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Walking for change? Cultivating degrowth sensibilities in everyday life through multi-sensory artistic engagements in public space

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Abstract
This article addresses the emerging interest within the degrowth community in the potential of the arts and artistic research to complement social-scientific methods in driving transformation towards more convivial and less materially intensive futures. There is an increasing acknowledgement that the type and scale of change implied by a societal transition beyond growth cannot be triggered only by scientific facts or macroeconomic perspectives. Change is also needed in collective imaginaries, cultural values, and practices. This requires situating the transformative process in everyday life and the lived realities of communities to collectively imagine a life beyond consumerism as possible and desirable. Artistic practices can play an important role in subverting hegemonic worldviews through different aesthetic propositions. In this article, I focus on their potential to shape alternative imaginaries and foster degrowth-aligned values by enhancing awareness of alternative paradigms through multi-sensory engagements in everyday public spaces that expose frictions. I do this by drawing on a collaboration with an artist collective involving a co-created walking-based method ('walkshop') carried out in a relatively new neighbourhood of Utrecht, The Netherlands. Reflecting on this experience, I propose situated civic-artistic pedagogies to cultivate degrowth sensibilities in everyday life. This proposition contributes to the debate on prefiguration and the popularisation of futures beyond growth by highlighting the need to anchor such futures in communities, local knowledge, and lived experience.

1. Introduction

In 2005, aiming to popularise the degrowth concept (Kallis et al., 2015), French economist François Schneider walked across France with his donkey, Jujube. Walking 1500 km, he talked about degrowth with citizens in many towns and villages, mobilising hundreds of people in

what was called the "Marche pour la décroissance"[1] (in English, *"March for Degrowth").* Inspired by this effort to popularise degrowth through walking, this paper aims to address the role of walking-based artistic practices in expanding imaginations about futures beyond consumerism and relentless economic growth. This posits imagination, specifically processes aiming for a "decolonization of the imaginary" (Latouche, 2015, p.117), at the centre of the degrowth transition, entailing the creation and societal establishment of different objectives in life beyond a continuous expansion of production and consumption.

Scientists from diverse domains are increasingly recognizing that incremental changes to the present socio-economic system alone are insufficient to reverse environmental degradation at the speed and scale required to address intersecting socio-ecological crises. For instance, "Europe's State of the Environment 2020" report, published by the European Environmental Agency (EEA, 2019), highlights the urgent need for a significant change in direction to address climate change challenges, reverse environmental degradation, and ensure future prosperity. Some scholars even reject conceptions such as 'green growth' that envisage technology- and innovation-driven sustainability while remaining committed to economic growth, arguing instead for a new societal metabolism that "has a different structure and serves different functions" (D'Alisa et al., 2015, p. 4). This raises the critical need for cultural shifts in imaginaries, values, and practices that must go hand in hand, or even precede, economic transformations towards a society beyond growth (Alexander, 2015).

However, envisioning and inspiring a desirable society beyond growth is not an easy task precisely because the dominant modes of production and consumption have shaped how we think and act, leading to a "crisis of the imagination" (Haiven, 2014). Thus, while the term 'degrowth' is meant to increase attention and stimulate political debate regarding the economic growth-centred paradigm, it may hinder engagement in this debate by triggering negative feelings associated with (mis)interpretations of degrowth as an economic recession and the curtailing of everyday comforts and conveniences of a consumerist society (Drews & Reese, 2018). In this context, affecting the collective imaginary becomes the "*objet politique par excellence"* (ultimate political object) (Bendor, 2018, p.134, emphasis in original). This

[1] http://www.decroissance.org/marche/

means that the lack of perceived alternatives to dominant visions needs to be politicized through engaging diverse groups in debates about sustainable futures, beyond dominant narratives and problem framings. Moreover, it requires approaches that have the potential to 'unmake' modern capitalist socio-ecological configurations (Feola, 2019) to help concretise the notion of decolonization of the imaginary.

