

# Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives' uses of Cultural Politics to engage with Past and Future visions.

## Master Thesis

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## **Abstract**

Modern capitalist societies are widely recognised as socially and environmentally unsustainable. Technological and scientific advances are insufficient to solve the climate and ecological crises that we face. Instead, structural, cultural and social changes are needed within Western societies. These cultural and social changes are crucial and have not been given significant attention in sustainability transformation research. A cultural transformation must include a reconsideration of core beliefs, assumptions and paradigms. Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives play an influential role for sustainability transitions due to their constituting a fruitful location for experimentation: they build alternative forms of relations to nature, alternative forms of social relations and alternative relationships to property. The work of unmaking capitalist memories and futures and making post-capitalist memories and futures forms a central part of dismantling the hegemonic power of capitalism over our beliefs, hopes, paradigms and habits. Such work is the focus of this study. Limited research has been done on the connection between future visions and past visions within transformative sustainability initiatives. Moreover, the cultural practices that are relevant for anti-capitalist goals is under-researched within sustainability academia. This research attempts to fill these gaps in knowledge.

This study examines anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives' engagement with the past and future through cultural practices in their attempt to unmake capitalism. A multiple case study analysis was performed on four anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives in Europe. Through interviews and an in-depth analysis of the initiatives' websites and uses of visual images, the visions of collective memory and of the future of each analysis were explored. The exploration of strategic uses of culture was done through categorising the identified recollections of memory and futuring practices into cultural politics of prefiguration, cultural politics of popularisation, and cultural politics of pressure. The results of the study show that the studied anti-capitalist initiatives engage significantly with cultural politics of unmaking in relation to the future and past. Moreover, results show that the studied initiatives make important uses of popularisation to spread their past and future visions to society. The study provides significant insights on strategies toward the building of cultural shifts for anti-capitalist goals. Moreover, the study builds theory on the role of collective memory for sustainability transformations.

## **Key words**

Collective memory, cultural politics, unmaking of capitalism, anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives, future visions.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Capitalist societies and modes of development are widely recognised as socially and environmentally unsustainable (Head, 2019; Brand and Wissen, 2013). Income inequalities have been rising since the growth of economic globalisation and the widespread implementation of neoliberal policies (Hyde, 2016; Brady et al. 2007). Furthermore, global temperatures are rising and scientists have warned that the sixth mass extinction of wildlife on Earth is accelerating (IPCC, 2021). Scientists emphasise that incremental change to the capitalist socio-economic system will not suffice to stop environmental degradation at the scale and speed required (Lövbrand et al., 2020; Gernert, et al. 2018). The current rate of economic growth cannot carry on without widespread environmental destruction (Jackson, 2009). In line with this, sustainability researchers, practitioners and activists are increasingly researching paths to initiate a widespread socio-economic transformation, which is seen as necessary (Kemp et al. 2018; Leventon et al. 2017). It is argued that preserving the resilience of desirable systems - here the ecosystems that sustain humanity -, will depend on overcoming the resilience of harmful systems such as the capitalist consumption production systems that are driving environmental destruction (Feola, 2020; Kostakis et al., 2016; Kemp et al. 2018). Such a large-scale transformation must include fundamental changes at the governance, economic, cultural and social levels (Feola, 2015; Patterson et al. 2017).

Radical civil society initiatives may hold a significant role in the transformation of society toward sustainability. In this research we look specifically at the transformative potential of grassroots initiatives. One role of grassroots initiatives is to get the necessary transformation toward sustainable futures off the ground (Gernert et al. 2018) by putting sustainable futures ideas into practice. Grassroots are sometimes seen as neglected sites of innovations for sustainability (Seyfang, Smith, 2005). Grassroots initiatives can be defined as any type of collaborative social undertaking that is organised at the local community level, has a high degree of participatory decision-making and flat hierarchies, and generally engages the voluntary contribution of time and resources of the organisation's members to achieve a particular shared cause (Grabs et al. 2016). Central features of these initiatives are hence self-organisation – they are autonomous from the state -, acting toward a common cause, and participatory democracy principles. They are most often driven by a quest to address both social and environmental problems. An example of grassroots initiative are eco-villages, communities living together and basing their communal way of living around sustainable practices such as alternative energy systems and green building (Lockyer, 2007). At the core of the idea of eco-villages is a social critique of the consumerism and

individualism characteristic of Western societies. Grassroots initiatives have been described as “nexuses for theory building and practical action for interdisciplinary scholars concerned with sustainability” (Lockyer, 2007). Furthermore, grassroots initiatives enact a type of politics that is described as “prefigurative”. The strategy of “prefiguration” is centred on the idea of embodying or “prefiguring” the kind of society that relevant actors wish to bring about (van de Sande, 2015; Leach et al. 2012). Alternative relations and institutions of this society are built in the present within and despite oppressive broader contexts such as in this case, capitalism (Monticelli, 2021).

## 1.2. Problem Definition

This research puts the questioning and transformation of capitalism for sustainability at its core, in line with arguments that sustainability transition research must move away from its too frequent lack of critique and blindness to capitalism (Feola, 2020; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Newell, 2020).

Within research on sustainability transformations, there has been a recent focus on future visions of transformations for sustainability and their performativity in the present (Beckert, 2016; Oomen, et al. 2021). It has been argued that moving toward a sustainable future must be a utopian process where people are increasingly involved in critiquing predominant institutions and ideologies and in developing emancipatory alternatives, and that sustainability-oriented communities is a location where this process has begun (Lockyer, 2007). One central reason for the importance of studying future visions and performed future visions is that the current state of climate and ecological crises demands radical alternatives (Klein, 2015). The concern with utopias and imaginaries of the past and future connect to the concepts of anticipation and imagination within sustainability research (Burch et al. 2018). There is an important link between imaginary futures and political choices in the present (Vervoort, Gupta, 2018). Anticipation processes have been argued to increasingly entail imagining and pre-experiencing pluralistic futures (Burch et al. 2018), because this act enables to question limiting assumptions about what futures may be possible and to experiment with strategies aimed at transformational change. Research on mechanisms and processes that facilitate imagining diverse climate futures has become increasingly paramount following the Paris Agreement’s goal of holding global average temperature increase to 1.5 °C by the end of the century (Vervoort, Gupta, 2018). Green utopian visions consist not only in visions of a better society and future, but also in a utopian critique and a stimulation of desire (Heffernan and Wragg, 2011). The act of imagining the future thus consists both of an act of meaning-making, and of an affective act (Oomen et al. 2021). Radical imagination or radical utopias represent ideas that exist in society that critique the status quo. Radical imagination is constantly changing and is a collective process, a social act which we do together and which drives the dynamics of our political moment (Khasnabisch and Haiven, 2012). It



constitutes a driving force because social movements depend on these radical utopias to navigate rapidly changing times. It is a collective creation, shared through experiences, stories, ideas, art (Haiven and Khasnabisch, 2014). For radical utopianism to be constructive, it ought to sharpen our critique of existing society (Pepper, 2010), and thus to actively engage with past, present and future. It is about bringing those futures to the present to inspire action, and about retelling and reimagining stories about the past and past struggles and their influence (Haiven and Khasnabisch, 2014).

There has been a growing interest in performativity of these utopian visions. The dominant ideology in our society is capitalism, it shapes our economic, social, cultural, psychological, and governmental institutions (Kemp et al. 2018). Utopian and anti-capitalist grassroots create spaces for directly implementing the changes they seek and are thus sometimes described as “performed local utopias” (Lockyer, 2007). There are embedded norms and assumptions around the presentation of the future that allow images of the future to travel and become persuasive and performative (Oomen et al. 2021). Grassroots initiatives often produce a transgressive shift in consciousnesses in members (Martin and Upham, 2015; Sargisson, 2000). Oomen et al. (2021) identify three steps that move the act of imagination of the future toward its performance in reality and in social practices: the presentation of the future in storylines; the sequencing of events enabling the visions to become persuasive including the movement of images of the future and the shaping of legitimacy; the navigation of structural constraints.

Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives can be defined as collective efforts of individuals that organise around alternative relationships to the “commons”, where commons represent communal properties and relations thereby the principles by which humans have organised their existence for thousands of years (Caffentzis and Federeci, 2014). They organise around alternative values to the dominant capitalist value systems in our society: they are shaped by ecological sustainability, social equity and communitarian values as their core values (Seyfand and Smith, 2005). Their values and practices challenge the current dominant cultural views in our society, for instance resisting the hegemony of the status quo and the multiple practices in our society that contribute to the normalisation of the climate crisis (Meissner, 2021). To create alternatives, anti-capitalist grassroots make use of cultural practices and cultural politics. Culture contains both values - for example the morality in Western societies that normalises consumption and certain identities connected to consumptions -, and practices - for example art used to imagine different worlds - (Meissner, 2021). “Cultural politics” then refers to the active use of culture for political means, such as for anti-capitalist goals. The cultural politics that anti-capitalist grassroots engage in are important for sustainability transformations firstly because they challenge these deeply held beliefs, assumptions and paradigms and contribute to a local change in human consciousness (Sargisson, 2000). Further, Meissner (2021) argues that cultural activity has the ability to do more than prefigure a postcapitalist society and that it holds a strategic importance for transformation.

Through the mobilisation of values, practices and identities in modern contemporary culture and connecting them to anti-capitalist goals, culture can be used to achieve a substantial transformation of cultural hegemony.

### 1.3. Knowledge gap

There are three distinct knowledge gaps which this research attempts to fill. Firstly, the importance of utopian visions and of their performance for our society is an area that deserves more research due to their mentioned potential transformative role. Fournier (2002) for instance uses the term 'utopianism' rather than 'utopia' to emphasise the moving nature of such visions and describes utopian grassroots movements as 'movements of hope'. Utopias move us to hope for and cultivate alternative possibilities. Utopian grassroots shed light on the outrageous character of the status quo and provide conditions for the development of alternatives. Moreover, the observed decrease of these green utopian visions in our society compared to the 1960s and 1970s (Heffernan and Wragg, 2011) justifies exploring and highlighting the value of the future visions identified within this research.

Secondly, missing from sustainability research on utopias and transformative sustainability initiatives is a focus on how visions of the future are connected to past visions (Feola et al. 2021a). Visions of the past are selective and politically motivated and hence affect the shape of sustainability practices as well as the forms utopian visions take (Kojola, 2020). Collective memory can be described as a repository of culture and therefore due to its inherently social nature (Ardakani and Oloonabadi, 2011) it has the potential to play a significant role for the social dimension of transformation. Visions of the future and of the past can both contribute to opening up or closing down possible horizons of future action (Beck et al. 2021). This study attempts to fill this gap in research on the role of past visions for anti-capitalist initiatives and for sustainability transformations.

Finally, cultural practices relevant for anti-capitalism as well as strategies to make use of cultural practices are areas that are under-researched within sustainability academia (Meissner, 2021). Sustainability academia and policymakers insufficiently recognise the power of culture (Paulson, 2017). Gaining a better understanding of the role of culture in social transformations is essential as it can constitute a catalyst for the achievement of sustainability targets (O'Brien, 2019). Cultural politics may play a significant role in shaping pathways to culturally and socio-economically sustainable societies. The observation that climate change can become normal and

lived with even when people are aware of it and express concern about it (Norgaard, 2011) demonstrates the significant influence of cultural practices, habits and understandings on sustainable futures. A sustainability transformation has been argued to require a vast cultural and political citizens' movement demanding such a great transition, which in turn requires a cultural change of common senses through new alternative institutions and spaces (O'Brien, 2019). Cultural work is necessary for conceiving, envisioning and making sense of possible alternative ways of living (Braun, 2015). In order to better understand the cultural practices of anti-capitalist initiatives, the analysis of their environmental imaginaries can provide crucial answers.

#### 1.4. Research Objective and Research Questions

Research Objective:

The aim of this research is to examine anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives' engagements with the past and future through cultural politics in their attempt to unmake capitalism.

Main research question:

*How do grassroots initiatives engage with the past and the future through culture in their attempt to unmake capitalism?*

Sub-questions:

- 1. What are the visions of the past and future present in these initiatives and how do they relate to each other?*
- 2. What cultural politics are used by the initiatives to engage with memories of the past and with future visions?*
- 3. Are cultural politics used to unmake capitalist memories of the past and/or capitalist visions of the future?*

## 1.5. Research framework

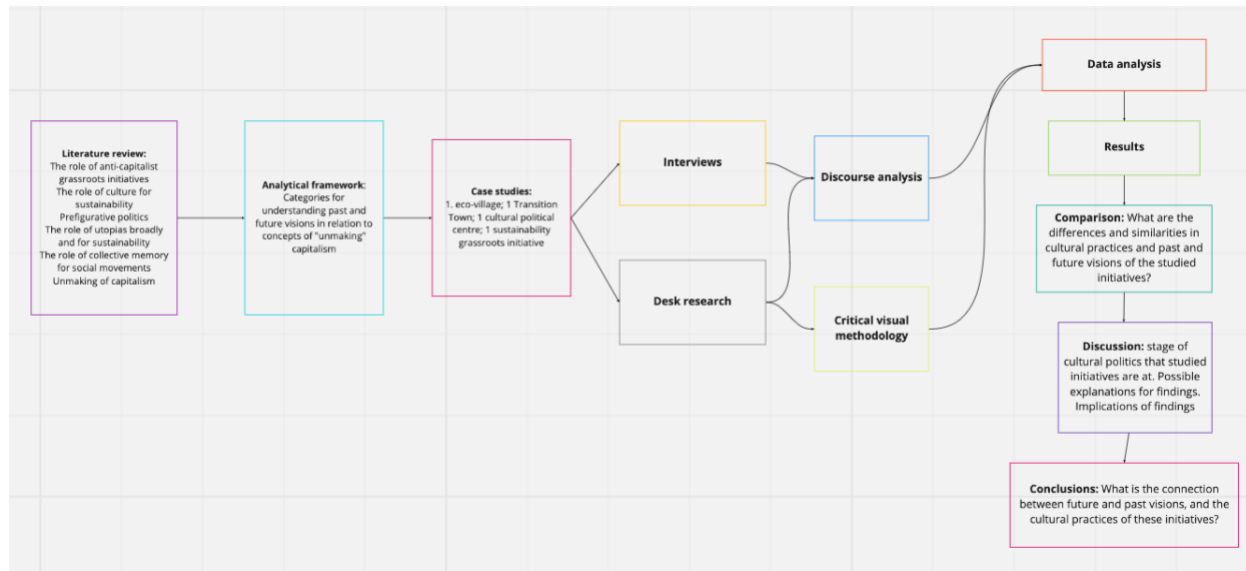


Figure 1: Research framework representing steps of the research

Above, the research framework is shown. This research framework was constructed based on the research aim in a way as to include the main steps of this research. The steps mentioned in the research framework are described more in depth in the following sections.

## 1.6. Scientific and societal relevance of this research project

The research provides insights on ways grassroots initiatives experiment with alternative societies and on the value of such prefigurative activities for sustainability. Such insights are especially important given the growing distrust in politicians' ability to lead solutions to climate and ecological crises and to defend the least privileged in society and enhance social justice (Klein, 2015).

Moreover, the research builds theory on the relatively unstudied disruptive, deconstructive, and destabilising activities which target capitalism within grassroots initiatives with a focus on their engagement with environmental and societal imaginaries. In this, the research provides valuable insights on the role of future and past visions for processes of unmaking capitalism (Feola et al. 2021b).

Furthermore, the research provides some ideas on the strategic role and shape of cultural practices for sustainability. This builds on theory on the key role of culture for sustainability

transformations (Feola et al. 2015; Paulson, 2017; Fazey et al. 2015). These insights can be an inspiration for future grassroots and other types of civil society initiatives.

Finally, the research develops insights on the role of collective memory constructions and reconstructions for anti-capitalist social movements (Kojola, 2020; Feola et al. 2021a). These will help build a foundation for future research on collective memory within sustainability transformations.

## 2. Theories

### 2.1. Anti-capitalism

Some criticisms of capitalism that relate directly to the environmental crisis are that due to the logic of infinite economic growth, capitalism generates waste which is inherently undesirable (Armiero, 2021). Also due to this logic, capitalism creates a system that does not have limits on the amount of resources that are taken from the Earth: this is problematic on a planet where resources are finite and is one of the central issues with capitalism in relation to environmental sustainability.

In terms of social injustices, there are three important issues with capitalism (Wright, 2019). Firstly, capitalism harms democracy and freedom: it promotes the emergence only of a partial development of freedom and democracy but obstructs the fullest possible realisation of these values. For example, those with most capital hold the most political power in all capitalist societies (Wright, 2019). Secondly, capitalism creates a sharp inequality between those who own capital and those who do not. This power imbalance leads to exploitation and the rich being rich due to the poor being poor. Finally, capitalism is dependent on competition and risk which leads to a pressure on firms to innovate and a destruction of jobs. It also generates extreme inequalities in distribution of jobs that are fulfilling versus jobs that are burdensome (Wright, 2019).

Cornerstones of open societies (socio-economic perspective)	Cornerstones of societies open otherwise
Wealth	Wellbeing
Accumulation	Commoning
Growth (limitless)	Balance (limits)
Efficiency	Sufficiency
Individual	Collective
Rationality	Multiple forms of socio-cultural engagement
Separation	Relation
Utilitarianism	Care
Externalization	Responsibility
Placeless-ness	Place-based-ness
Human	Human and non-human

Figure 2: Table representing traditionally 'capitalist' values versus 'anti-capitalist' values. Source: Feola, 2020b.

When we look at culture and values, capitalism fosters motivations and behaviours that are corrosive to the values of community and solidarity (Wright, 2019). The core values within modern capitalist societies are wealth, accumulation, growth, efficiency, individual, rationality, separation, utilitarianism, externalisation, placeless-ness, and human (see figure 2). Economic self-interest is the driving motivation for capitalist investment. Competitive individualism constitutes the values and beliefs within people's experiences within capitalist societies. This includes the desirability of being competitive, the norm of measuring one's self-worth by comparing oneself to others, the moral importance of people taking responsibility of their own fates as individuals and not relying on others, the virtue of being independent, and the individualistic belief that life satisfaction is based on increasing personal consumption (Wright, 2019).

The expenses of this mode of living - labour exploitation and environmental destruction - are borne disproportionately by the Global South (Meissner, 2021). Hegemony describes the social forces that strive to normalise this situation, despite its underlying socio-environmental injustices (Brand and Wissen 2018).

We can define anti-capitalist values as the values directly opposed to the capitalist values described above (see figure 2). Wellbeing is central to anti-capitalist organising. So are practices of commoning. The anti-capitalist worldview is moreover shaped by the concepts of balance, limits, and sufficiency. The collective is crucially important. Furthermore, multiple forms of socio-cultural engagement are values. Anti-capitalist ethics are shaped by the concepts of relation, care, and responsibility. Additionally, place-based-ness and the concepts of both human and non-human form a part of the anti-capitalist worldview. Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives organise around the mentioned values.

The capitalist values and anti-capitalist values which will be referred to in the analyses are those spelled out in the table found in Figure 2. The identification of politics as “unmaking” and “disruptive” of capitalism (See: 2.5.) will be done according to the anti-capitalist criticisms spelt out above.

## 2.2. Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives

A range of literature highlights the influential role of grassroots initiatives for sustainability transitions (Gernert et al. 2018; Lockyer, 2007; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). This is due importantly to these radical local niches constituting a fruitful location for experimentation and invention of sustainability innovations because of their local and autonomous character. Examples of such innovations are social innovations such as a change in behaviours compared to the dominant capitalist broader society (Gernert et al. 2018).

Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives are collective efforts of individuals organising around new relationships to the “commons”. “Commons” are constituted by communal properties and relations, they are the principle by which humans have organised their existence for thousands of years (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014). Hence, anti-capitalist grassroots create alternative forms of social relations, alternative relations to nature, and alternative relationships to property - contrasting the dominant capitalist model. Anti-capitalist grassroots communities are most often a location for experimentation with alternative ethical values. Members promote and build novel forms of economy and social organisation, along alternative systems of provision such as local food systems that enable more sustainable forms of production and consumption (Gernert et al. 2018). Often, such initiatives claim “solidarity” as their main principle. Sotiropoulou (2016) describes grassroots’ understanding of solidarity as a “collective emancipatory project and economic practice that goes beyond moral notions of goodness and kindness”. For instance, it is based on collective aspects of agency distinct from the modern western capitalist construction of self (Sotiropoulou, 2016). Such collective and solidarity practices have always existed inside capitalist



societies (Sotiropoulou, 2012). Newly created solidarity spaces are spaces for collectively challenging the capitalist economy which devalues humans, their skills, and labour, as well as devaluing nature (Eduards, 1994). The violence of capitalism is exemplified by its continuous exploitation and destruction of more shares of nature, or by the concept of “fast fashion” which relies on unsafe and unethical working conditions for workers in poorer parts of the world. One example of an anti-capitalist initiative is time banks, where services and resources are exchanged using time as a currency, which creates new relations to money and promotes the idea of equality between people as each worker’s time is worth the same (Cohen, 2017).

### 2.3. Cultural politics

“Cultural politics” in this study refer to ways of thinking, talking, imagining, and feeling in our society (Meissner, 2021). These include ethical values, beliefs, and everyday habits (Meissner, 2021). Similarly, when Latouche (2015) calls for a “decolonisation of the imaginary”, he refers to culture as the “psychosocial structure of people in the Western world”. Examples of cultural practices that connect to the climate crisis are the ethics of consumption. These cultural practices are here interpreted as political, because in this research we understand culture as a key site of political struggle and transformation. It is essential to study culture for sustainability research as climate change will potentially shift drastically the way we live in the world, and culture is central to the way this shift will play out for diverse societies (Feola, 2019). Illustrating this, environmental knowledge is “being made and re-made personally, locally and everyday” (Feola, 2019). This continuously changing “culture” thus importantly includes how climate change is spoken about, felt, and imagined (Meissner, 2021; Feola, 2019). This shows the close connection of culture to future and past visions which at their core include social feelings and imagination.

It is often argued that a central component of a future sustainability transformation is a cultural transformation and that technological and scientific advances are insufficient to solve the climate crisis (Fazey et al. 2015). What is needed is a cultural and social transformation that re-establishes relationships, livelihoods, and politics around a new range of core beliefs, assumptions, values and goals (Paulson, 2017). In this way, culturally determined emotions and ideas shape individuals’ and societies’ type of response to climate change (Feola, 2019). Culture connects to two of O’Brien & Sygna’s (2013) three spheres of transformation: the political sphere where norms are challenged and social movements are formed; and the personal sphere containing the subjective beliefs, values, worldviews and paradigms that influence how people relate to systems and structure. Culture contains both values - for example the morality in Western societies that normalises consumption and certain identities connected to consumptions -, and practices - for example art that is used to imagine different worlds - (Meissner, 2021). “Cultural politics” then refers to the active use of culture for political means, such as for anti-capitalist goals.

The purpose of analysing cultural politics is here to look at how culture can be harnessed for transformation, as opposed to it constituting a barrier to change. This links to the concept of deliberate transformation (O'Brien, 2019). Importantly due to culture's role in the stage of popularisation of particular ideas about a post-capitalist society, the use of culture is central within political activism and it has been argued to constitute a key factor determining the success or failure of future mobilisations and direct actions for a sustainability transformation (Meissner, 2021).

Meissner (2021) identifies three dimensions of cultural practices for broadening the cultural influence of the Degrowth movement. Degrowth is a movement that calls on society to shift values and desires away from productivist achievements and consumption-based identities and instead move them toward visions of the good life focused on health, harmony, wellbeing, and the vitality of ecosystems (Muraca, 2013). As Degrowth places at its centre a questioning of the inherent good of economic growth, the movement is at its core anti-capitalist (Schmid, 2019; Schmelzer and Eversberg, 2017). Meissner's framework of stages of cultural politics is therefore appropriate for this research and it is here adapted to analyse the different cultural dimensions of future and past visions of the studied anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives. The goal is to identify, categorise, and better understand practices that lead to shifts in cultural habits, values and ideologies (Meissner, 2021). The framework additionally enables to identify future potential strategic uses of culture.

The first dimension of cultural politics is prefiguration. In this dimension, cultural politics are used to inspire and to experiment with an alternative type of society (Meissner, 2021). The second dimension is cultural politics of popularisation and emphasises the vital role of culture and popular culture in normalising certain ideologies such as growth-based modes of living (Meissner, 2021). The third dimension is cultural politics of pressure. It focuses on the ways that culture can be used as a means in building political pressure for an anti-capitalist transition (Meissner, 2021).

## 2.4. Prefigurative politics

This research connects to debates on the role needed and morally desired from civil society in environmental governance. Civil society offers a democratising potential for environmental governance if it succeeds in becoming a significant player (Burell and Almén, 2019). This democratising role goes hand in hand with the growing public distrust in public authorities over the last decades, exemplified in a loss of trust in governments' abilities to solve the environmental crises we face (Sénit, 2020). Furthermore, the research adopts the theoretical position that prefigurative politics play an important role in creating progressive social change.

Prefigurative politics aim to transcend capitalism by embodying change, tackling social reproduction, by radically reshaping human beliefs, needs, and habits (Monticelli, 2021).

Prefigurative politics are a form of cultural politics due to this focus on cultural, social, and emotional practices as essentially political practices. For instance, fostering emotions of empowerment and connectivity often form a central part of these movements' activities (Dinerstein and Deneulin, 2012; Asara, 2020). Prefigurative politics' political strategy is to embody the change that it wants to bring about, for instance through embodying the kind of society that is wanted on a smaller scale (Creasap, 2021). This shows their core concern with changing culture. Prefigurative movements include intentional communities, workers' cooperatives, the Occupy movement, time banks, permaculture, community gardening, and transition towns. Their activities are a form of direct action: the changes that are sought are directly implemented rather than waiting for the changes or asking other actors to make the changes on one's behalf (Wright, 2013; Leach, 2012). Anti-capitalist prefigurative politics are inspired by utopianism and by experimentalism as they embody a post-capitalist society in the present. These "real utopias", in demonstrating that alternative ways of living are possible, serve firstly an ideological function (Schiller-Merkens, 2020). Furthermore, they politicise the everyday life as they rethink conventional forms of production, consumption and living (Monticelli, 2011). Some argue against the political value of these movements by arguing that they are usually a-strategic. This argument often comes from an understanding of change as targeting spheres external to the movement itself, for instance change targeting the public sphere, or from the view that prefigurative movements do not have a concrete goal that they move towards given their relationship to experimentation (Maeckelbergh, 2011). These understandings can be criticised. Prefigurative movements' mode of influence is opposed to representative democracy as they do not wish to push elected officials toward particular reforms; instead they create their own directly democratic forms of organising (Maeckelbergh, 2011). In the present study the position taken is that prefigurative politics can indeed be understood to be politically strategic because within their experimentations, they build organisation in order to achieve major structural changes in the political, economic and social orders. The process becomes the essential part of the movement's activities as opposed to the achievement of a particular future goal. The point is to try out new political structures and cultural practices in order to show that such alternative worlds are possible. In this conceptualisation of power and social change, the means become ends, which in turn become the means to other ends, and so forth (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Prefigurative politics creates all-encompassing change as they recognise the importance of everyday transformations of individual and psychological change, beyond a focus on changing national and global power structures (Cornish et al., 2016).

