sacrifice" (Meyer 2010: 20).

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[4] For example, Maika (customer at BijPriester – interview 16) explains: "I really enjoy clothing and I think I buy a lot. I should consume more vintage clothing (…) however, in the end I buy a lot online, on Zalando or ASOS".

[5] For example, Femke (degrowth activist – interview 6) explains: "I only buy second-hand or sustainable clothing"

4.1.2 Obstacles to Sacrifice

Yet, most people in Western societies value the environment and a just society higher than consumption (Hall 2010: 69; see Dunlap 1991 and Kempton et al. 1999). However, at the same time, these same people do not always seem to be willing to sacrifice their high consuming lifestyles. How is this possible? Hall (2010: 70-75) explained that there are several factors which explain this. First of all, the sacrifice of the environment and social justice is often an unidentified sacrifice (Hall 2010: 70). We only realize that we sacrificed one value for another when we already made the sacrifice. This could be because we have a lack of knowledge of the limits and impacts of our lifestyles or because we don't realize we value the environment and social justice over our high consuming lifestyles (Hall 2010: 70). Secondly, the sacrifice of the environment and social justice is often a false sacrifice (Hall 2010: 72). When we do a false sacrifice, we give up the thing we value most for the thing we value less (Hall 2010: 72). In practice, we often find it hard to behave according to our values. Especially when we have to give up something we value highly as well (Hall 2010: 72). We find it hard to sacrifice consumption because the social structures of the society, our culture and our practices are intertwined with consumption while sustainability and social justice aren't (Hall 2010: 73-75).

Hall (2010: 74) explained that we are more willing to make big sacrifices if "the value we get for our sacrifice is high, the need obvious and the sense of responsibility high" (Hall 2010: 74). Yet, exactly these three characteristics are problematic if we want to sacrifice consumption for sustainability and a socially just society. First of all, even though the need to protect our environment and humans in the fashion industry might be high, and maybe even visible to us, we tend to tell ourselves stories which make the need less obvious. When I asked my respondents whether they believed Human Rights were violated and the environment was negatively affected by the fashion industry the more-radical group would confirm this with strong expressions like "I am absolutely convinced of that" (Noa), "Yeah definitely" (Marijke), "Yes, of course!" (Zoeey), while the less-radical group would respond with a bigger uncertainty "yes… at least I think so" (Karianne), "I think, eventually, yes" (Maika), "I think the impact is big, but I don't know it exactly…" (Fenneken) and "Well, that could be..." (Isabelle). However, when I asked them what they thought was going on, both groups were quite knowledgeable. Second of all, the less-radical group felt less responsible for improving the situation in the clothing industry. They usually placed responsibility with governments and companies. The more-radical group would similarly express the responsibility of governments and companies but would also emphasize the responsibility which should be placed on the shoulders of consumers and themselves. As Marijke (customer at *BijPriester* - interview 2) explained: "Nevertheless, I think you still have a responsibility for your choice to participate in a particular market." Lastly, Wapner (2010: 35) explained we are more willing to sacrifice if we know that others will do this too. Sacrifice is, therefore, something collective. The less-radical group, however, expressed that they had the idea that many consumers do not know about the environmental and social impact of the clothing industry. This makes them less likely to be radical even if they themselves do know about the impacts and actually value the environment and social justice higher. Meyer (2010: 26) explained that sacrifice stands between despair and optimism. It is the hope that the things we do will eventually work out for the best (Meyer 2010: 26). If you do not believe your personal actions matter you are less inclined to sacrifice. In the next section, I will explain how we can overcome these obstacles.

4.1.3 Overcoming Obstacles

4.1.3.1 Making the Need Obvious
Hall (2010: 76) explained that to be able to overcome unidentified sacrifices it is first of all necessary to educate and clarify our values. Wapner (2010: 46) explained that, when we are young, we think everything is unlimited: our time, the things we can do and learn. When we grow up, we realize our time is limited and that we have to sacrifice certain goals to achieve others. Wapner (2010: 46) argued we need to grow up environmentally and teach ourselves and our children that the earth is limited and that we need to sacrifice particular wants in order to achieve others. This is, as explained in chapter 2, already happening within the Dutch Degrowth movement.

4.1.3.2 The Foundation for a Sense of Responsibility
Overcoming false sacrifices might be a harder task. First of all, we need to create better coordination between our personal values (Hall 2010: 78). To avoid false sacrifices, we need to get a deeper sense of 'self' and harmonize the voices inside ourselves (Hall 2010: 78). The various discussion I had with my respondents about the meaning of clothes and other stuff to their well-being showed that the well-being of both groups group did not necessarily depend on the things they acquired. The characteristics the less-radical group named centred around their personal lives. They expressed that a 'good life' is defined by 'good health', 'nice work', 'close friends', 'a good financial status' and 'love and attention from others'. Hamilton (2010; 571) explained that in the past years our conception of 'self' evolved in a way that sustainable behaviour has become less likely. The institutional changes which made production no longer the driver of consumption, but consumption the driver of production, in combination with the emphasis on creating a unique 'self', stimulated people to construct their 'selves' by what they owned and consumed, what they did and what others thought of them (Hamilton 2010: 573). Yet, these dynamics also had a negative impact on the many people who tried to build this unique 'self' but didn't achieve it. This has led to a (new) social discourse which is built around the idea of taking care of 'ourselves'. However, the more-radical group defined their well-being in slightly different terms. Even though taking care of yourself still mattered, they mentioned that overall their well-being depended much more on 'being'. They expressed that who they are as a person and how others experience the impact of their 'being' is more important than the things they did or owned. For example, Stephanie (employee at *BijPriester* – interview 4) explained:

> "for me, it is way more about 'being' as opposed to 'having' and 'doing'. I am increasingly less concerned with how I look, what I do, what kind of job I have, how much money I have or what kind of stuff I possess. At a certain point, I realized, all that matters is that I am a pleasant person. Just doing my best to be a sound person to and in the world."[6]

The more-radical group was more focused on who they are on the inside and very aware of what impact that makes on the outside. It is a combination of a strong belief in one's 'self' for who they are, which makes 'stuff', 'what others think of them' and 'what they do' less relevant. Yet, it is also a strong awareness of the people around them who they influence directly or indirectly. The will to be a good person not only to oneself but also to others. It moves away from questioning 'what do they think of me' to 'how do they experience me'. Their understanding of their 'selves' moves away from an individualistic standpoint in life towards a place in which taking care of all others becomes a way to take care of yourself. Hamilton (2010: 571) argued that an effective transition towards a sustainable society will not depend on how we change values and attitudes but requires a new way of thinking about ourselves and our relation to nature. We need to reconstruct our sense of 'self' and 'identity'.

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[6] For more quotes on how the more-radical group defined their well-being see Annex 4

4.1.3.3 Getting Value from our Sacrifices

I explained that we need to believe that our sacrifices matter before we are willing to make them. We, therefore, might need to create a stronger sense of community (Wapner 2010: 42). We hardly see ourselves as connected to nature or even our fellow citizens. We place ourselves as lords above them instead of living with them and within it (Wapner 2010: 44). The more-radical group explained in various ways that they were able to connect on a deeper level with nature and other people, even though they lived on the other side of the world. As Marijke (customer at *BijPriester* – interview 2) explained:

> "I think that my ability to empathize is higher. If your ability to empathize is high, you feel more driven to contribute to other societies. I feel very empathetic. (…) If you are able to empathize, if you can feel the pain when something bad happens to someone or something else, then you will change your behaviour and the way you deal with it according to those feelings.".

Empathic ability helped my respondents to connect to others and to nature and to realize that they are not the centre of the universe. That they have to care for others and have an obligation to do so (Wapner 2010: 50-51). It seems that people who invest in their selves, take care of their selves and think they are worthy of existence are more willing to address social and environmental problems. They develop strong feelings of compassion (Joanes 2019: 946). If we move our understandings of ourselves from being on top of the world towards being part of a global community the will to care for others will slowly emerge spontaneously (Wapner 2010: 51).

4.2 Change of Life-perspective

Yet, the way the more-radical group understood their sense of 'self', the knowledge they had about the clothing industry and their ability to connect with the global community wasn't self-evident. In all stories of how they then changed to a less-consuming behaviour, I could indicate that there was a change of environment (change of job, going to college, starting to live on your own, travelling) through which they started to ask themselves questions or others started to ask them questions. This resulted in questioning their old habits and a change in life-perspective. Stephanie (employee at *BijPriester* – interview 4) explained:

> "In that particular moment, I was thinking about my life in very philosophical and spiritual terms. I found inspiration in Buddhism and realized that everything I physically need is 'myself'. All stuff around that is extra (…) With all the things I did, I started to ask myself the question: why do I do this? Because I like it? Because I feel pressure to do it? Because I want to belong? Because I want to have certain status? Because I cannot find other meaning in life? It was exhausting, but it brought me to a point in which I couldn't deny it anymore."

According to Schatcki (in Fraanje & Spaargaren 2019: 500) a practice consists out of different elements which compose teleoaffective structures. He explained that this means that the normative goals we set when we do a practice are highly related to our emotions (Fraanje & Spaargaren 2019: 501). Collins (in Fraanje & Spaargaren 2019: 501) explained that the emotions we get when we perform a particular practice are key to understand why we engage in a particular practice and why we change the practices we engage in. She also explained that every practice gives us a particular emotional energy. She described emotional energy as the feeling of happiness, confidence, strength and the enthusiasm we gain from a particular practice (Fraanje & Spaargaren 2019: 501). The emotional energy we get from a particular practice is very personal. We all seek for a set of practices which give us emotional energy. In looking for this set of practices we stick with the ones which

give us the most emotional energy (Fraanje & Spaargaren 2019: 501). When the perspective of life changed with my respondents in the more-radical group the old practices (with high consumption levels) they used to perform still had the same social rules. Yet, performing them wouldn't give them enough emotional energy anymore for them to be willing to keep performing them. They became willing to sacrifice consumption for the environment and social justice because they had realized that they were part of a global community to which they had responsibilities. Also, they would directly feel the benefit of their sacrifices because it made them come closer to their 'selves'.

4.3 Risks of changing Life-perspective

In my sample, respondents coupled their new understandings of the 'self' towards social responsibility. However, Meissner (2019: 186) explained with her research on minimalism that a change of life-perspective towards being satisfied with who you are for who you are (not depending on stuff) doesn't automatically lead to a challenge of the structural system at large. Meissner (2019) explained that over the past years as a reaction to growth narratives and increased consumption narratives 'lifestyle minimalism' emerged as a critique towards high individual consumption levels (Meissner 2019: 186). In this, decluttering is presented as a technique to dramatically change your perspective of life. It promotes searching for the 'good life' in a way in which your soul gets more 'rest' and in which you have more time to do what you actually want (Meissner 2019: 190). Yet, 'lifestyle minimalism' does not challenge economic growth and social injustice at large (Meissner 2019: 186). The problem with this way of revolving your life-perspective is that the new narrative of 'the self' in essence still is purely about the 'self'. You are not stimulated to think about the effects your lifestyle has on the people around you or the people who support your lifestyle. This leads within 'lifestyle minimalism' for example to the promotion of the consumption of gadgets which can be defined as 'minimalistic', but not as sustainable, just or anti-growth (Meissner 2019: 191). Asking people to sacrifice high consumption levels just from the perspective of a changed life-perspective might be dangerous for it doesn't stimulate structural change which is really sustainable and just. This shows that only focusing on a renewed understanding of the 'self' won't be enough.