Artistic and creative practices can expand imagination by envisioning alternative futures and presenting the world in ways that people could not otherwise see, capturing the public's imagination and instigating action (Light et al., 2019). Examples range from provocative scenarios expressed through interactive media (Bendor et al., 2017); compelling narratives or immersive exhibitions to engage with the socio-ecological crisis (Pelzer & Versteeg, 2019); and "culture jamming," in which artists rework advertising to subvert messages targeting a consumerist culture (Alexander, 2017). As Alexander (2017) argues, such aesthetic propositions can help degrowth aspirations by supporting alternative stories to the dominant materialistic conceptions of a good life, engaging desire for a non-consumerist society, and inspiring change in compelling ways through affect.

This article highlights the capacity of critical artistic practices to subvert dominant hegemony, capitalist narratives, and related dichotomies (including that of culture/nature) by fostering 'agonistic' public spaces that make room for struggle and difference rather than smoothing out inherent frictions (Mouffe, 2007). For instance, this includes frictions that may unfold when there are different perspectives and values around an issue or when global ideals and local situations clash. A significant example in this context is provided by the Paris-based Situationist Internal group (or Situationists), whose artistic and political work in the 1960s influenced initial degrowth (*décroissance*) ideas in Europe (Muraca, 2013). Through practices like the *dérive*, or 'drifting' through the city, Situationists aimed to reclaim public space from a site of consumption and alienation to one where power relations and dominant social orders can be challenged (Sadler, 1999). While current forms of urban planning, management, and land use tend to encapsulate values that reproduce capitalist logics (Savini et al., 2022), this article will highlight the importance of public space as a place where frictions, if made visible, can spark collective imagination and inspire alternative possibilities.

Specifically, I will argue that artistic practices can activate public space as a place for transformation through friction by augmenting awareness of alternative paradigms to the mainstream growth-driven one, found in the 'cracks' (Holloway, 2010; Feola, 2019) of the present. Rather than creating something 'new' (an installation, exhibition, or artwork), I propose that artistic practices could have an important role in enhancing "awareness of many possible modes of existence - with myriad sources of richness and pleasure" which can widen "horizons for building unprecedented futures" (Paulson, 2017, p.441). One way is to broaden engagement with bottom-up initiatives that share degrowth values, such as commoning land[2], reconnecting with nature, and enhancing biodiversity through urban agriculture (Baibarac-Duignan & van den Eijnden, 2025). Such bottom-up examples are seen to prefigure, or enact, alternative degrowth futures in the present (Meissner, 2021). Here, I propose an additional way in which artistic practices could play a role in a degrowth transition: opening up public space as a playground for sensing and experimenting with degrowth futures situated in communities, their knowledge, and lived experiences. To support this proposition, I will discuss insights from my research collaboration with an artist collective that situates their work in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Drawing on empirical materials from this collaboration, I will reflect on the potential of multi-sensory arts-based methodologies that support deep engagement with the everyday neighbourhood environments to stimulate imagination about alternative futures.

Regarding the paper's structure, it begins with a background discussion that positions art and artistic practices within the context of degrowth, tracing some of the early moments in the development of the concept and movement in France. It continues with an overview of walking-based methodologies, focusing on their application in critical data studies and critiques of urban datafication. Datafication processes unfold through the increasing presence of technology in urban contexts (e.g., mobile and sensing devices, ubiquitous and embedded computing), while the data generated are extracted to inform so-called 'smart city' solutions, often for profit (Srnicek, 2016). This angle is considered a useful example for how the economic growth paradigm and related extractive (data) practices materialise in

[2] For example, David Bollier and Silke Helfrich, two leading commons activists, conceptualize commoning as set of three domains: social practices, acts of provisioning, and forms of peer governance (Bollier & Helfrich, 2019). Acts of commoning are necessary for the emergence and maintenance of commons.

contemporary urban environments, impacting individual and collective sense of place and the democracy and agency in shaping alternative, sustainable futures. Subsequently, I present and reflect on insights from the artistic collaboration through which, together with the artists, we expanded on walking-based approaches that address urban datafication through a 'walkshop.' Based on these learnings, I formulate two reflexive questions for the degrowth community and introduce the proposition of situated civic-artistic pedagogies as a potential avenue for practice and research to address them.