Connected to this, the research also adopts a position along the lines of the Ideational school of thought on transformation which views societal change processes as centrally driven by ideas and discourses (Schneidewind, Augenstein, 2016). The shared collective ideas in a society are central determining factors in change processes, these ideas often form barriers to change depending on their connection to the status quo. Monticelli (2021) argues that prefigurative

politics' conception of political change is a change that happens in the present but develops slowly and due to its karst-like nature can take time to produce visible changes on a large scale. Their conception of change is holistic, it makes use of imagination and experiment to tackle change beyond just the political or economic spheres. It transcends capitalism at a local level by developing alternatives within its cracks, affirming what is possible (Monticelli, 2021). Furthermore, against those that claim that grassroots' small and disjointed nature that prevent them from posing a threat to capitalism, Fournier (2002) argues that it is precisely the small scale and disconnected character of anti-capitalist prefigurative grassroots that enables them to express utopian visions and prevents them from being assimilated into a broader homogeneous but dogmatic vision. Additionally, it has been widely argued within sustainability academia that environmental issues demand a range of diverse solutions, as opposed to panaceas (Stirling, 2011; Ostrom, 2007). Accordingly, prefigurative politics are often seen as holding the most transformative potential when containing and interacting with a range of strategies (Monticelli, 2021). Leach et al. moreover argues (2012) that prefigurative politics' revolutionary strategy is that more and more people will choose these movement's alternative values, beliefs, and institutions until these gradually replace the old system. This is why it is difficult to assess the "success" of prefigurative strategies (Maackelberg, 2016). Thus Leach et al. (2012) calls for prefigurative movements' success being measured according to the sustainability and purity of their prefigurative models.

## 2.5. Disruption and destabilisation of capitalism

A form of prefigurative politics are anti-capitalist grassroots, which prefigure anti-capitalist visions as well as changing and disrupting capitalist visions and memories. The concept of transformation has gradually taken a centre stage within sustainability debates. Due to the fast pace of climate-related changes that we are experiencing (IPCC, 2022), academics are increasingly understanding sustainability transformations as a process that should contain a questioning of the fundamental principles on which our societies are based, our ways of living and working and their benefits and burdens (Jasanoff and Kim, 2013; Feola et al., 2021b). The field of research on disruption and destabilisation of capitalism is an emerging field within sustainability (Feola, et al. 2021b). It stands in direct opposition to the dominant sustainability transition theories which take capitalism for granted (Feola et al., 2021b; Kemp et al., 2018). Taking capitalism for granted limits the scope of imagined alternative futures and imagined policy options or strategies for creating a transition to sustainability (Kemp et al 2018; Latouche, 2015). Capitalism in this way too often plays a role of limiting our imagination about futures and of normalising certain oppressive aspects of our modern societies and of the activities of our economies.

Instead of the usual focus on innovations, this area of research of sustainability transformations focuses on the deconstruction of existing socio-ecological configurations and

socio-technical regimes, and on disruptions of capitalist ways of thinking, doing, being, and organising (Feola et al. 2021b; Shove and Walker, 2007). This means that instead of addressing climate change and ecological destruction through the adding of solutions, a sustainability transformation that we should work for is one where we subtract problems within the existing societies, institutions, human-to-nature relations, etc (Feola et al., 2021b). As Feola et al. (2021b). state, instead of constructing technological or social solutions, we need to “better understand whether and how existing institutions, forms of knowledge, practices, imaginaries, power structures and human-non-human relations can be deconstructed at the service of sustainability transformation”. Core processes within this area of research are exnovations, deconstruction, unlearning, everyday resistance, resistance, delinking, destabilisation, de-familiarisation, decolonisation of the imaginary, refusal, delinking, crack capitalism, and sacrifice. These can be placed under the tools of deconstruction, rupture and disarticulation, which are seen as conditions for transformation rather than consequences of transformations (Feola et al., 2021b). The concept of modernity is also central, as the systems that are unmade are those linked to the different cultural, economic, and institutional systems pertaining to capitalist modernity. In this unmaking, what is simultaneously made are post-capitalist realities. Frameworks used in post-capitalist research place individual, micro and meso-levels in focus, with a lesser concern with the macro-level (Feola et al. 2021b). Most often, actions that unmake capitalism occur in private or covertly, but they also occur through public actions such as civil disobedience (Feola et al. 2021b).

The lens of disruption and destabilisation of capitalism is used within this research to identify and analyse processes of disrupting and unmaking capitalism used by the chosen anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives.

## 2.6. Utopias

Utopias can be understood as processes of social dreaming, and as processes of critiquing the status quo and of demonstrating that there are social alternatives (Moylan, 2006). Utopias play a central role for sustainability transformations. Firstly, they do so because they offer a stockpile of inspirational visions (Heffernan and Wragg, 2011). Utopian visions convey the look and feel and experiences of what an alternative could actually be (Moylan, 2006); they expose that the forces of the market, multinational corporations, and governments are not natural forces but are constructed and sustained by decisions (Fournier, 2002). Utopian visions can inspire action and new forms of solidarity (Haiven and Khasnabisch, 2014). The functioning and components of particular green utopias provide insights on the relationships of a society to environmental futures; such societal relationships to futures can go through significant shifts (Heffernan and Wragg, 2011) - such as the mentioned recent decrease in environmental utopias relative to the 1970s and 1980s -. The recent academic researching of the concept of the future is shaped by urgency due to the societal uncertainty about what the future will look like because of ecological

collapse and technological risks (Oomen et al., 2021). Certain futures are resisted or silenced, and this can be done by the status quo through for instance the domination of particular forms of knowledge over others. Sustainability utopias are unique in their particular relationship to temporality. As the window of acting to address climate change is presently closing at a rapid rate (IPCC, 2022), our way of looking at possibilities and of experimenting with them is fundamentally altered.

Secondly, utopias can help reveal the complexity of the multitude of dimensions of human needs and expectations (Beck et al. 2021). They satisfy the two human drives of escapism and motivation (Fernando et al. 2019). Moylan (2006) argues that the diversity of utopian visions in a society is a necessity firstly as we face the dangers of global homogenisation within the Western world, and secondly due to this diversity pointing to a recognition of utopias as open and developmental as opposed to static and closed.

The study of environmental visions enables to identify and interrogate dominant and marginal values and visions in society. Social movements, including grassroots initiatives, are animated by such movement of the radical imagination: it is one thing social movements have in common that they cultivate common imaginary landscapes (Haiven and Khasnabisch, 2014). A study from 2019 on utopian thinking's role for planetary health, showed that the presence of green utopias impacted social change motivation in participants, as well as behavioural change such as an increase in the likeliness of participants donating to charities (Fernando et al. 2019). Utopias impact culture: Fernando et al. argue (2019) that utopias form a critical part of humanity's striving to self-regulate our own cultural dynamics through utopia's escapism and motivation dynamics. Beck et al. (2021) argue that to make new visions of desirable futures actionable in the public sphere, they must become collectively held, institutionally stabilised and publicly performed.

## 2.7. Collective memories

Collective memory can be understood as the collective psychological structures used to retrospectively structure the past to give it and the future particular meanings through particular framings being performed in the present (Zerubavel, 2003). In this sense, it is a dynamic collective process of re-construction. Highlighting that this process is dynamic, the way the collective past is remembered differs depending on many factors, such as official ideologies transmitted by media, history lessons, urban traces, or family stories (Lewicka, 2008). The past can for example be seen as negative or can be looked back on with nostalgia (Feola et al. 2021a). Hence, collective memories are central to people's emotions, but also to their identities (Kojola, 2020). One central object of collective memory are places: groups often feel a strong connection to their spatial context, and the strong resistance of the poor when dislocated within cities due to gentrification illustrates this connection that is intimately tied to their identity (Confalonieri, 1998). Studying

collective memories hence enables a deeper understanding of how people and groups structure their identity. Land and natural resources are crucial to the construction of narratives about the past (Kojola, 2020). For example, one framing of collective memory told by the mining industry and its supporters which seems to be succeeding is that describing humans' inherent domination over and separation from nature, which justifies this industry's past and present activities.

Social movements have always had a strong connection to collective memories. For example, in the form of movements' demands for official apologies for atrocities committed by political regimes in the past, or in current women activists taking inspiration from the memory of women movements from the 20th century (Paglia, 2008). Furthermore, collective memories play a role in the shape of current political activism and resistance. Particular references to the past can for instance be used to legitimise visions of the future (Berger et al. 2021). Together, environmental utopias and collective memories can be described under the concept of "environmental imaginaries": collectively constructed understandings of time (Kojola, 2020). The interpretations of meanings of the past animating contemporary political action are often emotional (Kojola, 2020). Illustrating these emotional meanings given to time are the feelings of anger and nostalgia present within contemporary conflicts over various extractive industries. Moreover, emotional understandings of the past shape people's desires for the future: this mobilises forward-thinking action (Kojola, 2020).

Utopian practices and practices surrounding collective memories interact closely. The construction of future and visions of collective memory occurs in a simultaneous way. Framings of the future and of the past interact for instance to justify particular forms of socio-material development (Feola et al. 2021a). For example, past movements' examination of the past enables them to relate to past colonial and present capitalist exploitation of land and people, in order to then bind "the negation of that exploitation with the hopeful prefiguration of the future" (Feola et al. 2021a). Collective memory is central in the maintenance and contestation of political identity, for example in its aiding to secure a group's identity and justice through the recognition of impacts of violence on humans and on the landscape (LeGrand et al. 2017).

Some important questions in relation to environmental collective memories are the compatibility between particular memories and utopias, the influence of values and political identities on the construction of collective memories (Kojola, 2020), and the cruciality of mobilisation of collective memories for processes of sustainability transformations (Feola et al. 2021a). This research builds theory on the importance of collective memory for social movements.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Multiple case study

A multiple case study of anti-capitalist initiatives was chosen to answer the research question as it enabled to identify and compare a diverse set of cultural politics, as well as diverse sets of visions of the past and future within the chosen initiatives. A multiple case study was chosen over a single case study as it was seen as most appropriate in light of the breadth of analysis needed to answer the research questions meaningfully. The choice of a multiple case study also facilitated the findings' representativeness of the studied phenomenon of prefigurative politics (Gerring, 2004).

A sample of four anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives in Europe was chosen for the analysis. This sample size is not too large so as to build sufficiently detailed analyses for each case studied and so as to construct fruitful comparisons across cases, which together are able to build a strong answer to the research questions (Bryman, 2015). The four cases were chosen based on the six following criteria:

- grassroots character of the initiative;
- opposition to capitalism on some level such as communitarianism or radical sustainability;
- contains a clear concern with sustainability;
- concern with prefiguring a post-capitalist world;
- contains cultural practices;
- current active character of initiative.

A most different case study was chosen to answer the research questions based on the wish to build a broad overview of a range of distinct cultural practices (Gerring, 2004; Bryman, 2015). Differences in these practices was thought to be best found when picking initiatives that differed in types; this with the goal of drawing broad conclusions about cultural practices used by anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives. With this in mind, the types of initiatives chosen are: one transition town, one eco-village, one political cultural centre, and one regenerative sustainability community.

ACU is an anti-capitalist political cultural centre situated in the centre of Utrecht, in the Netherlands. It is run by a collective of volunteers (ACU, 2022). The space is non-commercial and independent from the municipality's agenda. It has existed for over 40 years. It started as a squatted building in 1976 where occupants at first used the space to screen films, then later and still today, as a bar. A number of activities are hosted within ACU today such as a vegan restaurant, disco nights, alternative concerts, political events, jam sessions, benefit events and a free library.



Importantly, it is a meeting place for political and cultural initiatives such as the anarchist collective Barricade. ACU tackles the climate crisis by hosting weekly free dinners made from food found in dumpsters and through only serving vegan food in its restaurant. The initiative illustrates a concern with prefiguring a post-capitalist world through distancing itself from aims of making profit, through its anarchist form of decision-making, and through its embodiment of post-capitalist values of care and respect for all social groups in society and for all identities.

Land Van Aine (LVA) is an eco-village situated in the East of the Netherlands, in Ter Apel. It was started 9 years ago by a group of people longing to establish an eco-village and to find a suitable location for that aim. The location was found two and a half years ago, and the eco-village is still under construction (Ecodorp Land Van Aine, 2022). Nonetheless, 16 people including children currently live permanently at the premise. Seven other people live at the eco-village part-time. The eco-village movement is a movement of utopian communities that prefigure alternative systems of production and consumption whilst also critiquing the basic belief structures and practices of marketplace actors in everyday practices (Casey et al. 2019). LVA eco-village strives to be as self-sufficient as possible and to eliminate residents' ecological footprints. The eco-village hosts open days and permaculture workshops.

Transition Town Ilford (TTI) is a grassroots initiative in Ilford, North London, that started in 2014. It belongs to the transition towns movement: a movement of community-led initiatives developing a range of projects to start the transition of their local contexts away from a dependency on peak oil and to respond to climate change (Hopkins, 2019). This movement justifies grassroots activity by the rationale that waiting for governments to act would mean too little and too late, that individual action would mean too little, but that acting as communities may just be enough, just in time (Hopkins, 2013). Some argue (Barry and Quilley, 2008) that the transition towns movement represents a pragmatic turn because it focuses on doing sustainability here and now; this also highlights the important presence of prefigurative activities within the movement. The focus of TTI is on community-building and on environmental sustainability projects (Transition Town Ilford, 2022). The initiative is made up of over 200 active members and is focused on making changes at the local level of Ilford. Some current and past projects of the initiative are a free food festival, a community energy project and a forest garden project.

Grounded is a sustainable grassroots initiative in Utrecht, Netherlands, focused on regenerative themes. It started three years ago due to its three founding members feeling that it was necessary to start doing something and to start building alternative projects. It thus started with a festival three years ago focused on regenerative sustainability themes (Grounded festival, 2022). This then led to the creation of a community focused on building projects around sustainability within three areas of focus: food, education, art. Grounded functions according to five core values: diversity and open-mindedness, the power of we, willingness to learn, willingness to change and positivity. Grounded's projects include a sustainability festival focused on

regeneration, a community garden, and art exhibitions. The initiative's statement that it realised that *"the transition to a sustainable society is something we can start together, today"* (Grounded festival, 2022) highlights its concern with prefiguring the future they hope for. This concern with prefiguration is moreover shown by the initiative's work around creating values of care and respect for all identities in local communities and its work around building connectivity to nature and educating on earth system processes.

Two of the chosen initiatives, TTI and LVA eco-village, do not identify as anti-capitalist. ACU explicitly identifies as anti-capitalist on its social media and Grounded felt comfortable with the term when asked about it. Nonetheless, the present categorisation of TTI and LVA as anti-capitalist was justified by their belonging to movements clearly separate from capitalism. With regards to the transition towns Movement, it is difficult to argue that the low-carbon society and the localised economy envisioned by this movement can be a capitalist or growth-based society, due to the environmental destruction, social inequality and impacts on social wellbeing that such a capitalist society would entail which are all elements that the movement critiques (Jackson, 2009; Alloun and Alexander, 2014). As for the eco-village movement, its critique of hegemonic relations through its radical articulation and re-imagination of alternative social structures (Casey et al. 2020) leads to an easy identification of the movement as post-capitalist, and thereby also distinct from capitalism. Moreover, both the transition towns Movement and the eco-village movement include a focus on a building of communal values that are absent from the capitalist value-system (See Section 2.1).

### 3.2. Conceptual and Analytical frameworks

The dependent variable studied in the research is anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives' unmaking of (i) capitalist collective memories, (ii) capitalist future visions, and their making of (iii) post-capitalist collective memories and (iv) post-capitalist futures. The independent variable whose effects on this dependent variable is studied, is these grassroots initiatives' engagement with past and future through cultural politics (Figure 3).

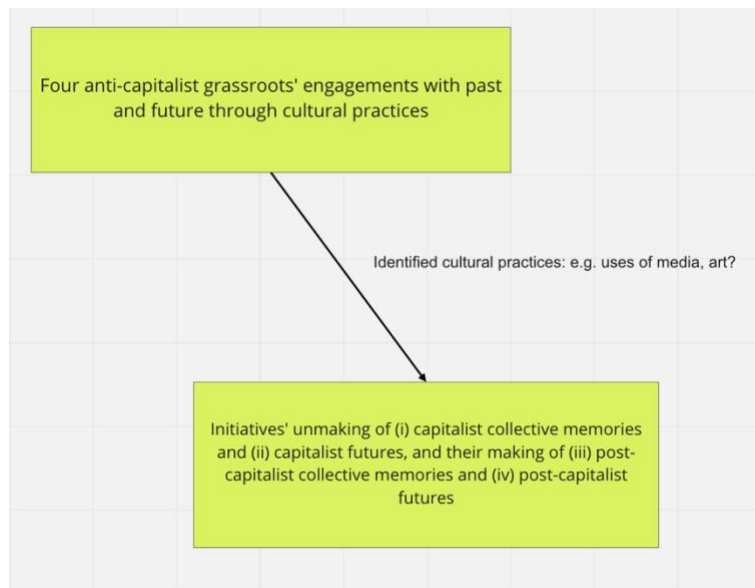


Figure 3: Analytical framework.

To answer the research aim, analytical guidance was needed to categorise cultural politics and future and past visions. Meissner (2021) identifies three dimensions of cultural politics for broadening the cultural influence of the Degrowth movement. Degrowth is a movement that calls on society to shift values and desires away from productivist achievements and consumption-based identities and instead move them toward visions of good life focused on health, harmony, wellbeing, and the vitality of ecosystems (Paulson, 2017). As Degrowth places at its centre a questioning of the inherent good of economic growth, the movement is at its core anti-capitalist. Meissner's framework of stages of cultural politics was therefore appropriate for this research and it was here adapted to analyse the different cultural dimensions of future and past visions of the studied anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives (Figure 4). The goal was to identify, categorise, and better understand practices that lead to shifts in cultural habits, values and ideologies (Meissner, 2021). This enabled to draw conclusions about the strategic uses of culture by the studied initiatives.

	Memory of the past		Future vision	
Form of cultural politics	Unmade	Made	Unmade	Made
Prefiguration				
Popularisation				

Pressure				
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Figure 4: Conceptual framework, inspired by Meissner (2021).

The first dimension of cultural politics is “Prefiguration”. Prefiguration here refers to the act of performing in the present what a future society would be like, or the embodiment within the political practice of a movement of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experiences that are their ultimate goal. In this dimension, cultural politics are used to inspire and to experiment with an alternative type of society (Meissner, 2021). Activities within this category contribute to building the awareness of many possible modes of existence, which widens horizons for the building of unprecedented futures. Examples of practices that fit into “cultural politics of prefiguration” are time banking practices in Brazil and utopian urban green planning.

The second dimension is cultural politics of “Popularisation”. Capitalism and economic growth are the hegemonic ideologies in our present societies. This politics emphasises the vital role of culture and popular culture in promoting certain ideologies such as growth-based modes of living (Meissner, 2021). Culture can in the same way be used for the goals of anti-capitalist and anti-growth movements. This politics appropriates existing cultural values, narratives, practices and identities and connects them to this articulating political principle: in this case, anti-capitalist goals of for instance moving away from increasing production and consumption. The purpose is to move anti-capitalist politics into mainstream popular culture (Meissner, 2021). Examples that fit into this politics are posters or Instagram posts with clear anti-capitalist messages. Meissner (2021) mentions the vital importance, for Degrowth, of building alliances that include but also go beyond groups, movements and interests that are already aligned with the Degrowth agenda. Thus the building of alliances for anti-capitalist goals can be categorised as popularisation.

The third dimension is cultural politics of “Pressure”. This politics focuses on the ways that culture can be used as a means in building political pressure for an anti-capitalist transition (Meissner, 2021). Direct actions for predetermined anti-capitalist goals fit into this category. Thus methods within this politics are applied in a goal-oriented oriented manner. Direct actions signifies practices of resistance to given processes (e.g. deforestation) or to the status quo (e.g. economic growth). Their focus is not on persuading actors such as citizens or governments to act in a specific way; their focus is on resistance. Types of resistance that fit into “Pressure” either consist in blocking a process, for instance by climbing a tree that is about to be cut; or in exerting pressure on actors to behave a specific way, for example by not leaving a place until this demand is fulfilled (Meissner, 2021). Examples of “Cultural politics of Pressure” are the resistance to deforestation by climbing into trees, the use of art as a form of activism within the Artist movement - for

instance in the form of a performance about the refugee crisis -, or activist blockades (Meissner, 2021). For activities to fit into this category, culture is used functionally with the goal of achieving anti-capitalist reforms, such as anti-austerity reforms.

Furthermore, Meissner's categories were further detailed by separating each category into politics that un-make capitalist futures and memories, and those that make anti-capitalist memories and futures. This was guided by some of the concepts from Feola et al.'s (2021) paper on processes of unmaking, disrupting and de-stabilising capitalism.

### 3.3. Data Collection

The central object of study is cultural politics and provided an understanding of the visions and the uses of visions by anti-capitalist initiatives. Through exploring future and past visions, results provided insights on people's motivations, wishes, and re-examinations of time. The identification of relevant data that counts as "cultural politics" was done according to the following understanding of culture and cultural politics based on Meissner's (2021) and Feola et al's (2021a) papers. The "culture" that we are interested in consists in ideas, emotions and imaginations surrounding society, economy, and climate. Cultural politics refers to the active use of culture for political means. An example of using culture for political means is eco-villages' strong engagement with communal practices with the purpose of critiquing dominant cultural values and showing that an alternative social system is possible.

Existing literature provided the study with an initial source of knowledge on the role of anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives for sustainability and on critiques of capitalism, as well as theories on utopias, collective memories, prefigurative politics and culture for sustainability. This literature review guided the identification of discursive categories used to study data from the chosen initiatives, and additionally helped design the interview protocol. Desk research was later used for collecting relevant data on the initiatives. Given the research's concern with culture, social media and internet resources are important to build an understanding of cultural practices in the 21st century. Here both visual and textual data were collected. Visual data provided insights on people's imagination. Visuals also provided ideas on cultural politics as they are created with the goal of being shared. The types of visual data collected were photographs, posters, social media posts, and any other type of visual representation that were deemed to be relevant to the initiatives' cultural politics.

These data were then complemented by qualitative interviews which were the dominant source of data for this study. Interviews were mostly done in person, as research shows that this method is most conducive to reliable data (Johnson et al. 2019). Though in person interviews were preferred, three of the 20 performed interviews were done online due to the location of the

participants and researcher at the time. Moreover, some of the short clarification interviews were performed due to time constraints. Interviews are an important source to build a detailed understanding of individuals' constructions of the past and future (Bryman, 2015). This is because interviews enable to build an understanding of how research participants view the world, and on how they frame and understand issues and events (Bryman, 2015).

Semi-structured interviews were performed in order to ensure that interviewees' replies could be easily aggregated: this was enabled by the asking of more or less identical questions within each interview (Bryman, 2015). The interview protocol for the semi-structured interviews revolved around general information about the relevant interviewee's relationship to the initiative, specific information about the initiative and its activities, and questions on prefiguration, popularisation, and pressure-related activities. The full interview protocol can be found in Appendix 1. The questions developed were based on the research questions. The aim was to get a view from inside initiative of how members interpret the grassroots initiative's practices. Interview questions were not read out in the exact same order but varied depending on answers provided by interviewees; this likely did not affect the reliability of results due to the qualitative nature of the study. Moreover, questions found in Appendix 1 were adapted based on preliminary research on each initiative. For example, more questions were asked to Grounded on the topic of visual arts due to preliminary showing a significant level of engagement of this initiative with this type of practice.

Moreover, all interviews except one were done on a one-on-one basis. Two interviews consisted in group interviews, where two interviewees were present. This was due to the preference of research participants of being interviewed in a group setting, or due to one particular context where another member of the initiative was nearby during the interview processes and joined in to provide help with answering questions. This was found not to affect the reliability of results, instead it was found to aid research participants in providing relevant data for the purpose of this study.

The last type of data that was analysed were the websites of the four chosen initiatives. Specifically, the part of the website with information describing the vision of the initiative was transcribed. Usually this consists in the "About" section of each initiative's website. This added crucial information to the analysis, as these sections included clear references to ways the initiatives perceive themselves and their activities. This triangulation of sources of information supports the validity of the research (Gerring, 2004) as it facilitates cross-checking and completeness.

Finally, a number of precautions were taken to ensure the ethics of the methods of this research. Firstly, at the start of each interview, permission was asked verbally to each interviewee

to record the conversation and to use the transcribed recording for the purpose of the writing of this research. The meeting was only recorded if consent was given. Secondly, interviewees were asked whether they wished their identity to remain anonymised for the research. The description of the relationship of each research participant to the relevant initiative was seen as consistent with preserving the anonymity of participants.

### 3.4. Data sample

Concerning the selection of research participants, this selection was done based on preliminary research and on the availability of participants. Firstly, preliminary research was performed in order to identify the most relevant members of initiatives for performing interviews, given the study's aims. For instance, for Grounded, preliminary research showed the presence of a sustainability team, a communications team, an art team, an awareness team and a legal team within the initiative. Out of the different teams of the initiative, these were deemed to be most relevant for answering research questions, therefore members of these five teams were selected for interviews. Such preliminary research often consisted in conversations with members of the four initiatives, which facilitated the process of selecting interviewees with the most knowledge about cultural practices of their initiative. The availability of members of the different initiatives for interviews was also a factor that affected the selection of participants and the number of interviews performed.

Name of initiative	Number of interviews performed	Details about the interviewees
ACU	3	Treasurer of ACU; 3 general active members of ACU
Land Van Aine	5	Founding member of LVA; 4 non-permanent residents of LVA eco-village
Transition Town Ilford	7	Founding member and coordinator of TTI; Vice Secretary of TTI; Treasurer of TTI; Communications Officer of TTI; coordinator of the forest garden; 2 general active members of TTI
Grounded	5	Member of the Sustainability team; member of the Communications team; director of the Art team; member of the Awareness team; member of the Legal team

*Figure 5: Table representing the number of interviews performed for each initiative, as well as some information about each interviewee.*

In total, 20 interviews were conducted as part of this research (figure 5). For each case study, the number of interviews performed was between three and seven depending on the availability of members. The length of interviews varied between 7 minutes and 75 minutes,

depending on the availability of participants and on the perception of the researcher about whether sufficient relevant information had been gathered. Additionally, three short clarification interviews were performed, with the goal of eliciting more detail about important information gathered during transcription processes or during the discourse analysis of interviews. The clarification interviews lasted between two minutes and three minutes and were considered part of the initial interview during the data analysis process. Information about the research participants can be found in the table on figure 5.

As is visible on figure 5, the number of interviews performed per initiative was unequal, with the least number of interviews having been performed with the initiative ACU. This was due to the unavailability of members of this initiative. Nonetheless, this did not affect results significantly due to the total length of interviews being similar to that of the eco-village Land Van Aine and due to the interview data being complemented by other forms of data.

Concerning the selection of images, the images for the visual analysis were found mostly on the initiatives' social media pages. This was because the image being shared on the relevant initiative's social media was perceived as implying a goal of these images being viewed by a range of people and pointing to a possible presence of cultural politics of popularisation. Moreover, one of the images is a photograph of the premises of one of the initiatives, and another image is of a poster by one of the initiatives found on its website and on the streets of Utrecht. The selection of images for analysis was done by searching on the initiatives' websites and social media for images seen as containing interesting elements for the analysis of anti-capitalist cultural politics. Thus, images were selected based on their containment of cultural practices and anti-capitalist ideas related to prefiguration, popularisation or pressure and to the past or future. For example, the clear presence of post-capitalist themes on an Instagram post by LVA led to the selection of this image for analysis. Two images were selected for analysis for each initiative.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

A critical discourse analysis of interviews and of textual data from websites was performed, as well as a critical visual analysis of selected images. Details on the steps of these analyses are described below. Furthermore, the analytical strategy of comparison was adopted to identify differences and commonalities between texts, interviews, and visual data (Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002). This allowed for the building of an argument around the commonalities and differences in past and future imaginaries and cultural politics of the initiatives.