As we think about stimulating and governing change in consumer behaviour that will kickstart a transition towards a Degrowth society, there are various lessons we can take from the analysis in chapter 3 and 4. First of all, it might be necessary to start to rethink the elements involved in our social practices (with a high resource throughput) which give us emotional energy. Yet, as we learned from the more-radical group, probably the most effective way to do this is by stimulating discussions about our idea of 'self'. However, changing a life-perspective doesn't automatically resolve into feelings of responsibility and connectedness which are necessary for people to sacrifice their high consumption levels. Also, as explained in chapter 2, when we understand we have to sacrifice in order to make our earth more sustainable and just, we often find it hard to see what our responsibilities are and how our policies and actions should be affected by them. In the next chapter, I will return to Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force and explain how this framework might help the Degrowth movement to stimulate lowering consumption levels, whilst at the same time incorporating the effects on people and the environment.

Chapter 5
Human Rights as a Counter-hegemonic Force

The more-radical group showed us, that we become more willing to make sacrifices if we change our life-perspective to a narrative in which we are satisfied with who we are without depending on what we do, have or what others think of us. Yet, a change in lifestyle is only effective for the Degrowth movement when it stimulates both a change in lifestyle and responsible behaviour. In this chapter, I will argue that presenting Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force in which rights are seen as common responsibilities might be key to stimulate a successful Degrowth transition in the fashion industry.

5.1 Human Rights as an Effective Counter-hegemonic force in The Netherlands

In chapter 3 I explained that Human Rights are not effective if they are just part of the law. They need to become part of our minds, bodies and culture (Merry 2006: 2). Currently, consumption is deeply embedded within Dutch practices. Change in practices is an effective way to stimulate social change, but practices don't change overnight. In order to stimulate fast change people might need to make big sacrifices. The Degrowth movement currently focuses on educating people on the false promises of consumption and tries to change our understanding of what we actually need. Yet, this is only partly important if we want to stimulate sacrifices. Feelings of responsibility and being part of a global community are very important for people to be willing to sacrifice consumption. Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force might offer the Degrowth movement a framework to build up these feelings of responsibility and community. In the next section, I will explain how.

5.1.1 Presenting Human Rights as a Responsibility of All

The hegemonic way in which rights are usually seen is that they result in negative duties. This means that duty-bearers would refrain from violating the rights of rightsholders (Pogge 2008: 70). Yet, others have countered this argument and explained that we should not only avoid depriving a right, we should also protect and constitute them (positive duties) (Pogge 2008: 70). Within the literature on Human Rights, there is quite strong consent that all humans are rightsholders (Pogge 2008). Yet, the question is who we can define as duty-bearers. Traditionally Human Rights law imposes duties on states (ICHP 2003: 15). However, we have to realize that Human Rights only function when they exist through social consent on what they should be (ICHP 2003: 16). The majority of the society has to respect and obey them. Pogge (2008: 70) explained that Human Rights are in fact "moral claims on the organization of one's society" (Pogge 2008: 70). All citizens are part of the way in which their society is organized and are therefore collectively responsible (Pogge 2008: 70). Even though the hegemonic understanding of Human Rights doesn't place responsibility on citizens living within a society, from a counter-hegemonic perspective it becomes possible to argue for understanding Human Rights as being part of a common responsibility. Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulates:

> "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized".

> (Banning et al. 2004: 3)

Pogge (2008: 70) argued that humans within a society are involved in upholding their institutional order and therefore the Degrowth movement could argue that they also share responsibility for the effects resulting from this institutional order. If Dutch citizens are part of upholding a social

or international order that supports Human Rights violations, the Degrowth movement could argue all Dutch citizens also have moral obligations towards respecting article 28. However, it is important to emphasize that this doesn't mean that governments are acquitted from their responsibilities. It is to change the narrative around the way Dutch people understand their rights. Zoeey explained (Customer at various CFCs - interview 5):

> "People easily say: (…) I don't want to be limited. It's my life, let me live it. But (…) we don't realise the privilege we have. (..) We say these are our 'rights' (…) even if that means taking something from someone else."[7]

The purpose of using Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force is to counter the individualistic narrative around rights in The Netherlands. This might help to create feelings of responsibility which stimulates the motivation to make sacrifices.