#### *a. Critical Discourse Analysis of Interviews and Website*

After recording interviews, these were transcribed. Following this, a critical discourse analysis was performed in order to analyse and compare findings from the different initiative. This was done



using the Nvivo software, and with the help of the categories of Prefiguration, Popularisation, and Pressure (Figure 4). Interviews that did not contain reference to cultural politics were not coded. The method of critical discourse analysis puts a focus on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use (Fairclough, 1995). Within this study, critical discourse analysis enabled to look at future and past visions both as processes seeking to generate answers, and as processes of struggle between different discourses that are produced, contested, sidestepped and resolved (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Moreover, the method facilitated taking into central consideration the power relations that exist within capitalist societies within the coding of interviews.

Using the NVivo software for the coding of textual data facilitated the making of linkages and the assembling of different parts of the data, in order to build an explanation and argumentation (Mason, 2017). The software aided in recognising the relationship of the data to the studied phenomena of cultural politics within prefigurative politics.

In order to identify statements that related to cultural politics within both interview and website transcriptions, statements that contained value-judgments, emotions, or understandings that connected both to anti-capitalism and to the past or to the future were coded. For example, statements critiquing the development of the modern society into one where individualistic values rule were coded. What was categorised as cultural politics within interviews and the website were any references to ways of talking, thinking, feeling, imagining, and ways of organising that clearly challenge capitalist norms.

Firstly, textual data was coded within the 12 categories: Prefiguration of Memory Made, Prefiguration of Memory Unmade, Prefiguration of Future Made, Prefiguration of Future Unmade, Popularisation of Memory Made, Popularisation of Memory Unmade, Popularisation of Future Made, Popularisation of Future Unmade, Pressure Memory Made, Pressure Memory Unmade, Pressure Future Made, Pressure Future Unmade. Following this, the statements within these categories were coded again into the categories of Emotion in relation to Memory, and secondly, references to Nature. Coding within the already categorised statements enabled to only categorise such references to emotion, value, and nature within references to cultural politics.

After the filtering and analysis of textual data with the discourse analysis, the analytical framework (Figure 4) was filled in with relevant information from each case study. Some cells were not filled for all initiatives. For example, some initiatives may not engage with cultural politics in relation to memories of the past; for these cases the six categories on the left side of the table (Figure 4) remained blank. Using the analysed textual and visual data, completed cells for each table within Figure 4 were described and compared in order to build an argumentation. Clarifying questions support the interpretation of the data, specifically the research question and sub-

questions.

#### *b. Critical Visual Methodology*

For the analysis of visual data, the Critical Visual Methodology was adopted. The visual analysis provided essential insights for the argumentation due to the cultural centrality of vision in modern societies (Schroeder, 2006). Critical visual methodology looks critically at cultural contexts involved behind visual representations (Rose, 2011). This method recognises three sites of meaning-making of visual images: the site of image production, the site of the image itself, and the viewing site of the audiences (Figure 5). Exploring the sites of image production and the site of audiences was for this research especially relevant as this elicited information on the aims of the initiatives when producing the relevant images, as well as on the intended audiences of the images and the expected impact of the images.

To perform the visual analysis, observations for all sites of meaning-making were spelled out. Within the analysis of the three different sites, relevant contexts and categories were identified such as "consumerism", "human-nature relationships", etc. Together, insights from the different sites of meaning provided a range of insights on the use of cultural politics tied to the relevant image. Figure 5 details the questions asked in order to perform the critical visual analysis. Furthermore, within the critical visual analysis of each image, details on the image's categorisation within the three types of cultural politics as well as on the image's use of making and/ or un-making strategies were described.

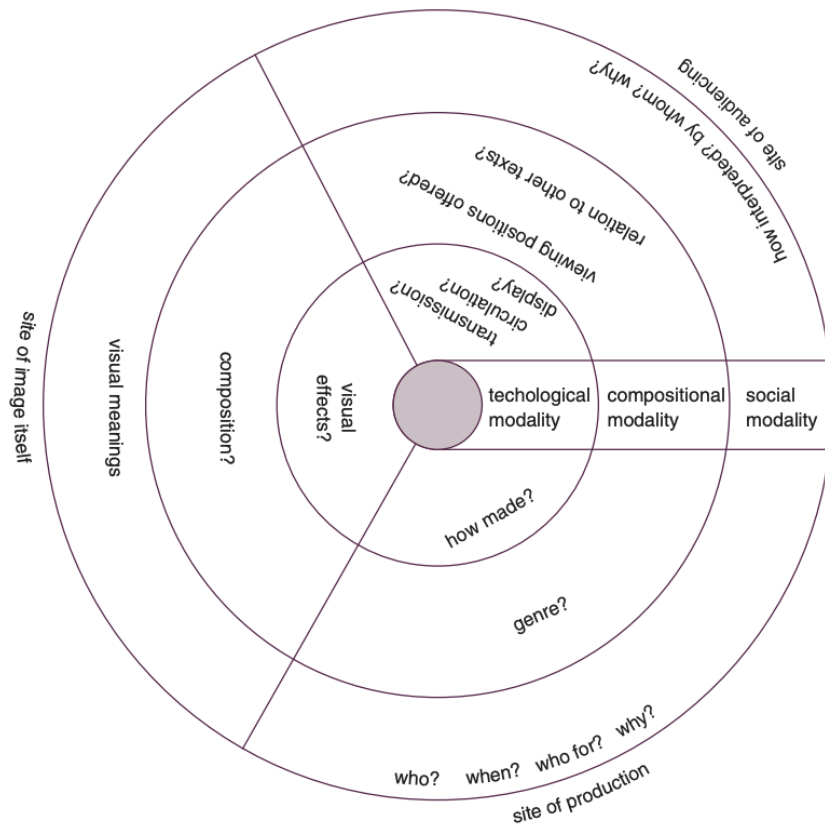


Figure 5: Representation of the sites and modalities for interpreting visual materials; used for the critical visual analysis. Source: Rose (2011)

## 4. Results

Firstly, the results from the critical visual analysis of documents are presented. These are divided into observations about the site of the image production, the site of the image itself, the site of the audiences, and the cultural politics used. Secondly, the results from the discourse analysis of interviews and of the initiative's website are presented. These are divided into results that deal with memory, results that deal with the future, and a section on the initiative's environmental and societal imaginary. This is followed by a short summary of findings for each initiative, concluding on the relationship to both past and future of the initiative. Finally, a brief comparison of results is done.

### 4.1. Results ACU

#### 4.1.1. Critical Visual Analysis of Documents

##### 4.1.1.1. Posters on one of the front windows of ACU



Figure 6: Photograph of ACU's front left window.

*The site of the image production:* The posters were hung by members of ACU and these posters were created by anti-capitalist or sustainability organisations as well as by ACU.

*The site of the image itself:* The photograph shows one side of the front windows of the cultural political centre ACU. Several posters are glued on the window. Behind the posters, many plants can be seen. These plants can be interpreted as an expression of the aesthetic and wellbeing value of nature to humans. There is a plant pot with a drawing of garlic and the words “sanctuary, garlic, anno 204”, expressing a romanticisation of nature. The left side of the front windows was chosen due to the presence of more clearly anti-capitalist messages compared to the right side window. The posters are of different sizes ranging from 50cm to 25cm in height. The posters are colourful, some of them composed by big letters and some artwork; they are meant to be noticeable to the eyes of passerby's.

The most dominant poster reads, translated from Dutch: “*STOP evictions, we want housing security and affordable social rent. #FuckFlex, Bond precarious forms of living*”. “Flex” refers to anti-squat housing. This poster criticises capitalism for the struggles that lower class citizens go through in order to pay unaffordable rent in much of the postmodern capitalist world (Martínes, 2019), and the evictions that this situation leads to. There is also a reference to problems with precarity, which is connected to the exploitation of labourers within capitalism. Additional information about the social and economic context of this photograph helps in the analysis of this poster. The Netherlands is going through a worsening housing crisis especially in big cities where there is a housing shortage, as well as declining housing affordability (CapitalValue, 2020). This situation is especially a struggle for the poorer parts of the population, with Dutch social renters spending an increasing percentage of their income on housing (Boelhauwer, 2019). There is a second poster that addresses the Dutch housing crisis which reads: “Your landlord is obliged to provide a safe home. #How safely do you actually live?”. This poster reminds passerby's to know their rights and to demand that they be respected, within a system where housing rights are increasingly ignored (CapitalValue, 2020). This neglect for the rights of poorer parts of the population is characteristic of capitalist economies of the modern world (Wright, 2019).

Further, there is a third poster on the top left corner that addresses housing problems in the Netherlands. It reads “You are too late”, with a graph in the centre depicting the rising housing shortage since 1995 in the Netherlands. It shows that in 1995, there was a housing shortage of 85,000 homes, and that around 2020, this shortage is at 406,000 homes.

In the bottom right corner there is a colourful poster that reads “Nurturing resistance. Food autonomy Festival, May 27, 28 & 29, Amsterdam, Utrecht. Sowing solidarity. Harvesting autonomy”. The poster is orange with trees in the middle. The roots of the trees give to the audience the impression of having life in them, and from the roots are growing mushrooms, seeds,

cutlery, and flowers, amongst others. The event advertised is created by the non-profit campaigning organisation ASEED Europe, or Action for Solidarity, Equality, Environment, and Diversity Europe. This event is focused on the importance of building food autonomy for transitioning to a more sustainable Europe, and highlights the importance of collaboration, community, and solidarity for building this new relationship to food in these societies. This message combined with the aliveness of the art of the poster make this collaborative transformation of European food production practices look appealing and playful.

Another poster shown on the photograph is a yellow poster with a house inside which is a symbol of the squatting movement, the poster reads: "Made possible thanks to: Due to the squatting movement". This poster is an expression of the central relationship of ACU to squatting movements in the Netherlands and to its memory of the squatting of its own building in the 1980s. Finally, the last poster shown on the image is a poster advertising a disco night on the 28th of May.

On the left of the photograph we see part of some stickers that read "Queer Liberation Now" and another illegible sticker about trans rights.

*The site of audiences:* As this is a front window, the spectators to this view are passerby's on the Voorstraat, one of the busiest streets of the centre of Utrecht, a city in the Netherlands. As expressed by interviewees, the street "Voorstraat" is an expression of characteristic aspects of capitalism in the postmodern society, namely consumerism, as it is filled with restaurants, fast food places, cafés, shops and supermarkets. The main focus of the photograph and the main thing that passerby's will notice as they pass by ACU are the posters on the window. The overwhelming impression given to the audience, i.e. to passerby's on the busy Voorstraat street that is a symbol of capitalism, is an overwhelming amount of political propaganda that are inciting passerby's to resist and to care about minority rights, about the housing and sustainability crises. The posters contain messages that ACU believes in, as explained by a member of ACU. The posters are on rotation, members can freely choose to put up posters on the windows without asking for permission from other members. Nonetheless it is expected that members of ACU know the main values and beliefs of ACU and that the posters be consistent with these. The presence of this form of propaganda on one of the busiest consumer hub of the city of Utrecht is an expression of the importance of resistance to capitalism and to consumerist habits on the Voorstraat street. They represent a strong contrast to the lack of resistance or critical thought to capitalism performed by the rest of the shops and restaurants that exist on this street.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework used in this study, the first type of cultural politics used are "cultural politics of Popularisation of a Memory Made". The cultural politics used on this image are popularising due to the hundreds of people passing by these posters daily and reading these messages, given the busy character of this street. This is important as it means that all parts of the city's population are potential viewers of these messages which can be understood as some form of propaganda. The vision that is popularised by the

images are firstly of a Memory Made: namely that of the historical importance of the squatting movement. The squatting movement is at its core anti-capitalist due to its resistance to the system of property rights, and due to its valorisation of practices of “commoning” and of the centrality of the collective (see figure 2). The movement challenges the acceptability of rented buildings that stay empty for long periods of time whilst the less wealthy parts of a population are homeless due to causes related to the priorities of capitalist economies.

The second type of cultural politics used are "cultural politics of a memory unmade", and “popularisation of a future made”. The three posters targeting the housing crisis can be understood as Popularising a Memory Unmade about the acceptability of the capitalist socio-economic system, as well as Popularising a Future Made where people’s housing rights are respected and where people stand up for these rights. The poster regarding the food autonomy festival is Popularising of a Future made where local food systems are self-sufficient. The disco poster does not contain any of the studied categories of cultural politics.

#### *4.1.1.2. Instagram post of a person diving into a dumpster*



Figure 7: Instagram post by ACU of a person diving into a dumpster

*The site of image production:* The second image chosen for ACU is a post made on ACU’s Instagram account. The photograph illustrates the mode of functioning of ACU. This dinner is

prepared by the Barricade. Though the event is merely hosted by ACU and hence the event itself and its political ideas belong to Barricade, the Instagram post was made by ACU and expresses political opinions. It expresses the position that saving thrown away food is fun and that the throwing away of edible food is problematic. Furthermore, as all food posts on ACU's Instagram are of vegan meals due to ACU only serving vegan food, such posts contribute to the normalisation of veganism.

*The site of the image itself:* It is a photograph depicting a person standing on a wooden box and bending over into a dumpster. They are wearing a red blouse, colourful trousers, and black boots. The description of the post reads *"Today at 18:00, The Barricade will have their regular vegan dinner at ACU, made from rescued veggies and for no cost or donation. You can also read or borrow books from the library!"*. The "rescued veggies" were found in the dumpster shown on the image.

The trousers, the position of the person in the photograph, as well as the terminology "rescued veggies", all contribute to making dumpster diving - a term that refers to the saving of food that is thrown away by literally diving into bins - look like a fun activity. Furthermore, the photograph and captioning normalise the eating of food that has been thrown away. The free character of the cooked meal contributes to the attractiveness of eating this rescued food. The free character of the cooked meal also challenges the capitalist idea that to enjoy oneself, money ought to be spent, and that to be productive and valuable, profit ought to be made. Food that is thrown away is usually food that by capitalist standards is no longer good enough to sell or enjoy: this free vegan dinner event hosted by ACU hence also challenges these standards.

The free library at ACU which is mentioned in the post is organised by the anarchist organisation Barricade, one of ACU's main guest groups. Free libraries are anti-capitalist firstly because sharing is central to free libraries and this is an activity that is not valued within the capitalist ideology, and secondly due to their free character. Moreover, the books present in the library are radical books, most of them are about anarchism, environmentalism, queer rights and anti-capitalism. By hosting and advertising this free library and according to interviews, ACU can be understood to be aiming to educate and radicalise people.

*The site of audiences:* The audience to this image are followers of ACU's Instagram account as well as non-followers interested in the organisation and its activities. Followers of ACU's Instagram tend to belong to alternative scenes in Utrecht, thus individuals who tend to be on the far-left side of the political spectrum, and people conscious of sustainability issues. The statement that guests may also "read or borrow books from the library" with an exclamation mark tells the audience that the reading and the sharing of books are enjoyable activities. Furthermore, the brief mentioning of this at the end of the post creates the idea that the sharing of books ought to be common.



*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework used in this study, this post uses cultural politics of "Popularisation of a Memory Unmade", "Popularisation of a Memory Made", "Popularisation of a Future Made" and "Popularisation of a Future Unmade". As there is a wide audience to this post, the image itself can be characterised as popularising. It popularises a Memory Unmade: it disturbs the normality of wasting food - this is at its core anti-capitalist as waste is characteristic of modern capitalist systems (Armerio, 2021). Further, the free library can be categorised as all four categories of cultural politics of Popularisation, Popularisation Memory Made, Popularisation Memory Unmade, Popularisation Future Made, Popularisation Future Unmade, depending on the books. This is because of the mentioned topics of the books which focus on past radical movements and hopeful futures surrounding environmental, anti-capitalist and queer rights topics. The post's normalisation of veganism and ACU's normalisation of veganism through only serving vegan food can be considered an act that defies unsustainable consumption habits in the Western world. This can be characterised as Popularising a Future Made: one where consumption habits are sustainable; it is popularising due to the attendance of these weekly dinners by sometimes up to 100 people.

Overall, this post's influence, meaning its spreading of anti-capitalist views to society, is limited due to its audience being limited mostly to followers of ACU's Instagram account who are already aware of environmental issues. Nonetheless, it may play a role of further educating and radicalising them.

#### 4.1.2. Discourse Analysis of interviews and website

##### *a) Memory:*

One of the interviewees explicitly mentions ACU's dominant focus on the past in the following quote:

*"I don't think we do so much for the future as we do for maintaining the past in hope for the future. We believe in the importance of history."*

(treasurer of ACU, 2022)

The interviewee here mentions that ACU's relationship to its past serves an emotional and strategic purpose of creating hope for the future.

The first types of practices within ACU's memory that develop a critique is the squatting history of ACU. It was referred to repeatedly within interviews. ACU's building was squatted in 1976, and ACU maintains a close connection to this squatting past in its discourse and mode of functioning:

*"I think, ultimately, the bottom line that kind of unites everyone is either an interest or a support of the squatting movement"*

(treasurer of ACU, 2022)

Nonetheless, there is no strictly collective view on squatting at ACU, as volunteers can for instance do bar shifts without supporting the squatting movement. Still, ACU's continued existence as a former squat on one of the busiest consumerist streets of Utrecht in itself was described by interviewees as spreading anti-capitalist ideals:

*“just the idea that it is still here. That it can still exist in that way, just being here on the Voorstraat is a way of spreading the idea that anti-capitalism can still exist on the Voorstraat [...] and in the city centre. [...] Because squatters, also homeless people, a lot of things are being pushed out of the city centre so I think it is good to stay and take a stand, and say we are still here”*

(general member of ACU, 2022).

Moreover, the history of ACU is described in detail on ACU's website since medieval times. The description highlights very clearly how central squatting both of ACU's building and of nearby buildings has been to ACU's history. It shows the use of the building by collectives in different ways throughout the decades. We can categorise this as Prefiguration of a Memory Made: that of the importance of the squatting movement and therefrom of the resistance to capitalism, the valuation of commoning practices and of the collective (figure 2). This memory of resistance is not present in the commonly shared understanding of the development of the modern capitalist society, especially not as an important part of history that there is any value in remembering. For ACU, the value lies in inspiring current generations about the wrongs of capitalism and about the possibility of fighting against capitalism.

Not only the history of squatting of the ACU building was mentioned by interviewees, also the importance of the squatting movement in Utrecht and in the Netherlands in the 1980s was referred to. The Dutch squatting movement of the 1980s was a protest against what was happening within urban environments: old buildings getting destroyed, tenants getting thrown out of houses that were perfectly fine, their houses being destroyed and replaced by newer houses, and ordinary people struggling to find affordable accommodation due to rising rents. This destruction of the old to replace with the new in order to make profit is characteristic of the capitalist logic. The quote above moreover includes a criticism of the gentrification that is still happening today, as it mentions people being pushed out of the city centre. In the 1980s and 1970s, Dutch youth movements occupied hundreds of buildings and public spaces and clashed with police as they defended their buildings, and the infrastructures also served as an infrastructure from which other political actions were organised. Crucially, squatters sought alternative ways of working and alternative ways of living in these spaces, for instance escaping hierarchies and interacting with each other with care and communal values (Martínez, 2019). In the same way, the squatted ACU building was used to screen films and later as a bar (ACU, 2022). All these elements show the way in which ACU's relationship to the squatting movement contains a strong criticism of the capitalist society and economy.

A second practice within ACU's memory which develops a critique relates to ACU's criticism of food waste. This is a clear position taken by ACU as a collective due to ACU's solidarity kitchen which was organised by ACU volunteers working on behalf of ACU. The solidarity kitchen ran for over a year and started during the Coronavirus pandemic as a response to the growing homelessness caused by this crisis (general member of ACU, 2022). Every Friday, ACU would host free vegan dinners that everyone was welcome to join and that would feed hundreds of people. In order to make these free dinners happen, volunteers at ACU had to dumpster dive for 4-5 hours during an evening (general member of ACU, 2022). ACU's dumpster diving activities and dinners disrupt the normalisation of waste which is characteristic of Western capitalist economies (Armerio, 2021). Moreover, ACU still hosts a similar dinner weekly that is organised by the guest group Barricade, where food is also coming from waste. An interviewee mentions that the reason for ACU hosting this event is that it:

*"[points] the finger directly at capitalism when it comes to waste and unsustainable practices"*

(treasurer of ACU, 2022).

These events are frequently advertised on ACU's Instagram, where it is also always specified that these dinners are vegan. Given this advertisement and the wide public that came and come to these events, it can be said that ACU through these dinners popularises its vision on capitalism's unsustainable waste practices. This disrupts modern capitalist and Western societies' normalisation of waste, thereby popularising the Unmaking of a Memory. Guests to these dinners are mostly regulars at ACU, thus young people on the far-left side of the political spectrum, as well as other interested people from the general local population.

Furthermore, interviewees repeatedly criticised the growing power of big corporations in capitalist societies. Therefore, ACU only sells products from smaller vendors; this is the third practice within ACU's memory that develops a critique. This is a form of Prefiguration of a Memory Unmade - namely that of the legitimacy of a society ruled by big companies and therefrom by profit-driven motives. This also consists in the creation of an alternative to the system where these businesses rule.

The last cultural practice of ACU which develops a criticism is ACU's hosting of a free library with radical books about anti-capitalism, queer rights, feminist theory, anarchist theory and environmentalism. This highlights a focus on memory of radical movements. This contributes to developing a critique to the erasing of memories of resistance from the popular imaginary by the modern culture.

*b) Future:*

ACU takes a position against consumerism and waste. A central activity of ACU that develops this criticism is ACU's running of a free shop where people can find and drop off clothes and other items. The concept of a free shop promotes and therefore popularises the values of sharing, it also critiques the reduction of what is valuable to what is monetary, hence it disrupts capitalist values and capitalist premises. This therefrom was characterised as popularisation of a Future made. Moreover, extra clothes and especially warm winter clothes that homeless persons are unable to afford are dropped off at the homeless shelter (general member of ACU, 2022). This behaviour embodies an alternative to the status quo of wealthy capitalist societies where the exclusion of certain parts of the population from decent standards of living is deemed acceptable. This therefore was characterised as prefiguration of a Future Made.

The first practice within ACU's relationship to its future that builds an alternative is ACU's serving only of vegan food. On their website, ACU describe themselves as 99% vegan and asks guests not to bring meat or fish into ACU. This contributes to normalising alternative and sustainable consumption behaviour in society, and was thus coded as Popularisation of Future Made.

Furthermore, ACU takes a stance against some detriments of modern Western society. Though all interviewees agreed that ACU does not take any clear political position, they agreed that ACU's position against the dominant culture could be translated into core values that it supports.

*"the ACU does try to aim for many years to be as anti-racist and anti-sexist [as possible],*

*"we cannot exclude any person inside"*

(general member of ACU, 2022)

Values of care as well as anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-fascist values are a central part of ACU's future vision. In this hoped for future, individuals are able to be whoever they want and to be respected for the identities they hold (general members of ACU, 2022). Interviews and the website showed that ACU aims to embody these values in the way it treats its guests and within the events that it holds. For example, ACU currently hosts a queer Arcana event for queer persons to discuss gaming. Sub-cultures and oppressed identities are celebrated by the venue through posters and events. This contains a disruptions of capitalist ways of thinking where respect and care for one another are not the moral standard (figure 2). ACU expresses these views and values both through prefigurative practices such as the discourses expressed above, the collective's behaviours aimed at providing a safe space for all identities, as well as through popularising practices such as posters on its windows and front door and the collective's usage of social media. An activity that can be seen to be popularising of such values is ACU's strong stance against fascist and racist parties in its Instagram posts and Instagram comments. Moreover, another of ACU's practices which builds and popularises an alternative for the future are ACU's free dinners, which

promote anti-capitalist values of sharing and relationality (see figure 2). Also to express these visions, ACU holds events that target specifically repressed identities such as queer people. The central concern with creating a society where all identities are respected is moreover shown in the "House Rules" section of ACU's website where zero-tolerance against racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia or other forms of discrimination is the first listed rule. These practices can be said to be popularising of an alternative future that is created and was therefore coded as Popularisation of a Future Made. These practices and discourses and events contribute both to developing a critique of modern society and to developing an alternative.

ACU's second practice that contributes to building an alternative related to ACU's future vision is its alternative mode of organising. ACU on its website describes itself as non-profit and volunteer-run. This points to ways of organising that challenge capitalist methods of organising as well as capitalist norms. The collective is moreover anarchist in their mode of functioning, meaning that they have no hierarchy, decisions are collectively made, as well as having as little rules as possible. This is connected to ACU's squatting past where leaderless structures were the norm (van der Steen et al. 2014). The rules that they do follow are listed on their website and include for example no-harassment. This type of decision-making and functioning can be characterised as prefiguring a type of future that is made. An alternative to organisational norms in capitalist systems is created and put into practice.

Moreover, ACU prefigures the future that it wants through embodying its view of community as powerful and important. ACU does this by engaging in community-building practices. This is therefore ACU's third practice of developing an alternative related to its future. A core premise of capitalism is that individuals are the drivers of change and of innovation, and that they ought to look out for themselves and for themselves only, often at the expense of others excluded by the benefits of the capitalist economic system (Wright, 2019). ACU's central concern with building community that address a range of issues related to anti-capitalism directly challenges the narrative about the romanticisation of individualism.

Fourthly, within the developed alternative, ACU expresses a valuation of education and awareness of minorities and political issues, shown by its hosting a free library, political discussions, its posters, the way it manages its social media. Due to these factors, we can deduce that ACU views awareness and education as important parts of a sustainable future. Popularisation is also used here through the same means in a way to normalise this awareness.

#### 4.1.3. Summary: Environmental and Societal Imaginary of ACU

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
<b>Memory ACU</b>	References to and relationship to squatting+ education about squatting through website& posters	Posters on gentrification and housing crisis
	Free dinners with dumpster food: criticism of food waste	
	Free library	
	Volunteer-run and not seeking profits: critique power of big corporations and incentives of organisations in capitalist system	
	Posters on gentrification and housing crisis	
	Tags and graffiti inside: anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-police	
<b>Future ACU</b>	Critique of food waste (free dinners) + waste (free shop)	Solidarity kitchen + only serving vegan food
		Alternative mode of organising: volunteer run & anarchist
		Community-building practices, hosting and advertising anti-capitalist groups
		Free library, political discussions: awareness and education as the norm
		Hosting bands expressing revolutionary messages

*Figure 8: Table representing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of ACU categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.*

There is noticeable use of cultural politics of popularisation by ACU. The main intended audience to ACU's popularising anti-capitalist cultural practices are people who come to their events. Interviews showed that these tend to be members of the alternative scenes of Utrecht, for example people who identify as anarchists, part of the squatting movement, part of sub-cultures, or part of the LGBTQ+ community. Though many of these people may already hold the beliefs popularised by ACU's events and activities, based on members of ACU's discourses we can assume that their events aim to further educate and radicalise guests, as well as to provide a safe space for these non-conventional ideas to exist and blossom and for people to meet and interlink within different projects hosted at ACU. An interviewee moreover expressed that ACU particularly is interested in influencing the youth: exposing them to new ideas, making them reflect and perhaps radicalising them. Nonetheless, the posters on ACU's front windows have a broader scope of influence as mentioned (See 4.1.1).

Moreover, the comparison between the different analysis showed that posters are one of the strongest forms of political activism that is done by the ACU currently, according to this analysis and to interviewees.

That ACU describes itself as a "cultural political centre" shows that the initiative perceives an important role of culture for its anti-capitalist purposes. Through art, music, food and a range of different events, ACU aims to challenge the dominant culture.

There is a strong presence of collective memory for this initiative. An important finding is that ACU engages predominantly with the past rather than with the future. This was shown by the discourses used by members of the initiative with statements expressing this observation clearly, as well as shown by the initiative's website. Also highlighting this, out of a total of 69 references, interviewees mentioned the future 9 times, and the past 61 times. In these numbers, it must be noted that some of the references belong to the same statement, thus the same statement may contain several types of references to the past or to the future. This is consistent with findings

from the critical visual analysis as both analysed photos are very involved with criticising and un-making the normality of different aspects of capitalism and of its development toward the present.

Results show that ACU's visions are more focused on social sustainability rather than environmental sustainability. ACU's dominant form of activity that challenges capitalism, and the way interviewees interpret its main influence, is through its advertisement for anti-capitalist and sub-culture groups and through its providing a venue for these groups to exist in. These types of activities mainly embody the anti-racist, anti-sexist etc values promoted by the groups.

A significant result for ACU is the absence of collective position taken by the initiative. This was mentioned a number of times by interviewees, and was seen as a characteristic part of ACU's anarchist mode of functioning:

*"it's just a loose collective of individuals who all have their own view on everything"*  
(general member of ACU).

An important and related finding is that the initiative is merely a space for other groups to exist in, thus e.g. the free library is run by the Barricade; thus they agree with positions taken by these groups but do not engage significantly with politics in general - these groups engage more with cultural and political change than ACU.

Moreover, ACU made 12 references to emotions within its statements relating to its cultural practices surrounding collective memory, and 6 references to emotions relating to cultural practices surrounding the future.

Furthermore, results showed a similar number of practices engaging with popularising and with prefigurative politics, and an absence of practices situated within cultural politics of pressure. The photos chosen for analysis showed a dominance of popularising strategies, however this makes sense as the strategies shown on these photos - posterizing and social media - are two of the dominant forms of popularisation that ACU engages with (see Appendix 2).

Finally, ACU made no references to nature in its discourse.

## 4.2. Results Land Van Aine

### 4.2.1. Critical Visual Analysis of Documents

#### 4.2.1.1. Logo of Land Van Aine



Figure 9: Logo of Land Van Aine.

*The site of the image production:* The image represents LVA's logo, which can be found on the top corner of their website and of their Facebook page, as well as on the poster at the entrance gate of the eco-village. It was created by LVA.

*The site of the image itself:* The image is composed of a circle made up of people, a leaf, a rainbow, and a house. Above the circle and just above the rainbow, small birds are flying. The people are holding hands. There is a path that goes from the people to the sun. The image represents the eco-village's members holding hands with their home. The holding of hands represents the central



importance of community for the eco-village. This stands in direct opposition to the capitalist romanticisation of individualism (figure 2). Furthermore, they are holding hands with a leaf, which represents the closeness of the eco-villagers with their natural environment; this also stands in opposition to capitalism's de-valorisation of nature (figure 2). The circle made up of eco-village members, their home, a rainbow and a leaf give the impression of harmony and unity.

*The site of audiences:* The audience to this image are firstly viewers of LVA's website and their Facebook, hence those interested in the eco-village and those interested in eco-villages in general. Secondly, those coming to the eco-village see the logo as they enter: these are members but also those coming to workshops at the eco-village and to the open days. The harmonious circle between villagers, nature, a rainbow and their home, reminds the audience of a planet. This can be understood as a positive future vision for a socially and environmentally sustainable planet.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework used in this study, Land Van Aine's logo can be categorised as "Prefiguration of a Future Made", and "Prefiguration of a Memory Unmade". The criticisms of the capitalist society's de-valorisation of nature and community can be understood as the prefigurative unmaking of a capitalist memory. The eco-village embodies and prefigures new forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience, of which the logo is a representation. The logo does not target a wide audience, but it gives to its audience a positive view of nature, community, and of the eco-village. Therefore, the logo is not characterised as popularising of the mentioned ideas but merely as aiming to inspire.

#### *4.2.1.2. Post of girl with flowers smiling advertising the open day*



Figure 10: Facebook post of Land Van Aine for an Open Day in May 2022.

*Site of image production:* The photo was taken and chosen by Land Van Aine for its open day event, this event is made for neighbours who are curious about the eco-village as well as other people who are curious about this eco-village or about eco-villages in general. At this event, people are shown around the eco-village, the vision of the eco-village is presented in a power point presentation, people are invited for a free communal lunch and to ask questions, and finally there is the possibility to donate to the eco-village towards the building of the eco-village.

*Site of the image itself:* The Facebook post is composed of the title (translated from Dutch) “*Open Day Ecodorp Land van Aine - FULL*”, and of a photo above the title. The photo is of a young blonde girl smiling near some Buddleia flowers and some plants on her right. The age of the girl is around 5-6 years old and she is wearing a blue top. She is smiling.

*The site of audiences:* The audience of this image are neighbours and followers of LVA’s Facebook account, people interested in the eco-village or in eco-village life in general. The overall impression given to the audience is of the wellbeing of people living at the eco-village and specifically of children members. As a characteristic aspect of the capitalist society is the disregard for human wellbeing (see figure 2), this renders this alternative society attractive to the audience. The post can be interpreted as aiming to attract more younger generations to the eco-village.

Furthermore, nature plays a central role in this image, as the happy girl is shown to be surrounded by flowers and plants. This gives to the audience the idea that being near nature is a source of happiness. That the person on the poster is a child is furthermore important as interviews showed that the families of this eco-village practice alternative forms of educating their children that differ from conventional schooling systems. In these alternative forms of education, the needs of the child are more central, as the education does not follow the exact same structure for each child but is instead adapted according to their needs. The child is able to have more of a say on what they would be curious to learn. This central concern with the emotions and wellbeing of the child challenges capitalist values (see figure 2). The subjectivities built from this model do not fit neatly into the capitalist model as they have been taught to care centrally for their wellbeing, their personal growth, their inspiration, for others around them and for nature. Interviewees mentioned several times that both being in such a close community as well as being close to nature are important factors for the wellbeing of children.

*Cultural politics used:* The image uses both Prefigurative and Popularising cultural politics. The image is meant to inspire the audience about an alternative form of living and its benefits, in order to attract visitors. Only a weak form of popularisation is present due to the small audience to the post and image, and due to its indirect goal of inspiring people, through getting people to come to this open day. The image moreover prefigures an alternative way of life and its benefits and thus fits into Prefiguration of a Future Made.

#### 4.2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis of Website and Interviews

As mentioned (See 3.3), there are both part-time and full-time residents of LVA. Four of the five individuals who agreed to be interviewed live at the premise part-time - which means a minimum of 2 days a week -, some of them have a plan of living there permanently in the near future. One of the individuals interviewed only comes to the eco-village every few months but is planning to move to the eco-village soon.

##### *a) Memory:*

Firstly, there were 9 references to memory where emotion was expressed.

Secondly, the eco-village develops a critique of the individualism that is so present within Western societies (figure 2). The wish to live together in a community was mentioned many times in interviews as a reason for people to join the eco-village. In the following quote from LVA's website, the tie between the capitalist production system and individualism's harms is comprehensibly spelt out:

*“Increasing individualism in Western society leads to increasing loneliness. Due to increasing stress and time pressure, people lose contact with themselves. Burnout and depression are becoming more common. The desire for social acceptance drives us to consume more, without contributing to real fulfilment or connection.”*

(Land Van Aine, 2022).

Here, the recent development of modern capitalism and its impact on society are described. Capitalist working conditions’ negative impact on human wellbeing are pinpointed. The eco-village instead is shaped by communal and solidarity-based behaviours which are characteristic anti-capitalist values (figure 2). Interviewees expressed the belief that everyone has something meaningful to contribute to the eco-village; this challenges the capitalist ideology of meritocracy. Connected to this reconstruction of history, the eco-village shows an understanding of recent history as being affected by individuals longing for a way of life where people are more connected to each other and to nature. This is why increasingly people have been seeking to live in eco-villages. This is expressed both on the website and by an interviewee. Through both critiquing the capitalist devaluation of community and engaging in practices that revalue these ways of being the eco-village here engages in prefigurative politics of a memory unmade and of a new memory that is made. As LVA does not engage in any advertising activities for its website, statements made on the website are not characterised as popularisation.

In the previous quote consumerism is also critiqued by highlighting the fact that identities in capitalist economies are shaped by this ideology even though consumerism fails to contribute to human fulfilment. This ideology is expressed in the following words:

*“The pursuit of happiness in materialism”*

(Land Van Aine, 2022).

Interviewees’ discourses moreover show a strong concern with social sustainability. On LVA’s website, the development of Western consumption behaviour is also tied to increasing waste, deforestation, depletion of soil reserves, increasingly frequent natural disasters, encroaching deserts, poor air quality and polluted water. Cultural politics used in relation to this alternative understandings of consumerism - therefrom a memory made - are prefigurative: a new type of economy and an alternative way of living is built within the eco-village, as well as new types of discourses and ways of thinking being expressed.

Other capitalist ways of thinking are critiqued by the initiative. Specifically, the short-term thinking of individuals and governments in current Western societies is mentioned on LVA’s website. These and the equation of human wellbeing with materialism are identified as having caused the exhaustion of the Earth’s resources. Again, prefigurative politics are made use of to dismantle capitalist understanding of the past.

Additionally, both within LVA's permaculture workshops and within members' discourses, values related to the natural environment are expressed that disturb capitalist values and capitalist understandings of the past development of the current economy. Permaculture is an ancient form of growing food, thus these practices themselves express a valuation of memory. One member expressed longing to her past where growing one's own food was common:

*"my parents already had a garden without the lovely ideas. [...] we produced our own food. So now you have the nice stories about it. But it was common"*

(general member of Land Van Aine, 2022).

The workshops were categorised as using popularising politics to spread old understanding of the importance and the value of nature and of growing one's own food. This is because the workshops are open to people external to the eco-village as well as being advertised on LVA's social media. This nostalgia to past relationships to nature is also expressed in LVA's engagement with certain rituals around nature such as Celtic rituals. Such ceremonies are performed frequently. For instance, some ceremonies aim to honour vegetable gods, others aim to celebrate together in awe for nature (general member of Land Van Aine, 2022). These point to an important relationship of the initiative to its past. Given that capitalist neoliberal understandings of history view history as a linear progress toward the present modern world, LVA's valorisation of Celtic rituals has no place anymore within this framing of history. Inspiration from the past is moreover expressed in a method the eco-village uses for communicating called 'the way of council', based on Aboriginals' ways of sitting around the fire with a talking stick. Listening is central to this method (founding member of Land Van Aine, 2022). The idea that past values and past modes of thinking and relating to nature are something 'modern people' can learn from does not fit inside this framing. Moreover, the openness to multiple forms of socio-cultural engagements distinct from what is understood as Western rationality is clearly anti-capitalist (see figure 2), as well as pointing to an activity of "delinking". Delinking is an unmaking mechanism of claiming diverse logics and types of knowledge and a redefinition of subjectivities (Feola et al. 2021b). These rituals both create an alternative memory to capitalist memories as well as un-making the capitalist memory just mentioned, through prefiguration as these are spiritual activities limited to members of the eco-village. The permaculture workshops and the rituals contribute to building an alternative, and the discourses express develop a critique.

Furthermore, a range of views on the past within members of the initiative can be grouped together under nostalgic understandings of the past. These ways of talking and feeling constitute the fourth practice that develops a critique of capitalist societies. For instance, one member expressed being inspired to live in an eco-village by pre-colonial times where being in small communities and sharing things and being together was natural and where people were closer to nature. Another member mentioned that the traditions of living in communities is something the eco-village takes inspiration from.

An important point is that it was made clear in interviews that tradition is not central to the eco-village because they identify as an intentional community and not as a traditional community. This affects their relationship to collective memory, it means that they come from the modern community and carry this with them whilst at the same time putting their intention into a different way of living (general member of Land Van Aine, 2022).

#### *b) Future:*

Firstly, a practice of the eco-village that builds an alternative to capitalist norms is the eco-village's sociocratic mode of decision-making. In this type of decision-making that is inspired by permaculture, observation is crucial for decision-making, and decision-making happens based on consent and through a range of circles - such as the house building circle and the community building circle - made up of all members of the organisation and election by consent (Romme, 1995). A core aspect of this type of decision-making is ensuring the equality between all members, it thereby values the collective and relationality (figure 2); this form of organising is therefore very different from capitalist forms where hierarchy is the norm. It thus contributes to destabilising capitalist social values, through the embodiment of an alternative and was therefore characterised as Prefiguration of a Future Made. Nonetheless, one member mentioned that the sociocratic mode of governance was not visible for her in the initiative. Another member mentioned the difficulty in implementing the model; thus the implementation of this alternative practice and this alternative form of decision-making and values seems to be still at a building stage.

A second practice central to LVA's future vision which contributes to building an alternative to capitalism is self-sufficiency. Members eat locally and wish to grow most of their own food themselves. They produce some of their energy themselves, from waste, and aim to produce all of their energy themselves by also producing solar energy. The term "independent" is moreover mentioned a number of times in interviews to refer to the freedom the eco-village wants to have from big business and from global players, in order to create a:

*"more local, sustainable, independent economy".*

*(general member of Land Van Aine, 2022).*

The modern capitalist system is intimately tied to neoliberalism and hence to a global free market economy. Land Van Aine's future vision is therefore directly in opposition to this system. Through their existence and practices, the initiative prefiguratively challenge this system. Moreover, the eco-village exchanges with other eco-villages at national and international levels. This is done through the eco-village's participation in GEN, the global eco-village network, and within GEN Netherlands. Interviewees described that this participation means that the eco-village is trained on the four pillars of eco-village living - the social, ecological, the economy, and the spiritual -, and that the eco-village shares information with other eco-villages about strategies. According to

interviewees, this is done with the purpose of building knowledge and awareness about ecological forms of living and working in communities (general member of Land Van Aine, 2022). This can be considered a form of Popularisation of a Future Unmade as it unmakes the capitalist and dystopian future presented by the modern Western world through media (Krøijer, 2020). The form of popularisation in this activity is weak as the targeted audiences to the spreading of knowledge about eco-villages are other eco-villages plus people with an interest in eco-village living, thus a limited audience.

Furthermore, a third practice related to LVA's future vision that contributes to building an alternative is LVA's holding of workshops on permaculture. These are accessible and advertised to external people, with the purpose of promoting a different type of living and inspiring people to do similar activities in their own time (general member of LVA, 2022). This is anti-capitalist due to its promotion of the idea that people can be self-sufficient with regards to food production and the spreading of the idea that working with nature and being close to nature are closely interlinked to human wellbeing (figure 2). This can be categorised as Popularisation of a Future Made - that of the self-sufficiency of human communities that are close to nature -.

Moreover, interviewees mentioned that the eco-villagers respect each other in what they do and bring. This act is done with the purpose of creating something together. The following statement mentions similar values:

*“help each other, if they want to learn. Learning, education is a big part of it also, like just doing everything together, or holding hands. [...] lift somebody up and give some compliments and make them feel nice. I think that’s an important part of community building. [...] So that’s nice when like two or three people say we’re going to do this and you’re interested, and they say [...] come join, we teach you”.*

(founding member of LVA, 2022).

These statements contain a valorisation of mutual respect, mutual care, co-learning and of collaboration that unmake capitalist social “values” or the lack thereof. They destabilise the status quo on how people should live together in society. Connected to this re-valorisation of communal values, Land Van Aine expresses clearly both within interviews and on their website that the eco-village has a central focus on social sustainability. This challenges the capitalist understanding that climate change can be fixed solely with technological innovations and that it doesn't require system-wide changes. This focus on communal practices and communal values addresses LVA's criticism of increasing individualism, loneliness and lack of connection and human fulfilment within modern Western capitalist societies. For instance, on its website, LVA describes its own eco-village as a “contemporary answer to important social questions” (Land Van Aine, 2022). The specific vision that the eco-village has for the future holds a place both for individualism and for community. For instance, within a training given by one of the members of the eco-village on paths

for the success of eco-villages, two of the four important elements for such a success are the individual and the community. Although community and communal values are central to the eco-village, the “role of the individual”, “personal growth”, and “self-consciousness” were mentioned a number of times (general member of Land Van Aine, 2022). This balance is distinct from the capitalist value system and hierarchisation, where the individual and their needs always come first.

Finally, LVA’s website showed that urgency is a part of LVA’s vision of the future. The development of capitalism and its catastrophic impacts on ecology and on the climate are presented clearly, followed by the statement that the eco-village is an appropriate and active solution to these problems:

*“Appropriate in the present time and society, in the here and now, with care for the future. Ecodorp Land van Aine actively contributes to this”.*

(Land Van Aine, 2022).

#### 4.2.3. Summary: Environmental and Societal Imaginary of Land Van Aine

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
Memory LVA	Critique individualism in speech	Permaculture workshops and rituals
	Website criticising consumerism and pursuit of happiness in consumerism & short term thinking of governments	
	Embodying critique of tie between Western lifestyle and increasing loneliness and unhappiness	
Future LVA	Embodying new views on personal responsibility	Participatory sociocratic mode of organising
		Self sufficiency practices & ecological practices: solar panels, heating system etc
		Workshops on permaculture
		Communal practices and communal values
		Way of council method of discussion and listening
		Facilitating space for consciousness growth, personal development, healing, transformation
		Exchange knowledge and experience with other intentional communities in NL and Europe and creating open source info about ecological living to inspire others
		Using social media and newsletter to spread awareness about what the eco-village is doing
		Alternative schooling practices for children

Figure 11: Table representing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of LVA categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.

On its website, Land Van Aine situates itself clearly in time. It is mentioned that it is time for a change, and that the eco-village is

*“Appropriate in the present time and society, in the here and now, with care for the future.”*  
(Land Van Aine, 2022).

The website makes this statement in order to justify the value and usefulness of the eco-village following the issues with contemporary ways of life that are stated just before and that are closely



tied to capitalism. In discourses, the initiative was found to engage more with the future than with the past. The critical visual analysis also showed practices more centred around the imagination of a future. However, the past was found to serve an important function for the initiative. We can tie some of LVA's criticisms of the past such as that of increasing individualism and loneliness to LVA's future utopian visions of community and sharing which they put into practice. Furthermore, recollecting past rituals served a function of facilitating the embodiment of the future that LVA want centred on harmonious relationships of humans with each other and with nature.

The dominant mode of cultural politics that are adopted by the eco-village are Prefigurative. While discourses made references to Popularisation practices 12 times, they referenced Prefigurative cultural politics 90 times. This is consistent with the findings from the critical visual analysis that prefiguration is LVA's dominant cultural strategy. The dominance of prefigurative practices can moreover be seen on the listed cultural practices in Appendix 3.

The audience to LVA's popularising activities are limited to local communities interested in visiting the eco-village and in coming to the permaculture workshops, as well as other national and international eco-villages.

Moreover, there were 9 references to emotions within statements relating to cultural politics in relation to collective memory, and 20 references to emotions within statements relating to cultural politics in relation to the future.

## 4.3. Results Transition Town Ilford

### 4.3.1. Critical Visual Analysis of Documents

#### 4.3.1.1. Instagram post advertising the Transition Town Ilford Repair Cafe

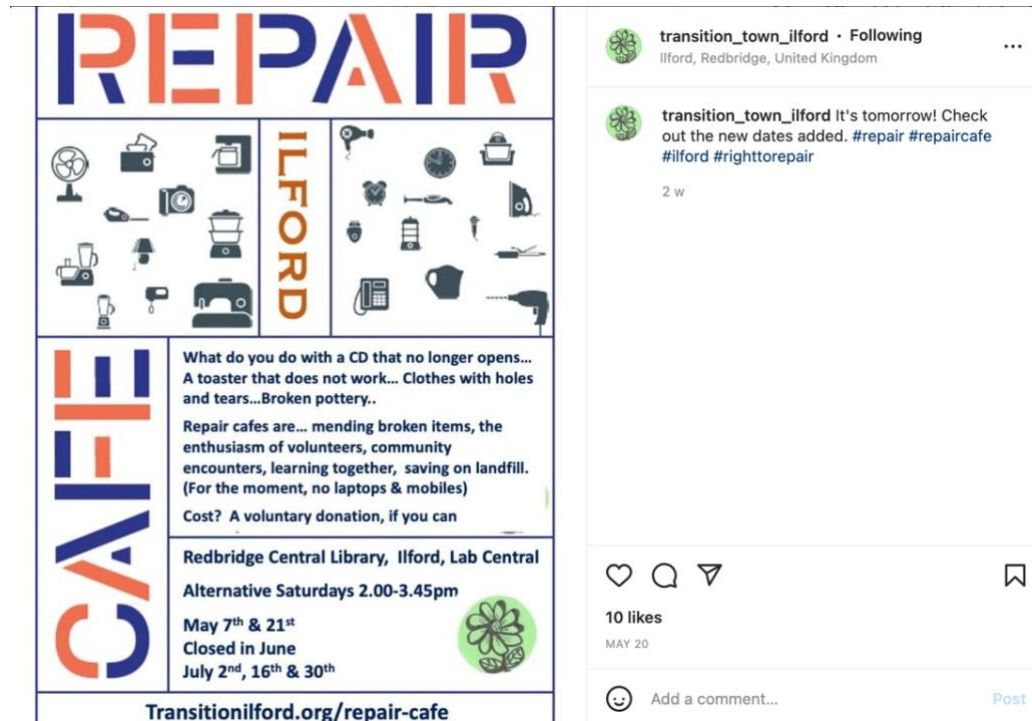


Figure 12: Instagram post by TTI advertising their Repair Cafe.

*Site of image production:* The post was created by TTI in order to promote its Repair Cafe events occurring in May and July 2022. The image is of the Instagram post, but the same post was made on the initiative's Facebook page.

*Site of the image itself:* The image is composed of big letters reading "Repair Cafe Ilford". Under the word "Repair", there are drawings of objects such as lamps and clocks. At the right bottom corner there is a text that reads "What do you do with a CD that no longer opens... A toaster that does not work... Clothes with holes and tears... Broken pottery.. Repair cafes are... mending broken items, the enthusiasm of volunteers, community encounters, learning together, saving on landfill. (For the moment, no laptops & mobiles). Cost? A voluntary donation, if you can". Below this, the location of the events and the exact dates are described. In the bottom right corner, the TTI logo can be found. This logo is composed by a simple flower with a green background.

*The site of audiences:* The audience to this image are viewers of TTI's Instagram and Facebook pages. These are most likely people interested in the transition town, in transition towns in

general, and in community initiatives in Ilford or the broader London area. The colourful big letters as well as the drawings of objects contribute to the playfulness of the poster, which makes it attractive to this audience. The statement “*What can you do with [...]*” broken toasters and CDs, in order to introduce the concept of repair cafes, challenges the capitalist idea that broken items ought to be replaced and thrown away. The post gives to the audience the impression that fixing objects is an easy and accessible activity. Moreover, TTI's logo is an expression of the beauty of nature.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework used in this study, the type of cultural politics here used are “Prefiguration of a Future Made” and “Popularisation of a Future Made”. Firstly, the post contributes to prefiguring a type of Future that is made where objects have a longer lifetime thus reducing the amount of products needed to be produced and consumed. This contributes to a reduction in resource consumption. Furthermore, the post aims to attract many viewers in order for the repair cafe to be attended by as many members of Ilford community as possible. As the post destabilises certain views, the post can be said to Popularise the same mentioned Future that is made.

#### 4.3.1.2. Instagram post advertising becoming a Community Energy Champion

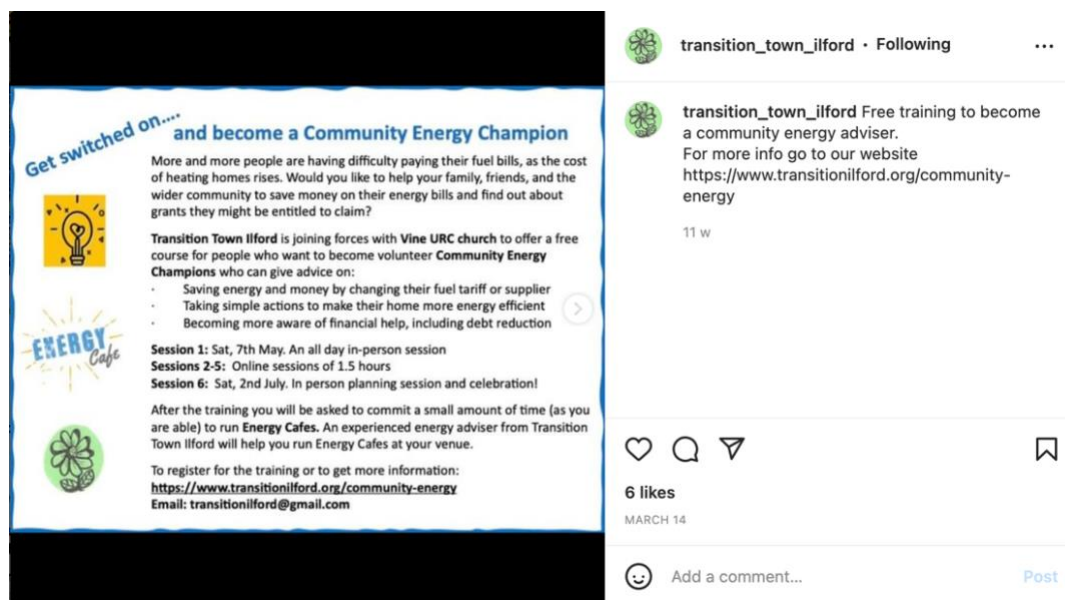


Figure 13: TTI Instagram post advertising becoming a Community Energy Champion.

*The site of the image production:* The image is of a post made by TTI on its instagram

page in order to promote courses for people who want to become Community Energy Champions. These courses are to take place from May until July 2022.

*The site of the image itself:* The image is composed of a title “Get switched on... and become a Community Energy Champion”. Under the title, there is a long text. It firstly describes the rising fuel prices in the UK and the difficulty of some parts of the population to pay their fuel bills. It then describes a way for viewers of the poster to help their friends, family and community save money on energy bills and learn about their rights to claim grants that they may be entitled to. It describes how to register to a free course led by TTI and Vine URC church to train people to become “Community Energy Champions”, which means that they are able to advise the community on switching fuel tariffs or suppliers, making their homes more energy efficient, and becoming more aware of financial help available for paying fuel bills. The Community Energy Champion is then able to run Energy Cafes with Transition Town Ilford’s help. On the left of this text, there are three images, the first is of a light bulb with stars, the second is the logo for TTI's Energy cafe events, the third image is TTI’s logo of a flower with a green background.

*The site of audiences:* This post is aimed at the general audience as it has a purpose of getting more people involved in becoming Community Energy Champions. People who will see the post are viewers of TTI's Instagram, thus people interested in TTI, people interested in the transition town movement, and perhaps people interested in community or sustainability initiatives in Ilford or London. The overall impression given by the post is of the importance of solidarity and standing up for one's rights in the face of socio-economic conditions that neglect human lives. The feeling conveyed by the logo is of the deep aesthetic value of nature.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework used in this study, this post adopts “popularisation of a future made”. The post consists in a form of community support and community caring that contributes to un-making capitalist values. The post advertises to “*help family, friends, and the community*”. The inequalities and injustices caused by capitalism are highlighted, although the term ‘capitalism’ is not mentioned. This contributes to disrupting the normalisation of capitalist systems of domination and social neglect. As this post is advertised on social media, this disruption and un-making of capitalist values can be categorised as popularisation of future made where the norm are caring values and respect for human wellbeing and for social rights. Nonetheless, an interesting aspect of this post is the absence of the term ‘capitalism’. Though the rising fuel prices and subsequent governmental disregard for its effects on the lower classes of the population are clearly shaped by capitalism, TTI does not on this post explicitly link this situation to capitalism. This is linked to TTI as an initiative not identifying as anti-capitalist and to members explaining that they are not a campaigning group focused on critiquing but rather an initiative focused on doing things (general member of TTI, 2022). The absence of the term ‘capitalism’ limits the un-making potential of this post.