5.1.2 Presenting Human Rights as a Shared Responsibility

In chapter 3 I explained that Dutch citizens tend to experience their rights as individual and not linked to the rights of others. However, in Chapter 4 I showed that 'caring for others' is a foundational element for people to be willing to sacrifice. Pogge (2008: 61) explained that the only motivation behind protecting Human Rights is the idea that we should protect others. If we are to respect Human Rights, we need to have a "deep prior moral concern for the interest of others" (Pogge 2008: 61). Therefore, the Degrowth movement needs to counter the hegemonic understanding of Human Rights as individual rights by emphasizing our connection with others and the interrelatedness of Human Rights. But how far should this moral concern go? Pogge (2008: 72) argued that humans have the responsibility to protect those with whom they participate within the same social systems. In other words, we should organize our institutions in such a way that we secure the rights of all who participate within these institutions (Pogge 2008: 72). Pogge (2008: 102) explained that if we look specifically at the institutions within our global economic order, we tend to put much higher claims on the effects of these institutions in the national sphere as on the global sphere. Most of us don't feel that we are responsible for poverty and exploitation of the poor, so we don't need to change our lifestyles (Pogge 2008: 102). Pogge (2008: 110-11) explained that most theories of justice differentiate between the national and international context. However, it is questionable why this difference only starts beyond national boundaries (Pogge 2008: 111). Why do we not accept fundamental moral principles to be different between families, municipalities or provinces when we do accept this for the global order (Pogge 2008: 111)? In fact, we measure the acceptability of our institutions with two standards: we accept poverty within our national boundaries much less than we do outside our boundaries (Pogge 2008: 114). Yet, we cannot provide the ones who are exploited by our economic institutions with any reason for why we are morally right to place our national societies at higher value than international society (Pogge 2008: 115). Yet, we do continue to impose an economic order on millions of people which "contributes significantly to the persistence of severe poverty and thus [we] share responsibility for it" (Pogge 2008: 121). The Degrowth movement recognizes that we are connected through our social and economic institutions with people all over the world and that the effects of environmental degradation and the pursuit of growth are already experienced by millions of people. People are dying and are being exploited through our economic systems right now (Pogge 2008: 102-106). Yet, what effects this has on the construction of Degrowth policies is less clear. Only holding negative duties would mean that we would refrain from participating in institutions that uphold or even stimulate Human Rights violations (Pogge 2008: 72). However, despite the fact that doing this might be a hard task, a much more effective way of realizing Human Rights is honouring our positive duties and reform the institutions in such a way that they protect the victims of the

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[7] Full quote in annex 4

violations of our institutions (Pogge 2008: 72). This must be a key point of attention when the Degrowth movement formulates its policies and proposals in The Netherlands. However, in chapter 2 I explained that the emerging Degrowth movement, currently, mainly focuses its attention on the impact of growth on our environment and what this would do for our futures promoting 'outer solutions' (e.g. decreasing consumption levels). However, in chapter 4 I explained that we become more willing to make sacrifices if "the value we get for our sacrifice is high, the need is obvious, and the sense of responsibility is high" (Hall 2010: 74). Adopting Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force might help the Degrowth movement to switch from only focussing on the effects in the future to which most citizens cannot relate to including the effects in the present which are very obvious.

If Human Rights are presented as a counter-hegemonic force by the Degrowth movement, a form of resistance can emerge which O'Brien (1996: 33) would call 'rightful resistance'. Rightful resistance uses the rhetoric of the authority to change the way political and economic power is used and reveals the places and ways in which the authority misuses its power (O'Brien 1996: 33). "Rightful resisters (…) recognize that the very symbols embraced by those in power can be a source of entitlement, inclusion and empowerment" (O'Brien 1996: 33). O'Brien (1996: 52) explains that the effects of rightful resistance have the potential to move beyond unmasking systemic injustices. The campaigns themselves empower the activist involved. They create awareness amongst activist about their rights and the rights of others (O'Brien 1996: 52). The dialogues emerging from rightful resistance open up space not only in politics but also in the hearts and minds of citizens to aspire new ways of thinking, asking hard questions and enlarge the societal will for political change (O'Brien 1996: 52). It might become clear for Dutch citizens that transitioning towards a Degrowth society is not (just) about sustaining the planet on which we live for the future but is even more about the responsibilities we have towards the nations and people who have already experienced the negative effects of our growth policies for centuries. It might conjure the need for and the effects of the sacrifices which have to be made if we want to live together in a sustainable and fair way.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

The fashion industry remains to be an industry with a great impact on the environment and people. Still, the sales of fashion items continue to increase (Genaaid: episode 1). The Degrowth movement explained, however, that if we want to live in a sustainable and just world we must "get rid of fashion" (Georgescu-Roegen 1975: 378). In chapter 2 I explained that until now the Degrowth movement hasn't paid much attention to how Human Rights law could help the Degrowth movement to reach this. I, therefore, asked the following question:

> What role could Human Rights law play in a Degrowth transition taking the example of Collaborative Fashion Consumption in The Netherlands?

To answer this question, I explored two sites of CFCs. I explained that CFCs like *Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester* struggle to make their initiatives both sustainable and just because they highly depend on the way consumers engage with their stores. The Degrowth movement might step in to help them to stimulate sustainable and just behaviour. Yet, I showed that until now the emerging Degrowth movement mainly focuses on 'outer' solutions (e.g. decreasing consumption levels) while neglecting to pay sufficient attention to 'inner' transformations that would allow people to become willing to make the needed sacrifices. We need to value ourselves for who we are instead of what we do or have. Instead of asking ourselves the question 'what do others think of me', we must ask ourselves the question 'what effect do I have on others'? What can I offer to the world and the people living on it and how can I live with gratitude from what the world and others give me? To do so the Degrowth movement might need to stimulate conversations about who we 'are'. CFCs and other Degrowth initiatives might be a perfect place to form groups to open-up discussions about our 'selves'. Yet, doing this might only be effective if the movement creates feelings of common responsibilities, at the same time, to stimulate lasting sacrifices which will result in a change of the way we perform practices. Human Rights could play an important role to help the Degrowth movement build feelings of responsibility and community for they can only be realized if (also) Western citizens take both their negative and positive duties seriously (in the form of critically assessing the institutions they are part of). I, therefore, propose that Human Rights are presented by the Degrowth movement as moral guidelines of behaviour to stimulate feelings of common responsibility. However, I emphasized that this will only be effective if the Degrowth movement adopts Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force since the hegemonic way in which Human Rights have been used in the West might even lessen feelings of responsibility. The impact of understanding rights not only as entitlements but also as responsibilities is expressed through the words of Karin (Degrowth activist – interview 7):

> "For a long time, I took the gift of our society, our freedom, for granted. I took the maximum of it but didn't realize that this [gift] comes with great responsibilities. I didn't realize that if you take, you should also give back. All people who are born in The Netherlands, are granted (…) an enormous gift [rights]. However, this [gift] comes with great responsibilities. You have rights and you have duties. Everyone who lives here has so much freedom and wealth. How do you give that back? That should be a standard question."