#### 4.3.3. Discourse Analysis of Interviews and Website

##### *a) Memory:*

Firstly, TTI's website as well as interviewees expressed an understanding of Ilford's development toward modernity as a source of isolation, individualism and of a decrease in communal values and practices, illustrated by this statement:

*"they don't know any of their neighbours. [...] And they lived on the same street for 20-30 years, they never know their neighbours. There isn't any community local event. They sort of live very isolated lives. Everyone has their own little network of friends but there isn't a local community"*

(treasurer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

TTI organises several projects to dismantle this perceived isolationism within local neighbourhoods. For instance, the 'Growing Food, Growing Friends' project aims to bring neighbours closer together by growing food together. This was done by inciting every TTI member to connect to around 10 neighbours and provide them with seeds, which in the end led to TTI connecting to 100 local families in different streets of Ilford. Due to the success of this project and to this broad influence, this attempt to impact the local culture was categorised as Popularisation of Memory Unmade. The memory that is unmade is that of a culture of individualism and isolationism and its merits. The activities mentioned contribute both to developing a critique and to building an alternative.

The initiative takes inspiration from the past in its conceptualisation of nature and in its relationship to nature and growing food. This is shown by the Forest Garden project. As mentioned by one of TTI's members, this project is inspired by past societies where forest gardening was more common:

*"Forest gardening [...] has been used traditionally in other places for a very long time, for millennia. So [...] for example, in India, they had been using certain approaches, which you could call forest gardening"*

(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022).

Members of the project were trained about these ancient gardening practices, they then pass on this knowledge to anyone interested in joining the project during a weekly session, this indicates popularising forms of cultural politics. There is no place for such valorisation of ancient practices within the capitalist framing of history which follows a linear progress. Moreover, the project embodies and popularises multiple forms of socio-cultural engagement through sharing alternative forms of knowledge and of relating to nature. This points to an activity of delinking, through its reclaiming of diverse logics and types of knowledge (Feola et al. 2021b). Thereby the Forest Garden project reconstructs history alternatively and can be said to engage in Prefigurative and Popularising forms of cultural politics of a Memory Made.

Furthermore, the way nature is spoken about within TTI initiative differs from the modern capitalist culture, exemplified by this quote:

*“[worm] That’s one of the heroes of the world”.*

(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

These ways of talking are a form of disruption of capitalist ways of thinking thus consisting in prefiguration of a Memory Made: that of the importance of nature. In speech, these criticisms are embodied. An interviewee mentioned that when schools approached TTI to be able to bring children to help with the forest garden, they felt that children had lost their connection with nature, expressing a nostalgic reference to a past where children spent more time outdoors and in nature (Anonymous Transition Town Ilford, 2022). The responses from children involved with the forest garden project were overwhelmingly positive, with children leaving gifts and decorations behind. In this and other emotional references to connectivity to nature, participants prefigured a Memory Made of the emotional connectivity to nature as well as of the value of knowledge of food growing. These practices contribute to building an alternative to the capitalist memory.

Furthermore, several interviews criticised the development of the current food production system. This criticisms included firstly modern agriculture's impacts on biodiversity:

*“We can’t live, as human beings, without nature. For too long, humans have been complacent. You can’t just put fertilisers and grow things, we cannot carry on spraying everything to kill insects, we can’t get rid of what is out there?”*

(vice secretary of Transition Town Ilford, 2022).

The criticisms secondly included the criticism by several interviewees of the distance between the places of production and of consumption of food. Interviewees moreover referred nostalgically to a past where there was a diversity of food types available in supermarkets.

These critiques were categorised as un-making a capitalist memory of the acceptability of the recent development of the food production system justified by profit and productivity motives. Again, these disrupt the capitalist view of progress as linear.

Interviewees mentioned that the past was not discussed collectively, only sometimes on individual bases. Nonetheless, interviews showed that the past is something that was looked back on with nostalgia by members of TTI. One interviewee took inspiration from their childhood experience of the Church and of being in a close family for their views on community and in their community-building activities within TTI. Another referred to past and present smaller scale societies that have had a closer relationship to nature, and how they inspired her, as an anthropologist, in the nature-related projects of TTI such as the Forest Garden project. Another interviewee referred with nostalgia to ways of living before the Industrial Revolution and the growing dependency on oil.

These show that the movement as a whole takes inspiration from the past; this collective inspiration was also explicitly mentioned in interviews. For instance, TTI did a free food festival based on a nostalgic relation to the past of an area in Ilford that used to be an orchard filled with apple and pear trees. Some of those trees stayed but a big part of present inhabitants of the houses that now exist on this location were not picking up these fruits. These fruit were thus collected by TTI and given away in the food festival also in the form of recipes. All these mentioned understandings of the past challenge capitalist norms of idealising the present, as well as challenging capitalist norms through these visions of nature and community that are separate from the capitalist ideology.

#### *b) Future:*

The title of TTI's website, "Building local community in Ilford to promote the wellbeing of all living beings", is anti-capitalist in its central moral concern with humans and biodiversity. Capitalism is concerned with individuals' economic self-interest, above the wellbeing of humans, community, and the planet. Moreover, this title contains a relationality to the future, it describes the present active building of community for a future that respects all life. The website is focused on future visions and solutions to reach this future, with no explicit references to the past.

Many interviewees envisioned a future where everyone learns about plants and growing food and where everyone is able to grow food. This quote illustrates this vision:

*"able to do something like grow your own food. Able to do something like plant something, and for them to fruit... And for a child to be able to pick [...] that plant"*

(Treasurer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022).

The projects 'Growing Food Growing Friends' and the Forest Garden express this future vision. In the first, neighbours are encouraged to interact with one another through collaboratively growing food. In the Forest Garden, everyone is welcome to help out in planting and growing fruits, herbs, nuts, spices, berries, vegetables and edible flowers that they all later will share. The following quote illustrates the embodiment of this future:

*"we have to research plants. And look at which ones thrive in this kind of environment. [...] I've got shaded space, [...] what can I grow here? So it's things that we wouldn't ordinarily eat perhaps. We're learning actually, this is edible. Actually, this plant has a use as a dye, [...] there's a particular flower you can use as a dye. So lots of the things that we're planting have multiple uses."*

(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

The participation of school children in the forest garden project and TTI members' enthusiasm about children's enjoyment of the closeness to nature within the project contribute to building an alternative future. This is one where people of all ages understand and value earth system processes. As the Forest Garden project and the Growing Friends Growing Food project both

aimed to and succeeded in attracting a lot of people that were not part of TTI, these projects were also characterised as cultural politics of Popularisation of a Future Made. These discourses and activities are focused on building an alternative rather than on critiquing.

Closely related to this reconnecting to food is the future vision concerned with reconnecting to neighbours and to the community. On TTI's website, under the heading 'Our vision', the future envisioned is one where everyone is

*"caring for the common good and for our Planet."*

(Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

This unmakes capitalist values and ways of behaving and replaces them with more empathetic, environmental and social justice-oriented values (figure 2). These new values, where sharing is central, are embodied in this statement found on the general flyer in the "About" section of TTI's website:

*"growing fruit, herbs, nuts, spices, berries, vegetables and edible flowers for all to share".*

(Transition Town Ilford, 2022).

This is a core part of TTI's future vision and of its mode of functioning. Here are some statements where members of TTI describe the initiative's purpose:

*"that is one of the ethos of transition towns, to help build community. It's not only about sustainability, [...] it's about creating communities"*

(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

*"we [...] focus on caring for each other, caring for the community"  
"it is about bringing community together"*

(treasurer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022).

The communal aspect through the formation of friendships is for instance central to the 'Growing Food Growing Friends' project. Moreover, the Forest Garden project was described as an outdoor community centre by TTI's coordinator due to its attracting people and drawing people together. This was described emotionally by this member as fulfilling their dream of creating a big environmental community centre. Further, on the flyer on TTI's website a future is described where Ilford community is "connected, resilient and self-reliant", highlighting again the importance of community and solidarity-based values in TTI's future vision. Additionally, it speaks to a future where the local is self-sufficient. Within these expressions of TTI's visions on their website, the audience are members of the Transition Town, as well as individuals interested in local community initiatives, in Ilford transition town and in the transition towns movement. Thus the type of politics that is used here are a weak form of cultural politics of popularisation. What is popularised is the future just described, as well as the unmaking of particular capitalist understandings of society. These core communal aspects of TTI's future vision contributes to



dismantling capitalist ways of being. Capitalist ways of being are disrupted as community and solidarity imply values and ways of behaving directly opposed to those within competitive individualism, which is a concept containing the values and beliefs that drive the capitalist economic and social systems (Wright, 2019). Further, the understanding of community and relationships to friends and neighbours as connected to human wellbeing contribute to disturbing capitalist ways of thinking (figure 2). This new way of thinking is highlighted by interviewees' insistence on the importance of community and by the emotional reference to TTI's communal successes mentioned above. Cultural politics used to reach this Future vision made are firstly Prefigurative: these communal practices are embodied in the way members relate to each other, to interested people and to their neighbours. Moreover, cultural politics that are Popularising of this Future Made are adopted: through the Forest Garden and Growing Food Growing Friends projects and through the advertisement of these projects.

Further, collaboration is central to TTI's future vision. On TTI's website, TTI's vision for the future is described as one where everyone works together on solutions through cooperation. This unmakes capitalist ways of organising, where top-down action as well as individual action are the preference. On TTI's website, the initiative mentions that it hopes to expand its activities to many areas of sustainability as well as hoping to be a:

*"linking group for great community and green projects in Ilford".*

(Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

On their website 14 partners of TTI are listed, which are organisations focused on community-building and on environmental sustainability. These partnerships point to types of cultural politics that are popularising. TTI moreover exchanges with other transition towns and hopes to increase such exchanges in the future, members additionally mentioned that they take inspiration from other transition town's activities. This knowledge exchange, learning, critical reflexivity and openness to change of the initiative is important to prefigurative politics (van de Sande, 2015). This points to their vision of community as a powerful actor for solving sustainability issues; this value placed on the collective is at its core anti-capitalist (figure 2). Thus, in TTI's vision of the future, collaboration is a central actor for sustainability, and TTI embodies this future through its partnerships, as well as through activities aimed at increasing participation in TTI projects and events. This was characterised both as Popularisation and as Prefiguration of a Future Made; and here the focus is clearly on building an alternative for the future rather than on critiquing.

Moreover, the future that is imagined and built is one where societies move away from consumerist and wasteful practices:

*"buy less. Consume less. Waste less [...] Buy only what you need for that time, not buy so much. Fashion is so wasteful"*

(treasurer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

These quotes de-normalise and disrupt the capitalist ideology of comfort and of the reduction of the concept of life satisfaction to a monetary value (Wright, 2019). Connected to a criticism of consumerism, the distance between consumers and the location of production was criticised by interviewees. The waste that systems of production and consumption create is mentioned repeatedly by interviewees, for instance in the following statement:

*“we are against single plastic use [...] how the plastic stays under dirt for hundreds of years. It doesn’t go away, it has a severe and long term impact on our resources and so on”*  
(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

The repair cafe and the initiative’s free food festival directly target this wasteful ideology of the capitalist production system. Furthermore, TTI did an event around plastic waste in their community which was attended by a large number of people, and which they intend to repeat in the future. These practices promote values of limits, balance and sufficiency for the future (figure 2). Due to the wide audience to these events gained through social media advertising and in person networking (coordinator and founder of Transition Town Ilford, 2022), these projects were categorised as Popularisation of a Future Made. The mentioned statements and activities have both a focus on critiquing present practices and on building an alternative.

Finally, awareness is a part of the future sustainable vision of TTI. An interviewee highlighted the awareness-raising goal of TTI in this way:

*“Come together and recognise that we need each other and the planet”*  
(general member of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

The awareness and recognition of the threat of climate change is clearly present on TTI’s website and is embodied within TTI’s claim on its website that Ilford is a:

*“town that recognizes the threats of climate change and is working together on the solutions”*  
(Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

TTI's raising of awareness about the urgency of climate action is done partly through presentations in front of hundreds of children in schools. This is a form of Popularisation of a Memory Unmade: namely the Memory normalised by the common business-as-usual behaviour, that reduces climate change to a threat that is less than existential to human societies and to biodiversity. It is also a form of popularisation of a Future Made where people and communities take responsibility for acting for a sustainable future. Awareness as a part of a sustainable future is also highlighted on TTI's website. Awareness is an important first step toward the building of appropriate sustainable solutions. Some aspects of the modern capitalism culture discourage awareness and instead encourage distance from political issues such as through the Culture Industry (Durao, 2010), thus TTI’s building of a recognition of threats disrupts such capitalist ideology. Methods

used to spread this vision of the future and this unmaking of memory - of the acceptability of being unaware of socio-political issues - are TTI's social media, its Plastic Free Ilford event, its Free food festival event, its Forest Garden event, etc. These all contribute to popularising the awareness of the urgency of acting on climate change. The mentioned discourses and activities illustrate both a focus on critiquing institutions and societies' lack of recognition of the real threats of climate change, as well as on building an alternative.

Lastly, a central goal of TTI that is a part of its future vision is to empower individuals. The purpose is to make them feel they can make a difference to help in sustainable solutions. This is anti-capitalist due to this activity placing the collectivity at its centre (figure 2). Interviewees mention that the socio-economic and political system of modern Western societies has led people to feel powerless in relation to climate change, and that TTI challenges this perception by making the community feel empowered:

*"A lot of people feel almost like, if you're not able to change the mindset of the big companies, what can we do? Whereas they [TTI members] feel [...] empowered. [...] encouraging almost being self-sufficient at the local level"*

(treasurer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

*"not [...] people as an individual, more as a community. Because I think that is where the strength relies really. Because sometimes we can see the individual as, I've got no power to do anything, you know. Whereas as a community is a bit more, because you're bonded. You [...] have a bit more say and autonomy, independence."*

(communications officer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022)

TTI thus is trying to normalise the view that in community there is power to create a sustainable future. This is done through events which have a clear focus on people taking part. Events are advertised both through social media, networking and for instance passerby's for the Forest Garden project are invited to join. When people take part, they take part in doing something for the community and for the planet, this makes them feel like they are able to do something, importantly this also leads people to feel part of the community (communications officer of Transition Town Ilford, 2022). This unmakes capitalist ways of organising and addresses the individualism that was one of the criticisms present within TTI's conception of the past. The alternative future that is here embodied and built is one where communal organising is the norm.

A practice by TTI that illustrates the place of emotion and nature in its practices is an event that was done surrounding the pollution of a local brook. This event aimed to express love for this polluted river; it was advertised on their social media and the local MP was present. This consists cultural politics of Popularisation of a Future Made: in this future, the relationship to nature and to ecological harms is one that is emotional and that recognises these harms.

### 4.3.3. Summary: Environmental and Societal imaginary of Transition Town Ilford

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
<b>Memory TTI</b>	Growing Food Growing Friends: critique isolationism	Growing Food Growing friends: towards enhancing neighbour connectivity, and enhancing connection to nature
	Discourses about current food production methods	Forest Garden Project: advertising on social media + networking in person
	Nostalgic references to communal past; critique in ways of talking about development of society toward individualism	Alternative discourses about nature
	Free food festival	Partnership with Love Food Hate Waste campaign + events together
	Event showing the love for polluted brook + inviting local MP	Event neighbourhood fruits
<b>Future TTI</b>	Awareness and recognition of threat climate change	Empowering individuals and local community
	Moving away from consumerist and wasteful practices	Building awareness and recognition of threats of climate change through school presentations
	Repair cafe	Focus on community-building
		New ways of relating to nature and to food
		Moving away from consumerist and wasteful practices
		Discussions around hopes, frustrations
		Practices focused on collaboration, care, learning from each other
		Skills swapping event
		Repair cafe
		Social media to show and inspire people about what they are doing and get people to join events
		Community energy project
		Alternative discourses about nature
		Embodying this awareness of the real threat and impact of climate change on planet and on all global communities

Figure 14: Table representing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of TTI categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.

On TTI's website, references to inspiration by the past or criticisms of the past are almost absent. Within interviews and TTI's website, there were similar numbers of references to the future and to the past, with slightly more references to the future. This difference is not noteworthy; findings show that TTI engages significantly both with the past and with the future. This is also shown by the critical visual analysis where photos also both engaged with the past and with the future. Nonetheless, interviewees made it clear that the focus is on the future and on doing things for the future, rather than on critiquing the past and present.

A number of criticisms part of TTI members' collective memory are linked to a future vision and to present practices. For instance, the individualism in Ilford community was mentioned a number of times by interviewees with frustration. Ilford's future vision is one where people care for each other and for the community. TTI implements practices in order to create this future and to resolve this tension with the past: the Forest Garden for instance was described by TTI's coordinator as a 'community centre'. Moreover, the disempowerment that is experienced by individuals in modern capitalist economies in relation to the climate and ecological crises and that is highlighted several times by TTI members is addressed by working to make the community feel empowered through different projects. A central part of TTI's future vision is this powerful role of the community in the creation of a sustainable society.

The cultural practices that were most referred to were Prefigurative of a Future, and Popularising of a Memory Made.

The audience to TTI's popularising strategies are members of the local community of Ilford, where TTI aims to raise awareness and get people involved with their projects importantly in order for people to feel more a part of Ilford community.

Furthermore, there were 10 references made to emotions in relation to memory, and 18 references to emotions in relation to the future.

Finally, the initiative was found not to engage in cultural politics of pressure.

## 4.4. Results Grounded

### 4.4.1. Critical Visual Analysis of documents

#### 4.4.1.1. Instagram post of an art exhibition



Figure 15: Instagram post by Grounded advertising their art exhibition 'Creating Landscapes'.

*The site of the image production:* The image represents an Instagram post produced by Grounded on May 13th 2022. It was created to advertise an art exhibition at the Grounded fort in Utrecht. Grounded holds art exhibitions regularly, where the initiative showcases small artists and art connected to sustainability (director of art team of Grounded, 2022).

*The site of the image itself:* The post is composed of a poster for the exhibition as well as a text with information about the art exhibition "Creating Landscapes". This exhibition is an interactive media art exhibition at Fort Lunet 1. It invites guests to "take a trip into strange environments" and to "Make direct contact with plants, animals and other non-human entities" (Figure 15). The poster is composed by blue waters with some fish swimming along, with a contrasting red and purple background where fish also are swimming. Under the water and under the fish, there are two surfaces resembling land separating. On top of this background, the poster reads in big letters "Creating Landscapes", and in smaller letters "Playing with non-human forces", as well as the date and location of the exhibition.

*The site of audiences:* The audience to this post are viewers of Grounded's Instagram: members of the Grounded community, as well as people interested in Grounded or in Grounded

festival. The audience to the exhibition are mostly the members of Grounded, their circle of friends, and local people interested and engaged in sustainability. The overall impression conveyed by the image is that of the harmony, calmness and beauty of nature and of biodiversity. The poster conveys the idea that this will be the topic of the exhibition. The red and purple background contrast this impression. The dark and blood-like colours may be a reference to the ecological crisis. The blue frame in the centre seems to represent the created landscape. The artwork could be interpreted as meaning that the act of creating landscapes provides colours to the otherwise dark blood-red reality of the ecological crisis. The big letters “Creating Landscapes” provides an emphasis on the active role of the audience due to the interactive character of the exhibition.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of the framework adopted in this study, this post uses cultural politics of “Pressure of a Future Made”, “Pressure of a Memory Made”, “Popularisation of a Future Made” and “Popularisation of a Future Made”. The vision of harmony shown as existing in the ocean is a sign of world-views distinct from the norm in capitalist societies due to its concern with non-humans (figure 2). The impression of a disturbance of this harmony by the red points to a critique of the modern society’s relationship to nature. The post is moreover engaging in a weak form of popularisation of the two mentioned visions. The exhibition itself can also be said to engage in the same mentioned cultural politics of prefiguration and of popularisation. The exhibition's activity of popularising does not have a goal to be very widespread, as there is no strategy around reaching people outside circles of friends and local sustainability circles (director of the art team of Grounded, 2022). As most of Grounded’s art exhibitions were described by interviewees as aiming to be “activating”, this points to an engagement with cultural politics of pressure. The idea is that awareness has already been achieved, instead the goal is to engage individuals to change their relation to themselves and to the outside world, toward increasing social and environmental sustainability (director of the art team of Grounded, 2022). This is similar to the idea of activism where art is used for the purpose of activism. The post and exhibition contribute to building an alternative as well as pointing to a critique of the normalisation of extinctions.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the post engages both with the past and future, if the red is interpreted as pointing to the present, past and future extinctions of non-human beings and if the blue centre of the poster is a more harmonious past but also potentially to a future that we could create.

#### *4.4.1.2. Poster advertising Grounded’s Festival*



Figure 16: Poster advertising Grounded's regeneration Festival on the 25th of June 2022.

*Site of the image production:* The image was produced by Grounded with the aim of advertising the initiative's sustainability festival on the 25th of June. The festival focused on celebrating the concept of regeneration through including a range of events that are concerned with healing and regenerating our social and ecological systems. This is a festival that the initiative holds yearly and is at the centre of their activities.

*Site of the image itself:* The image is composed of a background of soothing colours reminding of the sea and of the sun, and of glitter. On top of this background is the title "Grounded Festival" with the date and location of the event. Above the title, there is a drawing of an eye and a moon. Below the title, the music line-up of the festival is listed, as well as the activities and art that will be present at the festival. These are: a clothing swap, ecstatic dance, audio-visual installations, meditation, ethical environmentalism, yoga, kinetic art, and plastic waste art. Grounded is a sustainability festival that is described on the Grounded website as a festival



celebrating regeneration. These listed activities all have some focus on sustainability and regeneration.

*Site of audiences:* The poster is put up on Grounded's Instagram page and all over the city of Utrecht, with the goal of having as many guests to the festival as possible. Therefore, viewers of the image are passerby's on streets of Utrecht, members of Grounded and people interested in Grounded community who view their Instagram page. The impression given to the audience is that of harmony and beauty.

*Cultural politics used:* Among the categories of cultural politics of the framework used in this study, this post engages in "Prefiguration of a Future Made" and "Popularisation of a Future Made". The post prefigures a society where these practices are more common, thus engaging in prefigurative politics of a future that is made. The festival itself engages in cultural politics that are popularising of a future made. The aim of Grounded festival is to have as many guests as possible and this is usually several hundred. The goal of the festival is to showcase and normalise regenerative practices for sustainability. The post and festival are directed toward the future: they are showcasing ways of relating to one another and to the Earth that they are hoping will gradually become the norm in the future, such as through the ethical environmentalism activity listed on the poster. There is a clear emphasis on building an alternative future here; no expression of critique is made.

#### 4.4.2. Discourse Analysis of Website and of Interviews

##### *a) Memory*

Grounded's understanding of the past is vague but nostalgic. There is an expressed longing to returning to old ways of doing things, shown in expressions such as:

*"go back to"*

*"reconnecting"*

*"remake everything a bit more simple"*

(member of the sustainability team of Grounded, 2022).

The past is understood vaguely as a past where things were more simple. Modernity is viewed as having made things too complex. Solutions to the climate and ecological crises are not to be found in new technologies, but instead are simple and have already been created (member of sustainability team of Grounded, 2022). Thereby, lessons on creating a sustainable future that we want are to be found in the past and in solutions and technologies that already exist. The past as a source of inspiration and of solutions disrupts the capitalist understanding of history where the

past is seen as less developed than the present. The memory un-made is that of history as following a linear progress. The cultural politics used to express this understanding of the past are mostly prefigurative but also popularising; examples of this building of an alternative memory are described below.

Within the current food system, the multitude of actors involved - producer, distributor, consumer - is described as too complex and unnecessary. Grounded addresses this by collaborating with a range of partners to create a local short food supply chain. An interviewee explained that they are actively involved in the food transition plan of the Netherlands, that they are partner number 5 on the regional level of this plan, and partner number 7 on the national level of this food transition plan, as well as European level partner number 35. This was characterised as cultural politics of popularisation of this memory of a simpler food production system. Activities are popularising because these partnerships highlight a goal of popularising this understanding of food production and consumption.

An action that is described by several members of Grounded as contributing immensely to a sustainable future and which can be understood as “simple” is the act of connecting again with people around us in our community. Some statements in interviews show an understanding of the past as shaped by people being more connected to each other. This is shown for instance in the following quote:

*“where we could just go back to the old system [...] Reconnecting with [...] our neighbours”*  
(member of the sustainability team of Grounded, 2022).

Re-nourishing communal values and engaging in community-building are central to Grounded's activities, therefore this memory of the loss of communal values in modern societies appears to be important for the initiative. Grounded's discourse expresses the importance that is placed on community for facilitating the wellbeing of society. For instance, it is stated on Grounded's website that Grounded “connects people” and “stimulates connection”. This valorisation of past communal behaviours disrupts capitalist values where the importance of individuals and of individuals' economic successes is placed above that of communal behaviours and above the wellbeing of the community (Wright, 2019). The memory that is made is that of a development of society toward a loss of communal values. Cultural politics used to express this vision are prefigurative: the initiative embodies these alternative values for example through its incredibly welcoming character to all new people, through its decision-making focused on equality and giving a voice to all, and through the activities of Grounded's awareness-team focused on ensuring that all races, gender identities and sexualities are respected, recognised, and cared for in the community (director of art team of Grounded, 2022; member of the Awareness team of Grounded, 2022).

Interviewees moreover expressed nostalgia about a past where people were more

connected to the soil and to the Earth. This is shown in the following quote:  
*“where we could just go back to the old system [...] Reconnecting with [...] our ground, with everything that surrounds us”*

(member of the sustainability team of Grounded, 2022).

It was expressed several times in interviews that Grounded wants people to connect to the ground and to, as in old days, have knowledge of Earth's processes. This knowledge was described as something most of us have lost. Gardening and planting things are seen as simple acts due to the abilities of nature:

*“Sure, gardening can be very complex in terms of which plant goes with what, and the interactions between the different elements. But planting a flower, is still a very simple action. If you choose your flower well, nature will do the rest.”*

(member of the sustainability team of Grounded, 2022).

To express this vision, one important activity of Grounded is its organic community garden. As there are no clear strategies of increasing users of the community garden on Grounded's social media or website and given that the community garden seems to mostly be attended by some of Grounded's members who number around 200, the community garden can be described as an activity that prefigures this memory of connecting to the earth and of knowing about plants and ecosystems. Nonetheless, Grounded also uses Popularising strategies to spread this Future vision that is made: members holds workshops in schools on growing vegetables.

Moreover, Grounded expressed nostalgia about a past where the vegetables on our plates were more diverse. Grounded builds a critique of the development of capitalism with its prioritisation of productivity over the loss of biodiversity. An interviewee mentioned the wide biodiversity of fruit that is absent from supermarkets, for instance that we only find 5 varieties of apples in supermarkets whilst 400 of them could grow in the Netherlands. Grounded's community garden resists the de-valuing of biodiversity, as they only plant what they call “forgotten veggies” which are vegetables which are not productive or attractive enough to the capitalist system to make it to supermarket shelves. In the community garden, they additionally plant other non-conventional plants such as stinging nettles for cooking and medicinal herbs in their community garden, alternative practices that are inspired by societies of the past. They moreover un-make this de-valuation of biodiversity through trying to use as many “rescued veggies” - vegetables that have or will be thrown away - in their catering. Grounded's discourse and activities disturb the capitalist ideology of viewing nature as a mere resource infinitely available to humans for growing capitalist economies. For example, one of Grounded's bands raps about vegetables in order to show their love for vegetables: this is a weak form of popularisation of the un-making of the capitalist memory that devalues nature.

## *b) Future*

The future is at the core of Grounded's activities and discourse. The initiative situates itself in the present as having started to build a transition toward the future that they want. Grounded's website explains this clearly in this statement:

*"the people at Grounded have realised that the transition to a sustainable society is something we can start together, today".*

(Grounded, 2022)

The type of future Grounded is working to build is one that is not just sustainable but also regenerative. To regenerate culture is understood as both healing culture and systems as well as improving them (member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022). This is applied both to physical things, for instance the healing of the soil; as well as to social structures, where this regeneration is understood as creating stronger connections between people and more diversity (member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022). The concept of regeneration expresses a future vision shaped by urgency and disrupts and contributes to developing a critique the capitalist understanding of sustainability which focuses on securing continued economic growth whilst searching for technological solutions to solve environmental problems thereby un-making a future (Hickel, 2018). The changes conceptualised within regenerative understandings of sustainability are much more transformative. Grounded disrupts the capitalist understanding through strategies of prefiguration, popularisation and of pressure described below.

Grounded engages in popularising politics through collaborating with a range of actors. Interviewees mentioned that they are working for their regenerative community model to be replicable to other countries as they believe that more community centres like theirs are necessary around the world. To achieve this, to be recognised as an institution, there is a requirement to have many parties involved with them, as it proves the reliability of the organisation. Therefrom, Grounded works with the municipality, with Utrecht University, with HKU, and with other organisations in order to be validated by these institutions. These are forms of popularisation because Grounded has a clear view on its goal and its strategy to reach this goal involves activities of spreading knowledge about methods of regeneration; this moreover helps to build an alternative for the future.

Futhermore, food is one of the three areas of focus of Grounded. Changing our relationship to food is seen as incredibly important for creating a sustainable transition, shown in this quote:

*"we believe that food is our relation to nature, to the soil, to our surroundings. But food is also a cultural thing, it also brings people together. This is what we want to teach people about the*

*real value, how you can make impact in your region through food. So that's why these workshops are also quite a lot centred around gardening, and around food."*

(member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022).

Thereby, food is seen as a way for people to connect to each other and to nature, and as a way to regenerate systems including the social system. This includes a destabilisation of the capitalist devalorisation of nature and of communal practices. Grounded is actively involved within the Netherlands' food transition plan, it is partnering up with local farmers, companies and initiatives with the goal of building short food supply chains, such as with Local2Local. This contributes to popularising alternative methods of food production. With their community garden, Grounded aims to highlight the diversity within their local context. Grounded caters food for guests at its location, which consists in locally grown and sustainable food. In these two practices, Grounded engages in prefiguration of this vision of the role of food in a sustainable future, and helps build an alternative for the future.

The second area of focus of Grounded is education. Grounded teaches children about gardening and growing vegetables in workshops within schools. Interviewees spoke of the value of inspiring kids through making them put their hands in the soil. Education is moreover provided about the source of products that Grounded serves to guests - which consists in locally grown and sustainable food. Grounded is also building future workshops about sustainable food. These educative activities contribute to popularise the future that Grounded imagines where knowledge and connection to plants and sustainable sources of food is common. One core area of education within Grounded's activities are awareness-related activities done by the awareness team of Grounded. This team focuses on teaching people about harmful systems of domination within our societies such as sexism and racism. This work connects to Grounded's view that healing our social systems is essential for regeneration. The values of solidarity, respect and care for all identities here normalised are distinct from the values promoted in the capitalist ideology, thereby contributing to popularising an alternative future (figure 2). This act both builds an alternative and develops a critique to the capitalist ideology.

Art is the third area of focus of Grounded. Grounded hosts art exhibitions which are mostly centred on Grounded's themes of social and environmental sustainability. For some exhibitions, these themes are explored and expressed with the goal of "*activating*" people to change their relationship to themselves, to their environment, to nature, and to sustainability (art director of Grounded, 2022). This points to cultural politics of pressure, as mentioned (See 4.4.1.1.). An example is a workshop that was done on zoonomic corporations that taught people methods to make ecology into a legal entity and allowed people to engage with the researcher in these ideas. Here, the goal of defending nature from capitalist exploitation that are causing ecological and climate disasters builds pressure for an anti-capitalist transition. Thus this constitutes cultural politics of Pressure of a Future Unmade. Some other of Grounded's exhibitions and art projects

were categorised as using cultural politics of popularisation as their focus was on spreading certain concepts and making people reflect on certain ideas, such as the impacts of urbanisation. Grounded's art projects both develop a critique and actively contribute to building an alternative to the societies we live in.

Emotions are central to Grounded's creation of a regenerative sustainable community and to its future vision. The term "fun" was used repeatedly both on Grounded's website and by members of Grounded to describe the process of creating a future sustainable society. The festival is described as a "celebration" of a tangible sustainable culture. Repeated statements about the importance of touching the ground and "connecting" point to an understanding of emotionality as important for Grounded. Moreover, interviewees mentioned that discussions about successes and failures and hopes for the initiative are a regular occurrence that is seen as crucial for the functioning of the initiative, highlighting a concern with discussing emotions. Additionally, it is stated on Grounded's website that a significant impact of their activities is to have "*given us more well-being*" (Grounded, 2022). This connects to Grounded's relation to social sustainability: members view their common goal as the regeneration both of their ecological and social systems (Grounded, 2022), one is not more important than the other and solutions to one are also solutions to the other. For instance, dismantling sexism, racism, and other structures of oppression, fixing the social system and culture, is seen as essential to solving environmental issues. A member of Grounded explains that:

*"creating a more sustainable society also adds more value to life. [...] it creates better social relationships and more reflection, fulfilment"*

(member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022).

This focus on emotions and human wellbeing disturbs capitalist ideology where productivity and economic growth is valued above human wellbeing, human enjoyment and above human flourishing (figure 2). The cultural politics used to spread this message are prefigurative when these alternative values are embodied in members' discourses and behaviours, and popularising in the Awareness team's work to spread these ideas and in events that are shaped by social sustainability goals. These activities contribute to building an alternative for the future.

This links closely to Grounded's views on the essential role of community to create a sustainable future: the power of "we" is one of the core values of Grounded (member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022). Community is central both to building this future and it is a central element of the future that Grounded collectively imagines. The future that is imagined is viewed as something that can be started "together, today" (Grounded, 2022). Grounded is very welcoming to new people and to new ideas for projects from anyone. The initiative sees itself as a space that can support and facilitate the development of different sustainability projects: this puts a value on each person and makes them feel empowered. The initiative views itself as "giving

people the opportunity to create value-based initiatives” (Grounded, 2022). This goal of empowering the community above corporations and powerful capitalist institutions challenges capitalist structures in our society. That community will be the central element enabling the creation of an anti-capitalist future independent from harmful institutions is here expressed:

*“For Grounded, it’s [community] the most fundamental thing we are, the collection of our shared ambitions, basically, and [...] the fact that we all have these diverse skills that are able to support each other and help each other out in creating new projects or initiatives [...] can we have enough trusted people around us to make us independent of these institutions?”*

(member of the legal team of Grounded, 2022).

Most Grounded projects and activities are prefigurative of this future where the community is empowered. Strategies to increase the size of the Grounded community are limited, this is mostly done through word of mouth, thereby the community consists mostly of circles of friends and connected circle of friends. This can be interpreted as a weak form of popularisation. Within the Telegram chat and in combination with clothing swaps events, an alternative type of economy shaped by solidarity-based values has been developing members exchange and give away bikes, rooms, furniture and clothes. The subsequent activities of consumption have no ecological footprint and create values that are absent from monetary-based exchanges. This activity uses a weak type of popularisation of these alternative values and economy to capitalism.

Grounded’s adopts alternative modes of organising that challenge capitalist norms. The community is 100% volunteer-run, this disrupts capitalist modes of organising and the capitalist logic of ascribing value only to monetary activities. Equality is central to Grounded’s organisation and sustainable vision as the initiative adopts a holocratic mode of decision-making and organisation. This is a de-centralised type of governance structure where there is an equal distribution of power between self-organised groups (art director of Grounded, 2022). This challenges the top-down authority present in traditional and typical hierarchical corporate culture models. According to interviewees, holocracy in many ways gives more power to the voice of members of the initiative as it relies on the autonomous decision-making of the different groups, as well as avoiding the incrementality of their previous consensus-based decision-making. The values of equality and diversity promoted by this type of decision-making challenge capitalist values and typical capitalist modes of organising. Socio-economic inequalities is a characteristic feature of capitalist societies because the capitalist system creates a sharp inequality between owners of capital and those who do not own capital, which further leads to exploitation and thereby the rich being rich due to the poor being poor (Wright, 2019). This shows that capitalism depends on some level of neglect of the value of equality. Here the disruption of this capitalist logic is embodied in methods of organising thereby making use of cultural politics of prefiguration and contributing to building an alternative future.

#### 4.4.3. Summary: Grounded's Environmental and Societal Imaginary

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
<b>Memory Grounded</b>	Community garden and planting of forgotten vegetables	Non-conventional gardening practices
	Discourses about current food system	Workshops on gardening in schools
		Alternative discourses about nature
		Band rapping about their love for vegetables: new ways of looking at nature and food
<b>Future Grounded</b>		Art exhibitions on ecology, extinctions, systems of oppression
	Art exhibitions on ecology and extinctions	Collaboration with partners to create a short food supply chain
	Awareness team of Grounded	Workshops on gardening in schools
		Activities centred on human emotions and wellbeing
		Holocratic decision-making
		Art exhibitions on ecology, extinctions, systems of oppression
		Awareness team of Grounded: dismantling sexism, racism
		Focus on community and empowerment of individuals' ideas through community
		Clothing swap and signal chat alternative economy
		Grounded Festival on regeneration
		Showing people that they can do things with little: empowerment
		Band rapping about their love for vegetables
		Discussions around feelings projects, future hopes
		Spreading idea that we need regeneration: idea of urgency
		Partnerships in order to create other similar communities abroad and make Grounded a replicable model
		Practices of care, support
		Openness to all new ideas

Figure 17: Table representing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of Grounded categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.

Grounded refers significantly more to its future than to its past, with only 10% of total references to cultural politics related to the initiative's collective memory. Nonetheless, there is a clear presence of memory within the initiative's statements. This is shown by the use of terms like "reconnecting" with the soil and with each other within descriptions of Grounded's future vision, which shows an inspiration from the past within their relation to the future.

Cultural politics of pressure was found to be used by the initiative in relation to its understanding of the future. The critical visual analysis and interviews identified the use of art for activist purposes.

The cultural politics most used by Grounded in its temporal relationship to the past and future was popularisation with 95 references to popularisation, 69 references to prefiguration, and 8 references to pressure. One interviewee explained that two central activities of Grounded as inspiring and empowering people: this explains the initiative's focus on popularising and prefigurative politics. Repeated usage of terms like "experimentation", "trying", "practices" and "showing" highlight Grounded's engagement with prefiguration.

Popularising strategies are weak. The targeted audience of Grounded is the alternative scene of Utrecht which is most often already interested in sustainability, and only secondly some of the



wider Utrecht community. A lot of the advertisement is done through word of mouth and through the initiative's Telegram chat - made up of 200 the members of Grounded and people related to Grounded - thereby exhibitions and events are attended by majoritarily Grounded members, their circle of friends, and people interested in sustainability in Utrecht.

#### 4.5. Comparison of Results

Themes	ACU	Land Van Aine	Transition Town Ilford	Grounded
Nostalgia about a past where people were more connected to each other		X	X	X
Nostalgia about a past where people were more connected with and knowledgeable about nature		X	X	X
Development of the Western capitalist system has negatively impacted human wellbeing	X	X	X	X
Urgency is a part of their utopian practices and future envisioning		X	X	X
Alternative modes of organising and of decision-making as important for the future	X	X		X
Art as important for change in society, for making people reflect	X			X
Empowerment of individuals and community as important for creating the envisioned future	X		X	X
Connecting with nature as important for the future		X	X	X
Communal values as important for the future	X	X	X	X

Figure 18: Table representing common themes between all four initiatives' visions of the past and future.

Many views and themes are shared between initiatives, as can be seen on Figure 18. The absence of practices and discourses by ACU on reconnecting with nature as important for the future shows its central focus on social sustainability. All initiatives express the opinion that communal and solidarity values of care, mutual respect, and sharing are important for the future they envision. The figure also shows that ACU, LVA and Grounded engage in non-conventional forms of organising and decision-making, these were described in interviews as important strategies for the respective initiatives' goals. This experimentation with new forms of political organisation shows their distance from representative politics. Art was moreover perceived as important for creating the envisioned change in society by two of the initiatives, ACU and Grounded, shown in their discourses and in a range of art and music events which they were involved with. Finally, the

empowerment of the community and of individuals was an important part of creating change for the envisioned future for ACU, TTI, and Grounded.

Emotions were often present when members of the four initiatives made statements about memory, and even more frequently when members made references to the future. This can be seen on figure 19.

	ACU references	Land Van Aine references	Transition Town Ilford references	Grounded references
<b>Total Prefiguration</b>	27	92	71	79
<b>Percentage Prefiguration</b>	46.5%	90.2%	57.7%	49.1%
<b>Total Popularisation</b>	31	12	51	78
<b>Percentage Popularisation</b>	53.4%	11.8%	41.5%	48.5%
<b>Total Pressure</b>	0	0	0	7
<b>Percentage Pressure</b>	0%	0%	0%	4.4%
<b>Total Memory</b>	30	25	56	19
<b>Percentage Memory</b>	51.7%	24.5%	45.5%	10.6%
<b>Total Future</b>	28	77	67	142
<b>Percentage Future</b>	45.3%	75.5%	54.5%	89.3%
<b>Total references to cultural politics</b>	58	102	123	161
<b>Emotion in relation to Memory</b>	12	9	10	2
<b>Emotion in relation to Future</b>	6	20	18	22

*Figure 19: Figure representing total and percentages of references to prefiguration, popularisation and pressure for each initiative.*

With regards to the initiatives' relations to the past and future, figure 18 shows that ACU is the only of the four initiatives with more references to cultural politics related to its collective memory than to cultural politics related to the future. The critical visual analysis also showed this dominance of memory and of critique for ACU. TTI also engaged significantly with memory (figure 18). The figure shows that Grounded and LVA engage noticeably more with the future within their cultural practices than with the past, also shown in the critical visual analyses for both initiatives. The critical visual analysis also showed a focus on the future for both the initiatives. These observations are moreover confirmed by the listed cultural practices within each category found in Appendix Z.

Figure 18 additionally shows that LVA is the initiative with the highest percentage of cultural politics of prefiguration. The critical visual analysis also showed for LVA a dominance of prefigurative politics, with also some use of weak form of politics of popularisation.

In terms of percentages, ACU, TTI and Grounded, engage similarly with prefiguration and popularisation. Nonetheless, the listed practices for the three initiatives found in the Appendix show that TTI and Grounded engage with a significantly larger number of practices that are prefigurative and popularising than ACU.

Finally, the initiatives were found to engage very little with cultural politics of pressure. Grounded is the only of the initiatives that engages with pressure within its cultural practices, though only to a small extent.

Within Figure 19 and Figure 20, some practices fit in both categories of activities focused on developing a critique and activities focused on building an alternative. An example are ACU's posters on gentrification and the housing crisis which criticise a past development of capitalism and contribute to educating and inspiring in a way that supports change for an alternative future. Moreover, in the categorisation of findings, some practices fit both into future focused and memory focused categories.

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
<b>Memory ACU</b>	References to and relationship to squatting+ education about squatting through website& posters	Posters on gentrification and housing crisis
	Free dinners with dumpster food: criticism of food waste	
	Free library	
	Volunteer-run and not seeking profits: critique power of big corporations and incentives of organisations in capitalist system	
	Posters on gentrification and housing crisis	
	Tags and graffiti inside: anti-racism, anti-sexism, anti-police	
<b>Future ACU</b>	Critique of food waste (free dinners) + waste (free shop)	Solidarity kitchen + only serving vegan food
		Alternative mode of organising: volunteer run & anarchist
		Community-building practices, hosting and advertising anti-capitalist groups
		Free library, political discussions: awareness and education as the norm
		Hosting bands expressing revolutionary messages
<b>Memory LVA</b>	Critique individualism in speech	Permaculture workshops and rituals
	Website criticising consumerism and pursuit of happiness in consumerism & short term thinking of governments	
	Embodying critique of tie between Western lifestyle and increasing loneliness and unhappiness	
<b>Future LVA</b>	Embodying new views on personal responsibility	Participatory sociocratic mode of organising
		Self sufficiency practices & ecological practices: solar panels, heating system etc
		Workshops on permaculture
		Communal practices and communal values
		Way of council method of discussion and listening
		Facilitating space for consciousness growth, personal development, healing, transformation
		Exchange knowledge and experience with other intentional communities in NL and Europe and creating open source info about ecological living to inspire others
		Using social media and newsletter to spread awareness about what the eco-village is doing
		Alternative schooling practices for children

Figure 20: Table comparing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of ACU

and LVA categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.

	Activities focused on developing a critique	Activities focused on building an alternative
<b>Memory TTI</b>	Growing Food Growing Friends: critique isolationism	Growing Food Growing friends: towards enhancing neighbour connectivity, and enhancing connection to nature
	Discourses about current food production methods	Forest Garden Project: advertising on social media + networking in person
	Nostalgic references to communal past; critique in ways of talking about development of society toward individualism	Alternative discourses about nature
	Free food festival	Partnership with Love Food Hate Waste campaign + events together
	Event showing the love for polluted brook + inviting local MP	Event neighbourhood fruits
<b>Future TTI</b>	Awareness and recognition of threat climate change	Empowering individuals and local community
	Moving away from consumerist and wasteful practices	Building awareness and recognition of threats of climate change through school presentations
	Repair cafe	Focus on community-building
		New ways of relating to nature and to food
		Moving away from consumerist and wasteful practices
		Discussions around hopes, frustrations
		Practices focused on collaboration, care, learning from each other
		Skills swapping event
		Repair cafe
		Social media to show and inspire people about what they are doing and get people to join events
		Community energy project
		Alternative discourses about nature
<b>Memory Grounded</b>	Community garden and planting of forgotten vegetables	Non-conventional gardening practices
	Discourses about current food system	Workshops on gardening in schools
		Alternative discourses about nature
		Band rapping about their love for vegetables: new ways of looking at nature and food
<b>Future Grounded</b>		Art exhibitions on ecology, extinctions, systems of oppression
	Art exhibitions on ecology and extinctions	Collaboration with partners to create a short food supply chain
	Awareness team of Grounded	Workshops on gardening in schools
		Activities centred on human emotions and wellbeing
		Holocratic decision-making
		Art exhibitions on ecology, extinctions, systems of oppression
		Awareness team of Grounded: dismantling sexism, racism
		Focus on community and empowerment of individuals' ideas through community
		Clothing swap and signal chat alternative economy
		Grounded Festival on regeneration
		Showing people that they can do things with little: empowerment
		Band rapping about their love for vegetables
		Discussions around feelings projects, future hopes
		Spreading idea that we need regeneration: idea of urgency
		Partnerships in order to create other similar communities abroad and make Grounded a replicable model
		Practices of care, support
		Openness to all new ideas

Figure 21: Table comparing memory-related cultural activities and future-related cultural activities of TTI and Grounded categorised into activities focused on developing a critique, and activities focused on building an alternative.

The graphs seen on figures 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 27 are based on each initiative's listed practices in the Appendix and on the percentages on figure 18. Firstly, the graph on Figure 22 shows that for the small sample of initiatives studied, initiatives that engaged a lot with cultural politics of making and unmaking also engaged significantly with cultural politics of popularisation and/or pressure. Furthermore, the graph on figure 24 shows that for the initiatives studied, the

more the initiative engaged with cultural politics of un-making and making, the more likely they were to engage significantly with the future.

When looking at the critical visual analyses and discourse analyses, as well as the findings on Figure 19 and Figure 20, some observations can be made with regards to the relationship between memory and future for the initiatives, and between developing critiques and building alternatives.

Firstly, the critique of a memory is often connected to the development of a particular aspect of initiatives' future visions. For instance, TTI's view on the isolationism created by the development of the modern society, as well as members' nostalgia about some aspects of the past, led to TTI's engagement with practices such as the Forest Garden and Growing Friends Growing Food projects that build a future where communal values are seen as important. Here the initiative's vision of the past helps provide a complete understanding of the initiative's visions for the future. This seems to indicate that a critique of the past facilitates the development of an alternative future vision. Furthermore, this points to the critique of memory enabling to critique a capitalist future.

Secondly, adding on this point, the critique of a memory links to prefigurative practices that build an alternative to this which then enable the development of an alternative vision for the future. For example, LVA develops a critique of the impact of the development of individualism in Western societies. LVA moreover engages in prefigurative practices that challenge these individualistic values, such as its way of council focused on listening, as well as its sociocratic form of governance. These practices contribute to developing an alternative for the future, from which aspects of the initiative's vision for an anti-capitalist future can be deduced. This seems to indicate that critiques of the past facilitate prefigurative practices and the development of alternative visions for the future.

Thirdly, popularisation is more used in order to spread future visions, rather than criticisms or understandings of the past for initiatives other than ACU. Examples of such methods of popularisation are art exhibitions, social media, workshops on gardening, presentations in schools.

Fourthly, prefigurative practices are sometimes linked to nostalgic understandings of the past. For instance, Grounded expressed nostalgia about past connections to nature. The initiative was found to engage in prefigurative and popularising practices centred on connectivity to nature. Part of the future envisioned by Grounded is one where people reconnect to nature.

Figures 19 and 20 show the list of practices for all initiatives categorised within activities focused on developing a critique of a memory and of a future, and activities focused on building an alternative memory or an alternative future.

Finally, the age of members of the different initiatives impacted initiatives' conceptualisations of the past. LVA and TTI were the two initiatives with members from older

generations. As some families live at LVA, some members are children who were not interviewed, some members are over 35 years old, and the average age of members was +50 years old. For TTI, the average age of members was +50 years old. For ACU and Grounded, the average age of members was a younger generation, with members between 20 and 30 years old. It was found that when asked about the past, members of LVA and TTI spoke of lived experiences and had more individual understandings of the past that could be grouped under categories such as "nostalgic references to the past". For the initiatives made up of younger generations, references to the past were more generalised and less personal.

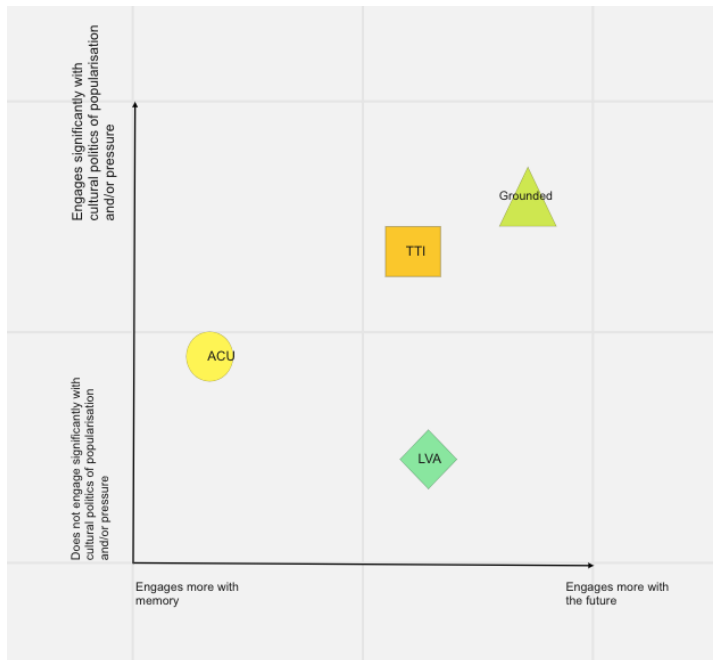


Figure 22: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' engagement with cultural politics of popularisation and pressure and their stronger engagement with memory or with the future.

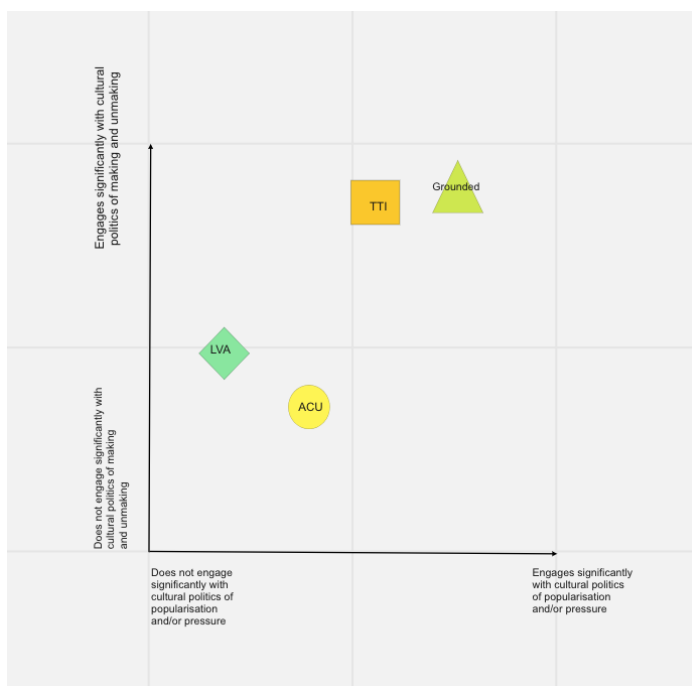


Figure 23: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' engagement with politics of making and unmaking capitalism, and their engagement with cultural politics of popularisation and pressure.

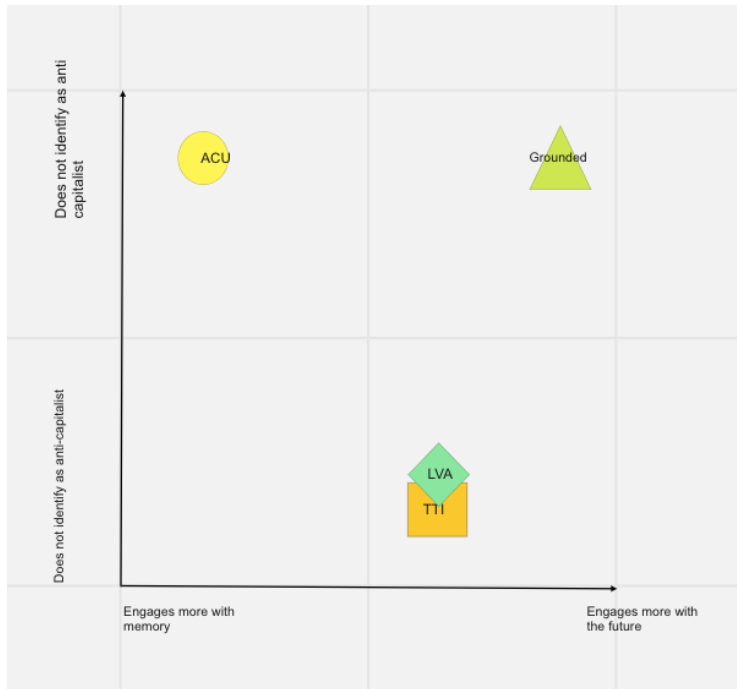


Figure 24: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' identification as anti-capitalist, and their stronger engagement with memory or with the future.