To end this research paper, I want to specifically look at the effects of adopting a Human Rights perspective for the CFCs I investigated throughout my research. Looking through the lens of Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force might help them face the struggle between remaining a thriving business and being sustainable and just. First of all, if we want to respect Human Rights,

we need to refrain from the institutions which uphold exploitation (of nature and humans) and stimulate the improvement of our institutions. CFCs might need to help their customers to do so by emphasizing their responsibility towards holding their negative duties and their connection with humans all over the world. This might happen through simple explanations on flyers (for example when you become part of the initiative) but also through in-depth conversations with customers. On the other hand, adopting a Human Rights perspective might also help the initiatives themselves to improve their own behaviour. As explained in chapter 2 *Appel en Ei* struggles to make the initiative sustainable and fair mainly because it still depends on the old hegemonic institutions. Adopting Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force might stimulate them to find ways to improve the situation. If we look at *BijPriester* however, the initiative might succeed in supporting local initiatives and stimulate fair and sustainable production of clothes but struggles to open up the initiative for a broader public. Yet, article 28 of the UDHR articulates that everyone has the right to an international order in which "the rights and freedoms can be fully realized". The UDHR also articulates in article 25 that everyone has the right to adequate clothing (Banning et al. 2004: 3). Adopting Human Rights as a counter-hegemonic force makes clear that if we want to take our responsibility towards the interest of others, we must make sure not only that our institutions change in such a way that rights and freedoms can be realized, but also in such a way that everyone has access to these institutions. This might stimulate *BijPriester* to reach out to minority groups in The Hague and to find ways to offer them the opportunity to become part of the initiative (for example through lessons in schools, offering a small section of (older) clothes for a lower rent, or creating pop-up stores at places more accessible for lower classes).

However, I want to emphasize that both for *Appel en Ei* and *BijPriester* keeping the initiatives alive and successful is already a great (and time-consuming) task in itself. On the other hand, the Degrowth movement in The Netherlands is just emerging and looking for opportunities to stimulate a transition beyond growth in The Netherlands. It is therefore important that the Degrowth movement and CFCs join their forces. Through its upcoming social and political activism, the Degrowth movement might be able to expand and find the man-power to help scale-up these small-scale initiatives to build a change in consumer behaviour and to support them in their goals to become both sustainable and just.

Words: 17.479

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Appendices

Annex 1.1 Interviews with the more-radical group

1. **Amanda** is a Dutch Woman in her thirties (middle-class), who owns the fashion-library *BijPriester* in the Hague. She thinks a fashion-library is a necessiy, because we have to start to consume less. She wants to offer an alternative for people who want to change, but do not know how. With her initiative she wants to be the answer to fast fashion. When she was younger, she used to buy clothes at regular stores (even though in her upbringing the value of stuff was already taught). When she learned more about the clothing industry and especially after Rana Plaza, she decided she 'did not want to be part of this anymore'. Now her clothes can fit into 'one meter'.

2. **Marijke** is a Dutch woman in her early thirties who leads a yoga/mindfulness business (middle-class). She is a member of the fashion-library because she wants to wear special things, but also wants to take care of the environment and people. Her goal was to buy fewer clothes when she became a member of the fashion-library. Yet, in rare occasions she does buy something new. She thinks it is very important to consume less and also applied this on her own life. As a teenager she bought a lot of clothes, but now she tries to live a more minimalistic lifestyle. She thinks that Dutch citizens abuse their rights. She thinks that we are all part of the market in which we participate (and therefore responsible), even though this doesn't mean the government does not have to do anything.

3. **Noa** is a 56-year-old Dutch Woman who works as a therapist (upper-middle-class). She has been a member of the fashion-library for two years. She became a member because she wanted to live in an environmentally conscious way. Already from her youth she buys mainly second-hand clothing. In the past ten years she also started to buy sustainable and FairTrade clothing. She owns around 100 pieces of clothes. She always liked to wear special clothing. She thinks we need to re-value clothes. Even though the government should do a lot to improve the situation, in the end you are responsible for your own choices.

4. **Stephanie** is a 31-year-old Dutch Woman who works as a social media manager and at the fashion-library. Already before she became a member of the fashion-library she started to consume less clothes. She prefers to live as minimalistic as possible. She feels like there is blood on regular clothes, so she doesn't like to buy them. If she does buy something, she would usually buy it second-hand or sustainable. She owns between 65-70 items (which she described as 'still a lot'). She is aware that we buy stuff for status or to show we care about somebody. She thinks we need a switch in our attitude and minds. A switch in culture.

5. **Zoeey** is a Dutch Woman in her early thirties who works in a second-hand clothing shop (middle-class). She radically became vegan and now tries to radically lessen her consumption of clothes. She mainly buys second-hand clothes but would like to also buy sustainable clothes. She explained: I vote with my money. She thinks it is in a way even unfair that she cannot afford sustainable clothes. 'I have the right to be able to buy sustainable clothes'. This would especially be the case if something is very hard to find in second-hand stores. She thinks a lot of consumers act without feelings. She explained that people think they have the right to buy whatever they want. However, this would not be the case because the people who make clothing items also have rights.

6. **Femke** is a Dutch Woman in her mid-thirties who works for FossilFree (Fossielvrij) The Hague. She is familiar with the concept of Degrowth and tries to apply it to her own life as well. Sometimes she finds it hard, because living in a 'growth' way is so natural to us. So, friends and family still fly, chocolate is still in the supermarket etc. But we cannot become Degrowth without radical change. She thinks she still has a lot of clothes, but that's mainly

because she finds it hard to throw things away. If she has to buy something, she buys it second-hand or sustainable. And she tries to use her clothes for a long time.