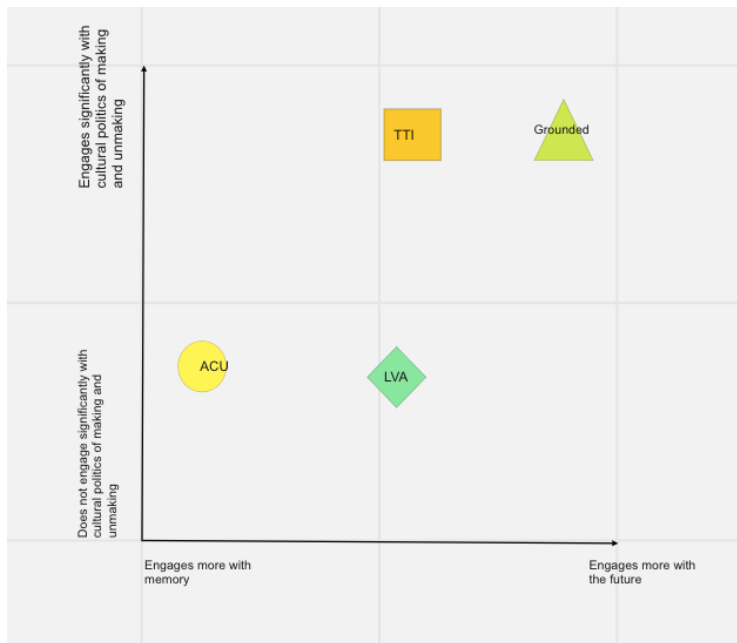


Figure 25: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' engagement with cultural politics of making and unmaking capitalism, and their stronger engagement with memory or with the future.



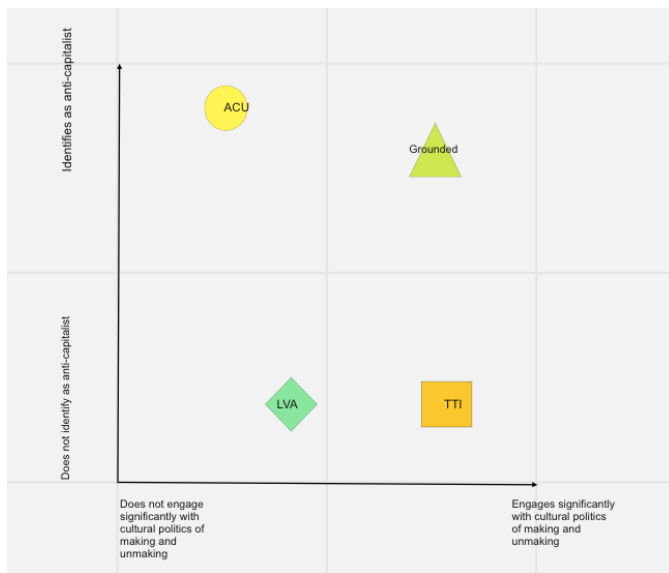


Figure 26: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' identification with anti-capitalism, and their engagement with cultural politics of making and unmaking capitalism.

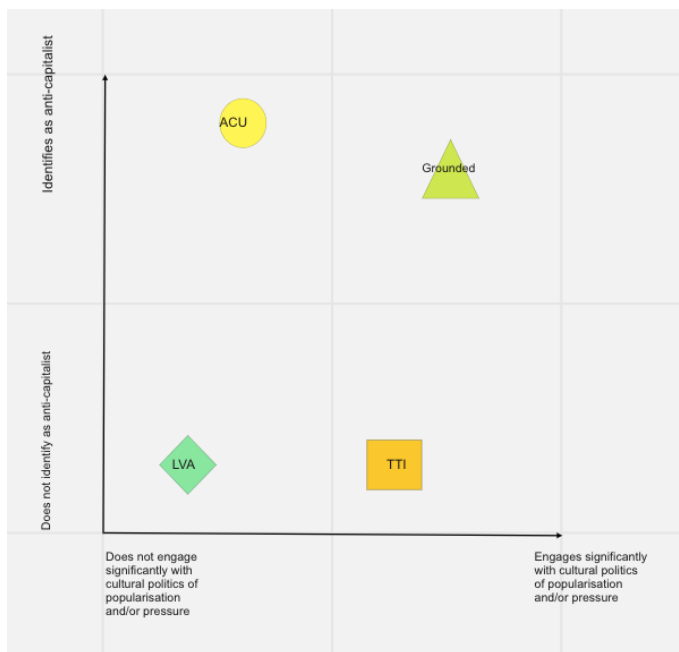


Figure 27: Graph representing relationship between initiatives' identification with anti-capitalism, and their engagement with cultural politics of popularisation and pressure.

## 5. Discussion

Below, the main findings of this study are firstly briefly summarised by linking them to the three research sub questions.

Secondly, the implications of the findings of this research are detailed. To do this, these findings are discussed in relation to literature under the following central themes of this research: the role of culture for sustainability, initiatives' engagements with un-making capitalism, initiatives' cultural uses of prefiguration and popularisation, initiatives' lacking use of cultural politics of pressure, initiatives' engagement with collective memory, initiatives' engagement with future visions, and the relationship between initiatives' cultural engagement with collective memory and with the future. Implications and questions raised are elaborated upon.

Secondly, the value and limitations of the research are described. This is followed by a discussion on further research that would complement the findings of this research.

### 5.1. Summary of findings

Main Findings	
1	Many themes are shared between initiatives
2	Clear and significant use of cultural politics of making& unmaking by studied initiatives
3	Initiatives that engaged a lot with cultural politics of making& unmaking engaged a lot with cultural politics of popularisation and/or pressure
4	Initiatives that engaged a lot in cultural politics of unmaking also engaged a lot in cultural practices that related to the future
5	All initiatives engage in politics of popularisation, LVA the least
6	Popularisation more used in order to spread future visions rather than in relation to visions of the past
7	Cultural politics of pressure is almost not used by initiatives, only used by Grounded
8	Critique of memory often linked to prefigurative practices that build an alternative which enable development of an alternative future vision
9	Prefigurative practices of futures sometimes linked to nostalgic understandings of the past
10	Nature played an important role in 3 of the 4 studied initiatives' societal and environmental imaginary
11	Critique of memory often connected to the development of a particular aspect of initiative's future vision
12	Age of members affects initiatives' collective memory
13	Emotions present within visions of memory and future
14	All studied initiatives engaged significantly with prefiguration
15	Presence of clear utopian visions for 3 of the 4 initiatives

Figure 28: Table representing main findings from the Results.

A summary of findings is shown in Figure 28 above.

The first sub-question of this research was:

*What are the visions of the past and future present in these initiatives and how do they relate to each other?*

Responding to this question, the first important finding of the research (finding 1) is that many themes are shared between initiatives' visions of the past and future. These are visible on Figure 18.

Another significant finding is that nature played a significant role in most of the studied initiatives' societal and environmental imaginaries (finding 10).

Moreover, it was found that the age of members affected initiatives' collective memory (finding 12). This was based on interview analyses and data on the demographics of members of initiatives.

Furthermore, another crucial important finding was the presence of emotions within visions of the past and future of all the four initiatives (finding 13).

Finally, the last finding that helps answer this research question is the presence of clear utopian visions for three of the four initiatives studied (finding 15).

The second sub-question of this research was:

*What cultural politics are used by the initiatives to engage with memories of the past and with future visions?*

The first important finding that helps provide an answer to this question is the finding that all studied initiatives engage in cultural politics of popularisation (finding 5). LVA was the initiative that engaged the least with cultural politics of popularisation.

Another key finding of the research that helps answer this question is the finding that cultural politics of pressure was almost not used by initiatives (finding 7). Only one initiative (Grounded) was found to engage in this type of cultural politics.

Another finding that relates to this sub-question is the finding that prefigurative practices of futures sometimes were linked to nostalgic understandings of the past (finding 9).

A third significant finding that helps answer this question is the finding that all initiatives engage significantly with cultural politics of prefiguration (finding 14).

The third sub-question of this research was:

*Are cultural politics used to unmake capitalist memories of the past and/or capitalist visions of the future?*

The first important finding that helps answer this question is the finding that there was a clear and significant use of cultural politics by the studied grassroots initiatives (finding 2).

A second key finding that helps answer this question is the finding that initiatives that engaged a lot in cultural politics of unmaking capitalist memories and futures and making post-capitalist futures and memories also engaged a lot with cultural politics of popularisation and/ or pressure (finding 3).

Another crucial finding that helps provide an answer to this question is the finding that grassroots initiatives that engaged a lot with cultural politics of unmaking were also found to engage significantly with cultural practices that relate to the future (finding 4).

Another key finding was that popularisation was more used in order to spread future visions rather than in relation to visions of the past (finding 6).

A further important finding related to this sub-question was that critiques of memory were related to particular prefigurative practices which build alternatives that seemed to enable the development of alternative future visions (finding 8).

A final key finding that helps answer this question is the finding that the critique of memory connected to the development of a particular aspect of initiatives' future visions (finding 11).

## 5.2. Implications of findings

### *a. Role of culture*

The present study explored the role of past and future visions for anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives, with core implications about the role of culture for their anti-capitalist goals. It was found that the four studied initiatives make significant uses of cultural politics for their political purposes (finding 2 on Figure 28). This relates to the premise of this research that large-scale systemic societal change is indispensable for resolving the climate and ecological crises we face (Meissner, 2021). We can interpret the finding that the initiatives make significant political uses of culture as meaning that each initiative perceives changing culture - values, ways of thinking, being, talking, feeling - as an important part of their work for creating their desired post-capitalist utopian world. What the initiatives target within the studied practices is a cultural shift at several different scales for the different initiatives. These scales can be seen as the different audiences that their practices aim to influence.

Culture was found to be used in a wide variety of ways as a tool for the achievement of the studied grassroots initiatives' political goals. Some of the initiatives engage with art, such as

through popularising music bands that express revolutionary views (see Appendix 2), or through an art exhibition about humans' relations to nature aiming to activate people to act on the crises we face. Most of the studied initiatives engage with practices aimed at shifting values, such as an event expressing people's love for a polluted local brook, or through the production of communal values within their collective through developing habits of sharing and learning from each other. One last example showing the wide spectrum of cultural practices identified is the use of rituals surrounding nature. This demonstrates the active and versatile role played by culture for anti-capitalist futures (Meissner, 2021). Given the prefigurative character of the four grassroots, this further demonstrates prefiguration as a holistic approach to progressive social change, as described by Monticelli (2021).

#### *b. Initiatives' engagements with unmaking capitalism*

Again, with regards to finding (2) (figure 28), the four initiatives made clear and significant uses of culture to unmake capitalism. Figures 19 and Figure 20 highlight the simultaneous critique and building of alternatives which is performed. For example, LVA critiques individualism in members' ways of talking and within discourses on the initiatives' website, whilst the initiative also engages in a non-conventional method for some group conversations called way of council. In this method, active and effective listening is a central focus and thereby builds an alternative to a perceived lack in communal values. This identified simultaneous critique and building of alternatives is characteristic of utopian communities (Casey et al. 2020).

Findings show that the studied grassroots initiatives are not focused on innovations but on deconstructing existing configurations and regimes and on disrupting capitalist ways of thinking, being and organising (Feola et al. 2021b; Shove and Walker, 2007). There are a number of examples from this study's results that clearly show this focus on unmaking activities. Within Feola et al.'s (2021b) un-making research programme, the mechanisms of unmaking capitalism and making post-capitalism targeting past and future visions which were identified in this study were processes of sacrifice, un-learning, delinking, everyday resistance, decolonisation of the imaginary, as well as related processes of making of post-capitalist realities for each of these concepts of making. An example of a practice of sacrifice are permanent members of LVA's voluntary elimination of consumption of un-sustainable forms of energy, habitation and food. A practice of unlearning identified is all four initiatives questioning of taken-for-granted values, norms and beliefs within capitalism. To create a post-capitalist reality related to such un-learning, LVA, TTI and Grounded's engagement with critical reflexivity with regards to their practices consists in a processual act of deconstruction and of facilitating better understanding of how existing practices, knowledge, power structures and imaginaries within society can be rebuilt toward a sustainability transformation (Feola et al. 2021b). An example of practice of de-linking and making a post-capitalist reality that is engaged with, is LVA's use of Celtic rituals of expressing awe for nature

which reclaims a de-valued type of thought and spiritual practice from the rhetoric of modernity and capitalism. A practice of everyday resistance is Grounded's questioning of oppressive power relations through its Awareness team, which enables the building of a post-capitalist reality where all identities are treated with respect.

The in-depth analysis of four anti-capitalist initiatives' visions of the past and future highlighted that capitalism plays a powerful role over our imaginaries of the past and future which it is paramount to unmake in order to achieve anti-capitalist transformations. Cultural practices were identified that unmake capitalist memories and capitalist futures, and those that make post-capitalist memories and post-capitalist futures. Therefrom, one central process of unmaking capitalism with which results more importantly show the initiatives' engagement is the decolonisation of the imaginary (Latouche, 2015). The present analysis followed the observation that there is a hegemony of capitalism that includes a dominance over ideologies within Western societies (Fazey et al. 2015; Paulson, 2017). Through the exploration of memories and utopian visions, this study explored what Feola et al. describe as the "*foundational imaginary signification of modern capitalist societies*" (2021b) which requires profound and radical cultural change in order to enable the decolonisation of the imaginary.

Results showed that the studied initiatives are engaged with processes of unmaking and capitalist memories and futures, and with making post-capitalist memories and futures (see Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5). One initiative (ACU) did not engage with cultural politics toward un-making capitalist future, with its unmaking cultural work focused on the past (see Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5). An example of an identified way imaginaries of the past are reconstructed is all four initiatives' understandings of the development of capitalism and capitalist modernity in ways that are incompatible with dominant modern capitalist configurations. Imaginative constructions of the future in society are shown to also be shaped by the capitalist ideology and the initiatives disrupt this domination with alternative future visions. These acts of making and unmaking memories and futures target the beliefs, norms, values, worldviews and paradigms of particular groups in society depending on the initiative. These beliefs, norms, values, worldviews and paradigms influence how people relate to the systems and structures around them (O'Brien and Sygna, 2013) and thus plays a critical role for an anti-capitalist transformation. Thereby results illustrate active work by the initiatives to dismantle the ideology of capitalist modernity, with its ideology of development, including through a critique of economism and the imperative of endless economic growth (Feola et al. 2021b). All the identified unmaking practices described above of sacrifice, un-learning, delinking, everyday resistance involved activities of 'decolonisation of the imaginary', which was the focus of this study.

It was moreover found that many themes of past and future visions are shared between initiatives (finding 1 on Figure 28). This means that similar wrongs are identified in capitalist memories and futures, and common goals are identified by initiatives as enabling the fixing of the

crises we face. These clear commonalities is a positive thing for the progress toward an anti-capitalist future. Though the sample of studied initiatives is small, the study provides some support for the claim that there are important commonalities between anti-capitalist grassroots critiques and reconstructions. This can facilitate the building of future partnerships, which Meissner (2021) identified as an important step for popularising anti-growth ideas.

### *c. Initiatives' uses of prefiguration and popularisation*

All initiatives except ACU engage in critical reflexivity which is a practice that is typical of prefigurative politics. Given prefigurative movements' core focus on experimentation, critical reflexivity involves being open to change, learning, adapting practices, trial and error and exchanging with other movements as important strategies (van de Sande, 2015). This highlights the process of "building a new society within the shell of the old" (IWW, 2014) and points to LVA, TTI and Grounded being clearly situated within prefigurative politics. ACU nonetheless engages with a range of prefigurative practices that justify qualifying the initiative as prefigurative. An example of ACU's prefigurative practices is the initiatives' embodiment of values that are distinct from the modern capitalist configuration, namely values centred on diversity, caring and respecting all identities.

The finding 5 that LVA engages the least with cultural politics of popularisation amongst the studied initiatives is not surprising. As the eco-village movement is focused on radically transforming and rethinking most aspects of everyday life through experimentation with alternative forms of living within a local context (Casey et al. 2019), this shows a clear focus on prefiguration. Eco-villages strive to embody their sustainable vision and through living in this way, to inspire people; this was also expressed in interviews. Spreading the vision of what is wrong with society and ways to change it are not usual goals. Thus, cultural popularisation is not a part of the traditional definition of an eco-village and LVA only engages with very few practices that distance it slightly from this definition, as the forms of popularisation LVA engages with are weak. This leads to questions about whether this limited engagement with influencing members external of the eco-village community is the norm for eco-villages.

Furthermore, the finding 3 (Figure 28) that for the studied initiatives, initiatives that engaged the most with cultural politics of making and unmaking also engaged significantly with cultural politics of popularisation and/or pressure is likely explained by the initiatives' perceptions of popularisation and pressure activities. It is a positive finding as it implies that the more the studied initiatives engage in practices to unmake capitalism, the more likely they were to perceive popularisation and pressure strategies as useful toward this goal.

Related to this, an important finding (finding 5 on Figure 28) is that all initiatives engage in cultural politics of popularisation. This means that they use cultural means in order to normalise

alternative beliefs, habits, norms, values and paradigms. It implies strategies to shift cultural values of people outside of the initiative away from the hegemonic individualistic, growth and productivity-focused values of the modern capitalist system. Examples of cultural practices of popularisation identified are: posters on the wrongs of capitalism, the use of social media to increase the attendance to initiatives' projects and events, presentations in schools about sustainability themes, clothing swap events, the use of art to educate people about social and environmental sustainability, gardening workshops in schools, partnerships with other initiatives with similarly anti-capitalist or with slightly different ideologies on a range of projects.

Finding 5 is significant as it means that the intended level of impact of ACU, TTI and Grounded's activities goes beyond the traditional limits of prefigurative grassroots initiatives. The traditional realm of activity of prefigurative movements are activities of embodiment of the change that is hoped for, such as a shift in values and economic practices at a local scale enacted in the present (Monticelli, 2018). Though inspiring the rest of society through these practices is most often a wish of prefigurative movements, the act of inspiring and spreading knowledge of such alternative practices is not usually their focus (Maeckelbergh, 2016; van de Sande, 2015; Monticelli, 2018). Here, their uses of cultural values and practices was shown to have moved beyond inspiration. Our results indicate that for ACU, TTI and Grounded, the spreading and normalisation of knowledge, ideas, practices and values related to the past and future to the rest of society is an important part of their activities. The knowledge, ideas, practices and values that are popularised are alternative visions of the future, and alternative views on the past. For example, TTI spreads the values of connectivity to nature to Ilford community through some of its projects, and by this means normalises alternative values that are present within its vision of the future.

ACU, TTI and Grounded furthermore engage in some coalitions with partners well-aligned with their anti-capitalist goals and with groups that have aims that differ slightly. This practice is one of the important strategies of engagement with cultural politics of popularisation listed by Meissner (2021) which she describes as essential for reaching post-growth futures. Meissner identifies partnering with groups that differ in their ideologies as a necessary step for moving anti-growth ideologies from prefiguration into mainstream popular culture.

With regards to TTI's strong engagement with cultural politics of popularisation (see Appendix 4), literature shows that significant work to expand membership of transition towns initiatives as well as to culturally affect local communities appears to be characteristic of the movement (Alloun, Alexander, 2014).

These popularisation practices for Meissner point to a step toward the transformation of the cultural hegemony of capitalism. We can hypothesise about the effects of these prefigurative movements' engagements with popularising strategies. In light of the urgency of tackling



environmental crises, popularising activities may lead to the acceleration of the traditionally slow karst-like process of change entailed by prefigurative activities (Monticelli, 2018). This is because such activities contribute to de-naturalising discourses and narratives about economic growth, limitless productivity, consumer culture as well as de-naturalising harmful value-systems within modern capitalist societies.

The presence of cultural practices of prefiguration point to an influence that occurs at the micro-level of the individual and at the meso-level of the collectivity of the initiative. The presence of cultural practices of popularisation point to an influence that occurs at the macro-level of the society.

#### *d. Initiatives' lacking engagement with cultural politics of pressure*

A core finding (finding 7 on Figure 28) is the absent or weak engagement with cultural politics of pressure. That Grounded engages with cultural politics of pressure implies that culture is viewed by the initiative as facilitating building political pressure for its own goals. The two cultural practices of pressure identified were an art exhibition where the aim was to activate people to engage with sustainability in their own lives, and one event aimed at engaging people with environmental knowledge and with the knowledge about how to make ecology into a legal entity.

A number of factors could explain the lack of engagement of the three initiatives with cultural politics of pressure. Firstly, some initiatives made explicit statements about their separateness from activism and from 'critiquing things', while describing themselves as rather focused on doing things in the present for the future. This may have affected their engagement with direct action for the future, which Meissner (2021) lists as a central example of cultural politics of pressure. Therefore, the lacking engagement with cultural politics of pressure may be tied to a perceived separateness between doing things for the future and direct action.

Additionally, it is likely that the general dis-engagement with cultural politics of pressure of the four initiatives is tied to prefigurative movements' refusal to engage with representative politics and with public institutions (van de Sande, 2015; Monticelli, 2018; Maeckelbergh, 2011). Grassroots initiatives in their mode of functioning, express a valuation of autonomy and empowering individuals and the collective. Linked to this, grassroots initiatives express a valuation of distance from powerful actors such as corporations and governments. For instance, both TTI and Grounded describe themselves as 'having started the transition themselves'. Furthermore, if initiatives believe that culture is what needs to change, this explains why a form of pressure that targets laws, policies and political institutions is not perceived as a step toward an achievement of this goal.

It can be hypothesised that after broad popularisation of anti-capitalist values and ideas is achieved, pressure strategies will arise and be more numerous. Finally, it is important to question

whether pressure is a more effective and active strategy than popularisation to reach anti-capitalist goals. Within Meissner's (2021) elaboration of the stages of cultural politics, this is the position taken. Once actors have been mobilised through popularisation strategies, the next step is to collectively contest and change existing capitalist institutions through direct action. When comparing Grounded's popularising and pressure activities, the difference in scale between probable effects of the pressure activities and the popularising activities is small.

#### *e. Initiatives' engagements with collective memory*

Findings show that the studied initiatives recollect the past in ways that differ from the dominant capitalist understandings, as they were found to engage in practices of making and unmaking memories that distance them from capitalism's hegemonic power and pressure on memory (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). This provides support for the claim that collective memory is a dynamic process of re-construction (Feola et al. 2021a) which is often politically motivated (Kojola, 2020). Although the self-perceived focus of initiatives other than ACU was on the future, findings show, firstly, that the past played a role in initiatives' definition of their future visions, connected to findings 8 and 11. This is discussed further in 5.2.f.

Secondly, findings show that the past plays a role in initiatives' understandings of the wrongs of the present. For example, TTI's clear expression of the urgent threat of climate change illustrated by its activities of education and raising awareness in schools is shaped by an understanding of particular developments that led to the present, for instance unsustainable food production methods. This finding is consistent with Kojola's statement (Kojola, 2020) that visions of the past shape how people interpret the present. Connected to this, some of the identified recollections of the past enable to shape a recognition for violence and injustice acts of capitalism. For instance, one of ACU's posters criticises the rising housing crisis in the Netherlands since the 1990s and thereafter the consistent lack of concern by governments for people's rights. Moreover, the violent impacts of the modern neoliberal economy on human wellbeing and on nature are pinpointed by LVA. Additionally, the four initiatives' criticisms of development of capitalism with its elimination of communal practices can also be understood as pointing at an act of violence. Through popularising strategies in the form of postering for ACU, in the form of discourse on its website for LVA, and in the form of communal prefigurative strategies by all initiatives, these initiatives engage in acts of recognition of a past that is erased within capitalist framings of memory. This is consistent with literature that argues that collective memory enables activities of recognition for social movements (LeGrand et al. 2017; Feola et al. 2021a).

It was found that identities impact people's understandings of memory. In this study, the age of members affected different initiatives' collective memories (finding 12 on Figure 28), as

results showed that younger generations made more generalised references to the past, whereas older generations included lived experiences and more individualised understandings when speaking of the past. This shaping role of identity on memory is consistent with literature that shows memory as both particular and universal (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2014). This finding provides new insights on the impact of different aspects of identity on collective memory practices of grassroots initiatives.

#### *f. Initiatives' engagement with the future*

The three initiatives that engage more significantly with environmental sustainability, LVA, TTI and Grounded were found to have future visions shaped by urgency. TTI had presentations in schools on the impacts of climate change, LVA on its website expressed that the impacts of the modern way of life on human wellbeing and on ecosystems justify the building of eco-villages right now, whilst Grounded expressed that it started a transition right now to regenerate systems due to the insufficiency of sustainability to respond to present and future threats of the climate crisis. Likewise, recent academic research on futuring has been shaped by urgency (Oomen et al. 2021), thus the present finding can be explained similarly by the observed societal uncertainty about what the future will look like given the multiple crises we face (Oomen et al. 2021). Finding 6 (Figure 28) that cultural politics of popularisation were more used in order to spread future visions rather than to spread visions of the past is likely partly explained by this perceived urgent threat of climate change. It seems to imply that the initiatives perceive the spreading of positive visions for the future as a more effective strategy toward the building of such futures than the spreading of alternative visions and critiques of the past.

For three out of the four studied initiatives (LVA, TTI, Grounded), the presence of utopian future visions was clear (finding 15 on Figure 28). The strong presence of utopian future visions in these initiatives can be explained by their clear situated-ness within prefigurative movements, which at their core engage in an embodiment of the society that is desired (Leach, 2013). The study of initiatives' relationships to the future was indeed able to reveal expectations for capitalist futures which they try to un-make; this revelation of expectations by the study of utopias is something described by Beck et al. (2021). Through their engagement with future visions and particularly through their performativity in the present through prefigurative practices, the initiatives prove that the status quo is not biological and that there are alternatives (Moylan, 2006). We can connect this to literature on the effects of utopian practices on society. We can hypothesise that, as Haiven and Khasnabisch (2014) argue that utopian practices enable a critical interrogation, the studied initiatives enable interrogations of dominant taken-for-granted values and visions in society. Initiatives for instance facilitate a questioning of the desirability and acceptability of individualistic values and of the lack of connectivity and understanding of nature,

through their engagement with practices that embody communal ways of being and thinking and practices of learning about and appreciating nature. Due to initiatives' usage of popularising strategies, these interrogations are likely spread to parts of society on which they have an influence. Given the close link between utopianism and motivation (Fernando et al. 2019), the initiatives' engagement with utopian practices and visions can be said to enable to create motivation for disabling dystopian capitalist futures.

#### *g. Relationship between collective memory and future vision*

A first observation on the connection between visions of the future and past is that results seem to indicate that the best strategy for anti-capitalist sustainability initiatives is not necessarily an equal level of engagement with past and future. Finding (4) shows that there is a positive relation between engaging with cultural politics of making and unmaking and engaging more significantly with the future than with the past. When asked about the past, some interviewees were reluctant to make statements and expressed that their initiative's focus was on acting for the future rather than on critiquing. This was the case for LVA, TTI and Grounded. Though ACU has a clear view on the past, its vision of the future was vague and not discussed often.