7. **Karin** is a Dutch Women in her fifties who works on community building, takes action for the Climate and indigenous people in Europe and is active in FossilFree the Hague (middle-class). She is familiar with the concept Degrowth and also tries to apply this to her personal life. Through becoming a mother, she realized that relations and connections are so much more important than all the other stuff in life. She thinks that our society and the earth we live on is gift from which we take. And everything you take, you have to return. So, in many ways we are responsible for the way we live. We have to grow up as civilization.

8. **Leonie** is a Dutch Women in her thirties who works with the 'Partij voor de Dieren' (Party for Animals) at the municipality in the Hague (higher middle class). She is familiar with the concept Degrowth and tries to apply this to her job and daily life. She thinks we have to 'degrow' because we consume more of the earth than that it can sustain. She is vegan, doesn't fly and tries to consume as less as possible (only second-hand clothing). She thinks we often try to find joy in materialistic wealth, but in the end, we don't need that much stuff. In the end she sees the biggest responsibility with the government.

9. **Mariete**[8] is a Dutch Women in her twenties who started and owns a vintage store in Leiden (middle class). She thinks the way we deal with our clothes is foolish. She tries to offer an alternative, but also tries to be an activist motivating people to change their behaviour. Her store is a place in which activism gets a daily spot.

10. **Noor**[8] is a Dutch woman in her twenties who is one of the founders of Project CeCe (A platform on internet which gathers all kinds of different sustainable and fair clothing labels) (middle class). She hardly ever buys something new, if she does it is usually second-hand. She thinks it is important to wear your clothes for a longer time instead of throwing it away so that you have a minimalistic closet.

11. **Miriam** is a German woman in her thirties who works at the university of Maastricht (upper middle class) and performs research on the intersection between cities, creativity, political economy and the environment. In her last research project, she focused on minimalistic initiatives. She is familiar with the concept of Degrowth and thinks it is important that we start a common movement to radically change the way we live together. She tries to buy as less as possible and to share things she owns. She prefers to buy quality and second hand.

12. **Maria** is a Dutch Women in her early sixties who works as a franchisee at the *Appel en Ei* in Zutphen (higher middle class). She has always had passion for clothes and really likes the concept of second-hand clothing. She wants to show that second-hand clothing is not just for poor people but for everyone. It should be normal to buy second-hand clothing. She owns a lot of clothes, but most of them are bought second-hand. She thinks it is important to consume less, especially since she knows about the impacts of the clothing industry (through documentaries).

Annex 1.2 Interviews with the less-radical group

13. **Fenneken** is a 28-year-old Dutch woman (middle-class), who works as a nurse in the Hague and is a member of the clothing-library (for six months) in The Hague. She likes second-hand and vintage clothing and likes *BijPriester* for it has special items. She owns around 100 pieces of clothes and she thinks she buys fewer clothes since she is a customer at *BijPriester*. If she buys something new, she buys mainly second-hand clothing because she

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[8] Through snow-ball sampling I also came in contact with the owner of a vintage store, one of the founders of a platform for sustainable clothes and an activist. With them I performed semi-structured interviews, yet due to limited space in this research paper I have mainly used these interviews to compare my findings at my main research locations with the answers given in these three interviews.

likes to wear something special. Yet, if she cannot find it there, she would buy it at a regular store. Especially because sustainable clothing is so much more expensive.

14. **Isabelle** is a Dutch photography artist in her thirties (middle-class) who is a member of the clothing-library. She uses the library especially for special occasions. She thinks she buys less clothes, but if she needs something, she would just buy it at a regular store, also because these clothes are affordable (even though she comes there with mixed feelings). She thinks she has around 100-200 pieces of clothes. That is also because she doesn't like to throw clothes away. She would like to have an emptier clothing closet, but she thinks it is difficult to put limits on herself.

15. **Karianne** is a 29-year-old Dutch Woman who works as a Psychologist (upper-middle class) and has been member at the fashion-library for 4-5 months. She likes to wear special clothes which are available in the fashion-library. If she buys 'new' clothes she usually buys second-hand clothing. Yet, she does walk into regular stores every once in a while. She owns around 200 pieces of clothes. She explained you have to shop consciously but you do not need to put very strict rules on yourself.

16. **Maika** is a 43-year-old Dutch Tattoo-artist (upper-middle-class) who is a member of the fashion-library. She loves to buy and wear new clothes and owns around 1000 single pieces of clothes. She usually buys clothes at regular stores and really likes to do so. On the one hand she thinks we need to consume less (including herself), yet, on the other hand she explained minimalism is a sort of hype. She really gets joy from the clothes she buys, and she takes very good care of them. She hates the kind of shopping behaviour in which people buy cheap stuff of bad quality which is only worn for a few times and then throw it away. She thinks it is important to buy 'fairly' and 'sustainably' produced clothes, but hates that companies have a lot of beautiful stories so that you cannot define what is true.

17. **Rigtje** is a 47-year-old Dutch Woman who works at the graduate school of The Hague (upper-middle class). She is a member of the fashion-library. She explained that she became a member of the fashion-library to consume less (for the environmental and social justice). Yet, she finds it difficult to quit buying new stuff. She buys vintage and brand-new clothes and owns around 250 single pieces of clothes. She sometimes feels like buying clothes is a sort of addiction and she would like to be helped to get rid of her 'addiction'. But she also thinks we should allow ourselves to change step by step.