In the findings of this study, the recollection of the past was shown to connect to the development of future visions (findings 8, 9 and 11 on Figure 28). Firstly, the critique of a memory was often found to connect to the development of a particular aspect of an initiative's future vision (finding 11). For example, LVA's critique of the isolationism created by the development of modernity was linked to the centrality of community and communal values within its future vision. Secondly, the critique of memory was often linked to prefigurative practices which build an alternative, which enabled the development of an alternative future vision. For instance, TTI's critique of the decrease of communal values in society links to its activities focusing on building communal values in Ilford, which then links to the centrality of care for one another in its vision of the future. These observations provide support for the idea that the critique of memory enables the critique of capitalist futures. Moreover, prefigurative practices of futures sometimes linked to nostalgic understandings of the past (finding 9 on Figure 28). For example, both Grounded and LVA have their own community gardens which can be linked to both their nostalgic references to a past where people were more connected to food and to nature.

The observations above moreover provide support for the claim that visions of the past and prefigurative practices serve a facilitating and legitimising role for the studied initiatives' development of future visions. Initiatives' uses of cultural politics of prefiguration, popularisation, and pressure reveal their strategic uses of visions of the future and past with the purpose of building socio-political changes, which demonstrates that the domain of socio-technical imaginaries is a field of political action (Beck et al. 2021). Furthermore, the observations provide

support for Feola et al.'s claim (2021a) that reinterpretations of the past bind together the negation of exploitations with the hopeful prefiguration of the future. The present elicited observations are moreover consistent with their finding (Feola et al., 2021a) that collective memory for Indigenous peoples enables them to re-define directions for the future, and that therefore collective memory is a place of social construction that supports politics of imagining the future.

The present findings moreover support Feola et al.'s (2021a) claim that social constructions of collective memory and future visions occur simultaneously. For example, for Grounded, this dual and simultaneous activity of recollecting and envisioning a future is clear in the terms used to describe its envisioned future. Terms such as "reconnecting" with the soil and with each other and "remaking" everything more simple highlight the past as an inspiration for the future.

Finding (13) that emotions were present in relation to future visions and to the past is consistent with the findings of Kojola's study of collective memory (2020). Kojola found that emotional meanings of the past and future imaginaries animate conflicts over extractive industries. In the present study, emotions were present in relation to both understandings of the past and to understandings of the future. For example, nostalgia was expressed about a past where people were more connected to and knowledgeable about nature. Findings thereby provide valuable insights for this area of literature. Emotions were only coded within statements that related to cultural politics, thus the prefigurative, popularising and pressure-related practices that the initiatives engage in for the future affect the emotions felt by members in relation to the future. The emotions present in relation to the past were nostalgia, frustration, and anger, and those in relation to the future were hope, frustration and joy. Similar emotions were identified by Kojola (2020). It can be hypothesised that the fact that the past and future are understood in an emotional way pushes these people to join initiatives focused on creating a better world for the future. Furthermore, the vast majority of interviewees confirmed that taking part in their grassroots initiative has made them more hopeful for the future. This is consistent with literature that shows that prefiguration is a political strategy that offers hope (Yates, 2021). This emotional dimension of prefiguration is one that is often overlooked in the conventional focus on structural and economic determinants of political change according to Cornish et al. (2016). This emotional element seems to be important due to the significant role of emotions in culture (Ahmed, 2014) and thereby for a large-scale cultural change.

Furthermore, finding (10) that nature played an important role in three of the four studied initiatives' societal and environmental imaginary is significant given that Kojola (2020) observes an under-exploration of the role of landscapes and experiences of nature in how collective memories are constructed. Within these three initiatives' cultural practices, there were a large number of references to nature, and they all saw reconnecting to nature as playing a key role for a sustainable future.

## 5.2. Value of the research

Meissner's framework for studying cultural politics focused on prefiguration, popularisation and pressure enabled the identification of numerous observations about the strategies and goals of anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives. Categorising practices within three distinct forms of cultural politics facilitated understanding why each initiative engages in a cultural practice, due to the distinct goals of each form of cultural politics. Such a categorisation of practices in terms of such aims enabled to clearly untangle the role of different practices within a large-scale cultural change toward an envisioned anti-capitalist transition. It enabled to identify strategic uses of culture. That the framework was constructed for application to initiatives situated within the Degrowth movement and not for the broader category of anti-capitalist initiatives did not affect the applicability of the framework. This makes sense due to anti-growth and anti-consumerism goals of the De-growth movement being crucial parts of the anti-capitalist movement.

As Latouche's concept of "decolonisation of the imaginary" (Latouche, 2015) in relation to the De-growth movement has been criticised for lacking concrete mechanisms for reaching this end state, this study provided insights on mechanisms falling under this idea adapted to anti-capitalist goals. These mechanisms were elaborated upon with the help of Feola et al.'s development (2021b) of such unmaking processes. The study elicited several cultural mechanisms that make and unmake memories and futures toward anti-capitalist goals, highlighting the power of capitalism over our minds and the valuable cultural work that is being done to un-make this. In this, the research provided crucial insights for the emergent field within sustainability research that deals with processes of unmaking capitalism (Feola et al., 2021b).

This research moreover provided valuable new insights for literature on collective memory for sustainability transformations. The study of memory showed the important and somewhat hidden work that is being done to un-make capitalist memories and make anti-capitalist memories through cultural means. The study demonstrated the importance of studying the inspiring and legitimising role of cultural work that is performed around memories for politics of the future.

## 5.3. Limitations of the Research

Firstly, as mentioned (See 3.a.), only two of the four initiatives felt comfortable characterising themselves as anti-capitalist. As explained in 3.a., characterising the studied grassroots initiatives as "anti-capitalist" was justified by a number of factors. Moreover, characterising the initiatives as "post-capitalist" which is a term that all initiatives likely would have been comfortable with, is expected to have affected results. This conceptualisation of the focus likely would have impacted

questions asked during interviews as well as the main concerns of the research, as within post-capitalist theory the focus is not on resistance to capitalism but specifically on creating worlds that move beyond capitalism (Chatterton, 2016). Given the distance of two initiatives from the qualification “anti-capitalist”, it can be argued that this is a limitation of the study and that this factor renders problematic the study's focus on these initiatives' strategies to dismantle capitalism. In response to this, results showed that there seemed to be no impact of self-identifying as anti-capitalist on initiatives' level of use of cultural politics of popularisation and pressure (see Figure 27), nor did self-identifying as anti-capitalist appear to have an impact on initiatives' level of engagement with cultural politics of making and unmaking (see Figure 26).

Moreover, the small sample of initiatives studied means that the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited.

Concerning Meissner's framework (2021), one limitation of the framework is the strict separateness between the categories of cultural politics which in reality was not clear. The commonalities between the categories would benefit from being elaborated upon for future uses of the framework. Additionally, one could challenge the place of the category of cultural politics of pressure within this framework given that most anti-capitalist and de-growth movements are prefigurative and thereby distanced from such tactics. The position here taken is that keeping this category in the framework seems necessary for the future, as it may happen that this tactic becomes part of anti-capitalist future strategies.

With regards to the eco-village LVA, it is important to mention that its character as still under construction likely affected results. For instance, the initiative's mode of decision-making was still under construction when interviewed, as well as its collective spiritual practices. Withal, it can still be expected that their dominant cultural politics would be prefigurative and more focused on the future. This is due to reasons explained in sections 5.c. and 5.f.

Finally, the validity of results is compromised by the fact that visions within initiatives are not as unified as what may appear from results. For example, members of ACU noted that there was no collective political position taken by the initiative other than core values that they agree on. More noticeably for initiatives' understandings of the past, a collective understanding was difficult to identify. Moreover, some statements made only by one member on behalf of an initiative were coded as a collective view and this could be slightly different from the truth. Nonetheless, this points to the diversity of visions within an initiative, which is a necessary part of grassroots movement (Hall, 2017). Achieving a fully collective vision should never be a goal, as it

would require the loss of individualities within the movement and with it the loss of the movement's adaptivity and reflexivity.



## 6. Conclusion

A cultural and social transformation that re-establishes relationships, livelihoods and politics around a new range of core beliefs, assumptions, values and goals is central to a future sustainability transformation. Grassroots initiatives have an influential role for sustainability transitions due to their constituting a fruitful location for experimentation of sustainability innovations because of their local and autonomous character. Anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives build alternative forms of relations to nature, alternative forms of social relations and alternative relationships to property. This study fills three knowledge gaps. The importance of utopian visions and their performativity for sustainability calls for significant research due to their potentially transformative role. Moreover, the relationship between visions of the future and past visions is an area of research that has not been given much attention. Finally, cultural practices for sustainability transformations and strategic uses of cultural practices for anti-capitalist goals is an area that has not been significantly explored. The central focus of this study was to build an answer to the research question: *how do grassroots initiatives engage with the past and the future through culture in their attempt to unmake capitalism?* The answer to this question is based on the results and a discussion of a multi-method analysis of images, websites and interviews with members of four anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives.

### 6.1. Answer to the main research question

Firstly, it was found that the four studied initiatives make significant uses of cultural politics of prefiguration and of cultural politics of popularisation in their attempt to unmake capitalism. The numerous cultural practices identified imply that each initiative perceives changing culture as a key part of their work for creating their desired post-capitalist world. The studied initiatives embody values, ways of being and modes of organising that are distinct from the modern capitalist configuration. Moreover, the strong engagement with cultural politics of popularisation for three of the four studied initiatives is a significant finding as it points to their use of cultural values and practices having moved beyond the purpose of inspiring and therefore beyond the traditional limits of prefigurative movements. This result indicates that three of the initiatives perceive the spreading and normalisation of anti-capitalist ideas, practices, knowledge and values outside of their own collective as an important part of their activities toward unmaking capitalism.

Secondly, findings show that only one of the four studied initiatives made use of cultural politics of pressure within their practices aimed at unmaking capitalism. This lacking engagement with this cultural politics is likely tied to grassroots initiatives' refusal to engage with representative politics and with public institutions. Thirdly, the analysis at its core demonstrated that these four anti-

capitalist grassroots recollect the past and envision the future through processes that unmake capitalism. Results indicated that practices of critiquing memory were tied to prefigurative practices of embodiment of a future as well as to particular aspects of studied initiatives' future visions. The findings provide support for the claim that collective memory is a place of social construction that supports and legitimises politics of imagining the future.

## 6.2. Recommendations for future research

Firstly, it would be interesting to research whether anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives are producing any noticeable changes on culture within their domain of influence, in light of the present found engagement with popularising strategies for the sample of initiatives studied. Such a study would provide crucial insights on the actual effects of cultural politics of popularisation, for instance on motivations and desires of societies related to solutions to the multiple crises we face. It could for example consist in an analysis of perceptions of capitalism of communities near these anti-capitalist initiatives. Such insights would be incredibly valuable given Beck et al.'s (2021) argument that in order to make visions of desirable futures actionable in the public sphere, they must become collectively held, institutionally stabilised and publicly performed.

It would moreover be interesting to explore methods for scaling up effective tactics of cultural politics in order to achieve anti-capitalist goals. Additionally, research on processes for cultural politics of pressure to become more used by anti-capitalist grassroots initiatives would provide valuable insights for anti-capitalist future pathways.

Future research may also compare the elicited findings with similar analyses of other eco-villages and transition towns. This would provide key insights on the uses of culture by two types of prefigurative movements that are relatively widespread. This could provide answers to whether it is the norm for transition towns to engage actively with popularisation strategies, and for eco-villages to only engage very weakly with such active practices for changing the broader culture.

Finally, the important work of un-making capitalist memories for politics of the future was here shown, and it justifies the necessity of continuing similar research on collective memory for sustainability transformations.



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## 8. Appendices

### *Appendix 1: Interview protocol developed based on the research questions and research aims*

#### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- General information

- 1) What is your connection to (initiative)? How long have you been involved?
- 2) What were your motivations for joining (initiative)?

- Specific information

- 1) I saw that you did projects around (...). What is the view of your initiative on (...)? What is the purpose of these events?

- Prefiguration

- 1) (Initiative) can be viewed as a form of experimentation with a different type of society. Do you agree with this description, in what way would you say that you are experimenting? How do you see the role of new values in relation to the experimentation that you do with a different type of society?
- 2) How does your initiative view the development of modern Western societies? How would you describe (initiative)'s views on "individuality"? On "community"?
- 3) Have you been involved with anything art-related at (initiative)? What is the role and place of art for your (initiative)?
- 4) Does your initiative take inspiration from the past, in projects it has done or in its visions? Does your initiative engage in any rituals?
- 5) What are (initiative)'s hopes for the future? Does your initiative have a utopian vision for the future? Do you speak about your future visions within your initiative?
- 6) Are there any practices within your initiative related to emotions and talking about emotions?

- Popularisation

- 1) When did you decide to have a website? When did you decide to have social media and for what reason? What is the role of your website & social media for your initiative?
- 2) Does your initiative use social media and/or art to share with others and normalise for others certain ideas such as those you mentioned about community? Or is the focus on sharing about events that you are doing?
- 3) How does (initiative) hope to change society?

- Pressure

- 1) Does (initiative) wish to play a role in creating pressure in society for an anti-capitalist transition?
- 2) Does your initiative envision that it plays a role in a transition to a future sustainable society?

	Prefiguration Memory Made	Prefiguration Memory Unmade	Prefiguration Future Made	Prefiguration Future Unmade	Popularisation Memory Made	Popularisation Memory Unmade	Popularisation Future Made	Popularisation Future Unmade	Pressure Memory Made	Pressure Memory Unmade	Pressure Future Made	Pressure Future Unmade
Practice	Speech importance of the squatting movement	Unacceptability of power of big corporations	Community-building - embodying importance of community also through the solidarity kitchen - a lot of people get to know each other	X	Spreading messages about activists doing good things - on social media	Unacceptability of food waste	Hosting bands that express revolutionary views	X	X	X	X	X
Practice	Importance of history of radical movements - ACU's hosting sub-cultures e.g. bands, events sub-cultures	Unacceptability of food waste	They work to maintain a caring & sharing relationship with their neighbours		Popularising anti-capitalist views through supporting anti-capitalist groups e.g. Barricade	Free shop - spreading criticism of un-needed consumerism	Aiming through its events and posters to inspire the youth toward radicalism					
Practice		Collective discussions about hopes for future and criticisms of status quo	Diversity and respect for all identities - through posters, events, behaviours of collective		Posters + leaflets + social media spreading messages about queer rights and environmental rights	Social media to spread anti-food waste message	Free library, leaflets, posters, social media popularise the value of education and awareness within this future					
Practice		ACU is volunteer-run; embodying criticism of idea that the value of an activity is based on profit-making	Free library, leaflets, posters, social media embody the value of education and awareness within this future		Educating people about squatting culture and history through posters, website	Social media to spread anti-war messages	Detriments of the Western society: sexism, homophobia, racism					
Practice		They work to maintain a caring & sharing relationship with their neighbours	Anarchist decision-making - no hierarchy, equality of each person and value of each person, no rules		Print shop for activists supported by ACU - enabling to spread their messages	Propaganda in front windows against gentrification and housing crisis caused by capitalist logic and capitalist prioritisations	Free shop - solidarity, moving beyond profit motives					
Practice			Solidarity kitchen created due to homelessness caused by COVID and lower capacity in shelters during COVID: idea that everyone deserves a decent standard of living i.e. food		Hosting bands that express revolutionary views	Tags and posters: anti-police, anti-racism, anti-sexism	Normalising talking about mental illness and chronic illness - moving away from perfectionist culture of capitalism - Spoons event					
Practice			Anti-oppression, all identities ought to be respected, embodied in behaviour of collective			Free shop - criticism of un-needed consumerism	Normalising values of care and respect for all identities					
Practice			Embodying anti-capitalist values on the busiest consumer street of Utrecht - you can exist on it without making any profit									

*Appendix 2: Filled out framework for ACU, representing all cultural practices of the initiatives that make use of the different categories of cultural politics*



	Prefiguration Memory Made	Prefiguration Memory Unmade	Prefiguration Future Made	Prefiguration Future Unmade	Popularisation Memory Made	Popularisation Memory Unmade	Popularisation Future Made	Popularisation Future Unmade	Pressure Memory Made	Pressure Memory Unmade	Pressure Future Made	Pressure Future Unmade
Practice	Embodying idea of the tie between Western lifestyle and increasing loneliness and unhappiness; also speech expressing this idea	The effects of the Western lifestyle on human happiness	Low-impact lifestyle without compromising the fullness, depth and richness of the human experience	Embodying a simpler way of living; idea that we need less (for human happiness)	X	x	Exchange of knowledge and experience with other intentional communities in the NL and Europe; contributing to open source information about ecological living	x	x	X	x	x
Practice	Exhaustion of Earth's resources due to development of western lifestyle	Acceptability of the capitalist model of living - unmade through all their activities	A community that provides space for consciousness growth and personal development, healing and transformation	Embodying idea that there are alternatives to 60 hours of work a week » isolation			Permaculture workshops: inspiring and educating people about nature and sustainable food growth					
Practice	Celtic rituals	Problematic development of schooling system	Cooperation, mutual provision, exchange with the environment, connection	Embodying new views on personal responsibility			Using social media and newsletter to spread awareness about what the eco-village is doing					
Practice	Aboriginal rituals		Producing their own food in order to become self-sufficient				There is a goal of working together with people around the eco-village, such as in the city of Ter Apel					
Practice			Eating together, cooking for each other				Open day: guests from outside are shown around the eco-village, to inspire them					
Practice			Eating only biological				Social media » attempting to inspire people that there is a different way of living					
Practice			Taking care of each other; learning from each other									
Practice			Participatory sociocratic decision-making - importance of equality and co-reliance in decision-making									
Practice			Embodying idea that community is powerful									
Practice			Embodying values of community, caring practices and living together, collaborating, sharing									
Practice			Participatory sociocratic decision-making									
Practice			More connected, to each other, to nature, helping raising each other's children									
Practice			Practices expressing idea that everyone can learn from each other									
Practice			Being vulnerable for each other; (not hiding yourself and weaknesses)									
Practice			Education as more caring for the child's needs and desires									
Practice			Practices of re-using and recycling in order to get away from over-consumption; e.g. creating heat from composting toilets									
Practice			Embodying the importance of consciousness growth and personal development									
Practice			Embodying idea of a balance between what we take from Earth and give back									

*Appendix 3: Filled out framework for LVA, representing all cultural practices of the initiatives that make use of the different categories of cultural politics*

	Prefiguration Memory Made	Prefiguration Memory Unmade	Prefiguration Future Made	Prefiguration Future Unmade	Popularisation Memory Made	Popularisation Memory Unmade	Popularisation Future Made	Popularisation Future Unmade	Pressure Memory Made	Pressure Memory Unmade	Pressure Future Made	Pressure Future Unmade
Practice	Relationship to nature inspired by other communities	Problematic character of children not knowing how to grow food	Reuse, repair, consume less, waste less, recycle	Skills swapping event - unmaking capitalist values (sharing skills, helping each other) - unmaking idea of skill - profit-making	Educating about forest gardening, valuing alternative forms of rationality and of relating to nature	Repair cafe - popularising due to the popularity of the event & advertising on social media platforms	A future where people are aware of environmental issues - e.g. plastic, pollution	Presentations in schools: inspiring people about a better future	X	X	X	X
Practice	Forest gardening inspired by ancient practices		Moving away from fossil fuels, Resilient community	Repair cafe (similar as above) - you don't have to spend lots of money to repair things, you can just repair - unacceptability of capitalism designing easily breakable things	Inviting the local MP to an emotional and spiritual event focused on pollution of local brook	Campaign about the non-acceptability of a polluted local river	Dismantling normality of food waste - through event around neighbourhood fruits					
Practice	Limitation of current food availability (in supermarkets): longing back to a past with more diversity in food production		Interconnected communities, caring for each other, caring for the community, sharing (valuing) all of TTI's activities and discourse	Dismantling normality of food waste - through event around neighbourhood fruits	Social media to show and inspire people about what they are doing locally and get people to join - get people involved, interested and aware	Partnership with Love Food Hate Waste campaign: events done together	Inspiring people of all ages to connect (spiritually) to nature - Forest Garden					
Practice	Speech about development of society into individualistic society as a negative development		Caring for local initiatives & buying local	Community relying on themselves- deciding how we consume our energy etc, solving new issues, and not dependent on community and ourselves - discourse and TTI's activities	Unacceptability of food waste - neighbourhood fruit event, free food event	Growing Food Growing Friends - importance of community and connection to nature	Projects aiming to empower people and community					
Practice	Inspiration from family about ways of relating to food- to one another		Moving away from reliance on governments and on capitalism - deciding how we consume our energy etc, solving new issues and not dependent on community and ourselves - discourse and TTI's activities	Unmake idea that we cannot live without nature; that we can just spraying insects etc when growing food	Social media tries to influence people to care and to get involved, to care for each other (to see that community is essential to sustainability)	Inspiring and inviting people to join Forest Garden/ Repair Cafe/ etc through verbal speech	Projects aiming to make people less dependent on fossil fuels and capitalism					
Practice			Everyone works together through cooperation, not competition - Critique idea of the individual as the powerful actor in society - through discourse and communal activities			Unacceptability of food waste - neighbourhood fruit event, free food event	Projects aiming to make people more connected to nature					
Practice			Affordable food for people of all backgrounds			School presentations in front of 500-600 children about ways to reduce ecological footprint of family	Events aim to bring people together and connect					
Practice			Local production and consumption - encouraging people to buy local + running free food festival + encourage people to grow their own food			Raising awareness about the importance and urgency of the climate crisis through school presentation, social media, projects	Popularising view of community as important & people being part of community through getting people involved in projects					
Practice			Embodying this awareness of the real threat and impact of climate change on planet and on all global communities			People care about each other - events are targeting this TTI belief	Linking up with regional community groups and organisations - to inspire each other, to collaborate					
Practice			Neighbours growing their own food and speaking to each other			People want change, care about nature	Posters about TTI					
Practice			Forest garden: embodying idea of new connection to nature and to growing food (without using pesticides)				Growing Food Growing Friends: inspiring people to grow food themselves, and to connect to neighbours					
Practice			Everyone's voice is included in decision-making and discussions - participatory organisation structure				Networking/ advertising TTI and its projects in person at Repair Cafe event and other events					
Practice			Regular meetings about how people feel about projects/ events, potential issues, inspirations, keeping people hopeful for future (focus on emotions)				Presentations at school to 500-600 children: inspiring kids about a better future & power of people to make a difference					
Practice			Ability of communities to make a difference - also inspiring this in children, schools coming to Forest garden				Practices to get all demographics engaged (e.g. children)					
Practice			Production no longer so far away from consumer				Kreihm brook event: dismantling idea that environmental harms are not emotional					
Practice			Growing Food Growing Friends: you don't need to spend lots of money on food, you can grow your own									
Practice			Activities promoting idea that community is a necessary aspect of environmentalism									
Practice			Recognising that everyone has something valuable to offer to the environmental movement									

Appendix 4: Filled out framework for TTI, representing all cultural practices of the initiatives that make use of the different categories of cultural politics

	Prefiguration Memory Made	Prefiguration Memory Unmade	Prefiguration Future Made	Prefiguration Future Unmade	Popularisation Memory Made	Popularisation Memory Unmade	Popularisation Future Made	Popularisation Future Unmade	Pressure Memory Made	Pressure Memory Unmade	Pressure Future Made	Pressure Future Unmade
Practice	Development of our society into making things too complex, solutions to the climate crisis are simple and available	Development of stimulation of bad impulses by our economic system	The power of community, of collaborating together, empowering people	Grounded believes in all the criticisms that would not make a sustainable future possible	Going back to the old system of re-connecting with neighbours, with our ground, with everything around us; Showing people through workshops/ gardening that this is something easy to do	No need to eat food that only grows internationally - shown through community garden, catering, and education; Showing that you are able to produce very tasty food from garden	Openness to any new idea and to all new people into the movement	Spreading idea that sustainability can be fun - emotional	X	X	Engaging and activating people on sustainability themes through art - way they relate to their environment, and to people	Event aimed at engaging people with environmental knowledge and with the knowledge to make ecology into a legal entity, to disrupt capitalism's harms on nature
Practice	Speech expressing that humans have destroyed our planet and everything	Unmaking the acceptability of overshoot day and using up all resources	Showing people that with the little they have, they can do great things	Idea of urgency of acting; sustainability won't save us, we need regeneration	Problematic only having 5 types of apple in supermarket - showing this through the growth only of 'unwanted' veggies in garden	As inclusive and diverse as possible; spreading idea that all skills and identities are valuable for a sustainable future	Showing people that with the little they have, they can do great things	Sustainability not enough; we need regeneration				
Practice	Inspiration from old simpler ways of living - giving away our comfort, all the great tools		Community growing and central importance of community shown through all their practices	Having fun creating a sustainable future, providing them more wellbeing right now and creating possibility of a brighter future	Spreading idea of regeneration; solutions have already been created, in past and recent times	Unmaking normality of diversity of foods in supermarkets	Clothing swap event + signal chat exchanges; alternative economy	Spreading idea that all things are possible to people - empowering people				
Practice	A past where we were connected to our soil and to each other		No hierarchy in decision-making, everyone is equal and all voices get heard	The struggles are still there, but we can add value while working on the solutions			Spread idea that you can create a party / festival without being un-sustainable	Art promoting a stable future in whichever way they would like to				
Practice			We should get to know our neighbours, essential to create a better future, collaboration at the centre of Grounded	Discussions around feelings about projects and future hopes			Inspiring people to reconnect to the soil and to nature and to each other					
Practice			Creating local to local chain of farmers	Dis-mantling the idea that a party is about profit making			Spreading idea that we need regeneration - The idea of urgency					
Practice			If there is an idea, Grounded will help you with it	Activities aimed at un-making all harmful elements that would lead to a sustainable failure			Educating people about sustainable food and about food growing (e.g. in schools + guests)					
Practice			We mainly show by practicing				Band rapping about loving vegetables spreading new ways of looking at nature and food					
Practice			Showing diversity of foods within a local context				Using art to spread + normalise anti-patriarchal and anti-deforestation messages					
Practice			Only use local sustainable foods				Educating people about themes important to Grounded through art					
Practice			Growing their own food				Engaging people outside the community (who are not into sustainability) through art+ events, to care about Grounded themes, though not their main target					
Practice			Growing non-conventional plants for cooking, netles, also growing medicinal herbs				Interacting with the EU and other partners in order for Grounded's model to be recognized and more influential					
Practice			Willingness to learn, connected to openness				Spreading idea that sustainability can be fun					
Practice			Regenerative practices				We to spread the word about a different way of living, people speak to their friends, their neighbours					
Practice			Discussions around feelings about projects and future hopes				Seeking want media exposure					
Practice			Community growing and central importance of community shown through all their practices				Art stimulating the cycle of people getting inspired then people co-creating new things					
Practice			Empower people to co-create projects				Spreading the idea that community is powerful					
Practice			Holocracy decision-making - moving away from hierarchy				Spreading value of diversity					
Practice			No need to eat food that only grows internationally - embodied in community garden, education, and catering				Art stimulating the cycle of people getting inspired then people co-creating new things					
Practice			Interactive arts that are as sustainable as possible, recycled, re-used, life-time extended				Showing diversity of foods within a local context					
Practice			Community growing through art - dismantling idea that community is not valuable				Making activities fun in order for people to join and activate people					
Practice							Opening similar Grounded communities in other countries					
Practice							Inspiring people to reconnect to the soil and to nature and to each other - e.g. gardening workshop					
Practice							Guided canoe tour with information about ecology					
Practice							Recognition of Grounded of its role in harmful systems of domination; raising awareness					
Practice							Growth of non-common plants in community garden - spreading idea of diversity of local biodiversity					
Practice							Re-sharing on social media of climate protests, climate actions; sharing their messages with Grounded's audience					

*Appendix 5: Filled out framework for Grounded, representing all cultural practices of the initiatives that make use of the different categories of cultural politics*