18. **Sandra** is a 46-year-old Dutch woman who works at a museum in Leiden (higher-middle-class). She is a regular customer at *Appel en Ei* and also quite often sells her own clothes at *Appel en Ei*. She explained she usually buys second-hand clothing because she likes to thrift for beautiful items (she likes the process). If she needs something now, she does buy it at regular stores. She explained that she wouldn't know which stores are good and which are bad. She thinks it is important to buy something new every once in a while, especially for special occasions. She explained that huge international organizations like the VN or big corporations should make sure the industry improves.

19. **Hanneke Laura** is a Dutch Women in her thirties who works as a musician but originally is educated as a jurist (middle-class). Hanneke Laura is familiar with the concept Degrowth and thinks it is necessary that we all start to consume less. However, she thinks the main responsibility lies with the government. She tries to buy second-hand clothing, but if she cannot find it there, she would just go to a regular shop. Also, when she sees something nice at a regular shop, she would buy it. She doesn't like to shop, so she is just happy when she easily finds something.

20. **Roos**[8] is a woman in her twenties who studies law and currently does an intern (middle class). She is a member of Extinction Rebellion in The Netherlands and recently organized an action to stimulate slow fashion. She thinks the government should stimulate change. She feels like she is locked into the system. It's hard for her to find affordable alternatives.

Sometimes buying something second-hand is not possible so she feels like she has to buy unsustainable clothes.

21. **Willeke** is a 56-year-old Dutch woman who works as a franchisee at *Appel en Ei* (middle class). She liked working in small shops and second-hand clothing. She also thinks it is a sustainable concept. She used to buy only second-hand clothes, but since she has the store, she notices that she sometimes buys something new at regular stores because it is easier and less time consuming.

22. **Sanne** is a 21-year-old Woman who works at the *Appel en Ei* in Leiden (middle class). Her mother founded *Appel en Ei,* so the concept has always been part of her life. She likes to buy second-hand clothing because it is cheap. Yet, she doesn't mind buying clothes at regular stores.

23. **Isabelle** is a 24-year old Woman who works for the GreenLeft Party at the municipality in The Hague (middle class). She thinks the responsibility for change lies mainly with the government. She tries to live in a sustainable way, but when it comes to clothes she still buys at regular stores.

Annex 1.3 Interviews with people who couldn't fit into a category due to lack of information

24. **Esther** is a 40-year-old Dutch Woman who works as organization advisor at *Appel en Ei* (Upper-middle-class). She first started her own *Appel en Ei* store, but later switched to working for the head office.

25. **Mirjam** is a Dutch woman in her forties who works as communication manager in *Appel en Ei* (higher middle class).

26. **Tonny** is a Bangladeshi Woman who wants to perform a PhD research on the impact of a Degrowth society on current trade relations.

Annex 2:

Before the interviews I asked respondents to take pictures of their clothing closets and to count the clothes inside the closet. I would also ask them to look for items with specific meaning or items they didn't wore anymore.

Annex 2.1 Interview design franchisee *Appel en Ei/BijPriester*
- What is *Appel en Ei/BijPriester*? What do you do?
- How was the store founded?
- How is the concept organized?
- How did you get personally involved with the store?
- Why did you want to work with this concept?
- What is the goal/the vision of *Appel en Ei/BijPriester*?
- What is the difference between second-hand clothing at a cyclestore or a vintage store and *Appel en Ei/BijPriester*?
- Is it difficult to be a thriving business?
- Who walks into your store?
- Why?
- How do you try to reach new people?

Consumerism
- How would you like to describe the Dutch consumer culture?
- Is this culture different within your store? Why not?
- How do you try to revolt against the hegemonic culture?
- What is challenging when you try to do so?

- What are important characteristics for a good well-being to you?
- Is that below the average standard in The Netherlands? Do you try to communicate this to other people?
- How many clothes do you think you wear?
- How many clothes do you think you need?
- Do you think it is fair when you own more or less clothes?
- Do you think that *Appel en Ei* reduces the amount of clothes in somebody's closet?
- Do you think we should consume less clothes?
- You own a store which sells clothes at very low prices. This makes it possible for consumers to still buy a lot of clothes. Do you think this is odd?
- If we want to consume less, we might have to put limits on ourselves: do you think we are able to do so as a society?

- Do you think that the way we currently consume clothes violates Human Rights?
- What rights are violated?
- Who do you think is responsible for the protection of Human Rights?
- What is the role of the different actors?
- Do you think that a consumer who buys clothes is actively violating Human Rights?

Personal
- What is the meaning of clothes to you?
- How do you choose your clothes?

- What kind of clothes are sold in your store?
- What does your clothing represent?
- What do you think is the influence of friends and family on what you wear?
- How did you start to consume more consciously?
- Did you find it hard to break through patterns?

Annex 2.2 Interview design – inclusive Degrowth
- Can you start by introducing yourself?

About Degrowth
- Why do you think it is important to change the way we live together?
- Can you remember the first time you heard the concept 'Degrowth'?
- What does the concept 'Degrowth' mean to you?
- How did it effect your own lifestyle and convictions?
- Have you always been interested in these kinds of themes?
- If you critically assess the way you currently live, are you then satisfied?

- How would you define a good life? What characteristics are important for a good life?
- What do you think is the basis for your beliefs (upbringing/belief/education etc.)?
- Do you think that the different ideologies in our society sometimes conflict with the way you want to live?
- Can you explain something about the way your family/friends reacted to your beliefs?

- If you think about a Degrowth society, do you think change is mainly needed in The Netherlands or also in non-Western countries?
- What do you think the influence of a Degrowth movement in the west will be on the Global South?

About Human Rights
- Degrowth ideas are strongly connected with concerns around environmental degradation, can you explain how?
- Do you think the Degrowth movement should also focus attention on the well-being of humans? Or are they already doing this?
- What role do you think you have (or Western countries) in the creation of safe and healthy spaces for people all over the world?
- How do you imagine a transition towards a Degrowth society?
- Do you think Degrowth ideas should become law?
- Have you ever heard of the concept 'Human Rights'? Do you think Degrowth ideas are related to the protection of Human Rights?
- Who do you think is responsible for the protection of Human Rights?

About clothing consumption
- What is the meaning of clothes to you?
- How would you want to describe your clothing closet?
- Could you show me some clothing items which have a special meaning to you?
- Are there items in your closet which you don't wear?
- How many clothes do you think you wear?
- How many clothes do you think we need?
- Do you think it is fair if you own more or less clothes?

- Do you think we should consume less clothes?
- Do you think this is a hard task?
- Why do you buy new clothes?
- How do you choose where you buy new clothes?
- What does your clothing style represent?
- How would you want to describe the Dutch consumption culture?
- Do you think you buy clothes in a different way? How did this change?
- How did this conscious way of shopping emerge?
- Did you find it difficult to break through your old patterns?
- Where there any obstacles when you wanted to change your shopping behaviour?
- Do you think it is possible to put limits on ourselves?
- What role do initiatives like second-hand stores have on the way you consume clothes?

Annex 2.3. Interview design customer *BijPriester/Appel en Ei*
- Can you start with a short introduction of yourself?

About BijPriester
- Could you explain to me what the fashion-library is?
- How did you get involved in the initiative?
- Why did you become a member?
- What does the store mean to you?
- Do you use the initiative regularly?
- Do you think you buy less (brand-new) clothes now?

About clothing consumption
- What is the meaning of clothes to you?
- How would you want to describe your clothing closet?
- How many pieces do you think you possess?
- Can you show me some pieces with special meaning?
- Which ones do you wear quite often?
- Are there pieces you don't wear at all?
- How do you choose the items you buy?
- What does your clothing style represent?
- Why do you buy new clothes?

- How many clothes do you think you wear?
- How many clothes do you think we need?
- Do you think it is fair if you own more or less clothes?
- How would you want to describe the Dutch shopping culture?
- Is this different with you? Why? How did your behaviour change?
- Do you think we have to consume less clothes?
- Do you think this hard?
- How did you start to consume more consciously?
- Did you find it was difficult to break through old patterns?
- What obstacles do you face when you want to change your own consumption behaviour?

- Do you think we are able to put limits on ourselves?
- Do you think that the way we currently consume clothes violates Human Rights?

- What rights are violated?
- Who is responsible for the protection of Human Rights?
- What is the role of companies and other actors?
- Do you think that if you buy regular clothes you are actively violating Human Rights?
- Do you think we should punish people who do so nevertheless?

- What role do you think initiatives like *BijPriester* have on the way you consume clothes?
- What influence does family/friends have on what you wear?
- How would you define a 'good life'?

Annex 3

[*Appel en Ei – Our stores, discover them all*] *Appel en Ei* has stores in 14 different cities: Apeldoorn, Arnhem, Breda, Deventer, Doesburg, Doetinchem, Enschede, Gouda, Groningen, Leiden, Nijmegen, Winterswijk, Zutphen and Zwolle.

Annex 4

Annex 4.1 Quotes on how the more-radical group defines well-being

"I don't need a lot. (…) I think, in The Netherlands, we are taught (and think) that having a lot of luxurious stuff is necessary. Yet, I also think that having all this stuff makes us miserable. I hope that with the clothing-library I can show people that they can slow down a bit. Personally, I somehow let go of this high standard ten years ago. It doesn't attract me anymore".

<div align="right">Amanda (owner BijPriester) – interview 1</div>

"For me it is important to be with friends, socializing, but also social involvement. To be concerned with your neighbours and the people around you, the earth, nature. Those also really need you. (…) I think that really adds value to life. If you can contribute".

<div align="right">Femke (Degrowth activist – 6)</div>

"After traveling, I started working in ICT. I was completely absorbed by that world. Yet, when I became pregnant with my first child, I realized that my job, the money I earned etc. did not have any meaning. It didn't contribute to the world. It only helped to support wrong social structures. So, I decided to quit and focus on motherhood (…) Motherhood forced me to calm down, stand still (for example during breastfeeding). I realized that the world isn't malleable, I just had to be".

<div align="right">Karin (Degrowth activist) – interview 7</div>

"For me it is important to connect with the other, to go into nature every once in a while. To not be stressed all the time (...) time for and with myself, time for your loved ones. To be able to enjoy that. That's what makes me happy. (…) Yet, for me good life also means taking responsibility for your choices. To think about the consequences of your choices and to be honest about that. We shouldn't look away when things get hard (…) we shouldn't feel bad about it but see it as an opportunity to take our responsibility."

<div align="right">Leonie (Employee at Party for the Animals) – interview 8</div>

"For me, good life means singing, to jump, freedom, love, yoga, to be, to share, to connect and sex. Love and sharing. Like I said it's *union*."

<div align="right">Marijke (Customer at BijPriester) – interview 2</div>

Annex 4.2 Quotes on 'Rights' in chapter 5

"A lot of people easily say: I want freedom, I don't want to be limited. It's my life, let me live it. But that's a very hard task. We don't realise the privilege we have. (..) We say these are our 'rights' (…) even if that means taking something from someone else. But that's not true: we don't have that right. It isn't ours, it's theirs: go look at what they have. Then come back with your 'rights', come on! People claim to much for themselves. They take things that isn't theirs."

<div align="right">Zoeey (Customer at various CFCs) – interview 5</div>