2. Background

Degrowth, democracy and art

The degrowth community has been rapidly expanding in recent years, beyond radical scholars and activists to diverse academic fields including more traditional scientific bodies (Meissner, 2021) and even to journalism (see recent BBC news item, "*Could 'degrowth' save the world?"*[3]). This is due to the growing recognition that the scale and scope of the transformations needed to address the multiple accelerating socio-ecological crises the world faces go beyond mere incremental changes. Current demands for planetary resources far exceed what is sustainable, while the extent of climate change impacts and socio-ecological injustices can no longer be ignored.

In this context, the concept of degrowth, which in Western Europe emerged in the political and cultural arena of France in the early 1970s as décroissance, is gaining renewed attention for highlighting the critical need to dissociate human (and ecological) well-being from economic growth. The debate started with the publication of the "Limits to Growth" report by the Club of Rome in 1972 (Meadows et al., 1972) and the introduction of the term *décroissance* by the French social philosopher André Gorz, who questioned the compatibility of capitalism with environmental sustainability. Drawing on the work of Georgescu-Roegen regarding the irreversible degradation of natural resources when employed in economic activity, Gorz emphasised that "even at zero growth, the continued consumption of scarce resources will inevitably result in exhausting them completely" (Gorz, 1980, p.13).

[3] https://youtu.be/596dU6pDEU8?si=d2a2r3m_7pemiChg

The now-widespread degrowth movement calls for a profound socio-ecological shift toward a postcapitalist society based on values such as sufficiency, autonomy, and democracy, liberated from the drive to consume and produce and able to radically reduce its material footprint (Savini, 2023). The need for such a shift has led to culture emerging as a key topic in degrowth scholarship in recent years (Meissner, 2021). This acknowledges that a shift in values, everyday habits, and ideologies is also necessary beyond the macro-economic perspective that calls for a drastic reduction in economic output to address ecological limits. Indeed, this would imply a "cultural revolution" (Latouche, 2015) toward the de-commodification of social relations and the creation or re-appropriation of the commons (Gómez-Baggethun, 2015).

This focus on the commons reflects one of the five conceptual roots of décroissance identified by Muraca (2013): the basic-democratic approach, inspired by Ivan Illich's critique of the commodification of social relations as a downside of the capitalist system of production. From this standpoint, degrowth can become a provocative and strategic keyword, which "revitalises the passions needed for the existence of a *public space* [emphasis added]" and for more democracy (Filipo, 2009, cited in Muraca, 2013, p.151). Public space, democracy, and the critique of commodified social relations represent an important link between the countercultural origins of degrowth and radical artistic practices and highlight the arts' potential to generate broader societal transformations. Even before the term emerged, artists had engaged with socio-political and environmental issues linked to capitalist modes of production and consumption in ways that align with degrowth values and objectives.

A prominent example is the Situationists in Paris – a group that involved artists and intellectuals who criticized how advanced capitalism had permeated every aspect of life and culture by mediating social relations and their expression through images (Debord & Nicholson-Smith, 1994). To counteract the capitalist 'society of spectacle,' Situationists developed artistic interventions aimed at liberating citizens from the increasingly predictable and monotonous experience of everyday life and reawakening authentic desires, like the *dérive*. Translated as 'drift,' this practice involves an unplanned journey through the city in which participants allow themselves to be led by prompts from their surroundings and reflect on their everyday relations to their social environment. By re-appropriating the city's public

spaces for its inhabitants, Situationists aimed to combat the *malaise* and boredom of a society of mere spectators and consumers, transforming them into active participants, or indeed, *citizens* (Sadler, 1999). In contemporary cities, this democratic deficit is amplified through the reliance on digital data in policymaking, which is increasingly 'data-driven' (Kitchin, 2016). The algorithms of the 'smart city,' trained on aggregated data of various kinds, including personal traces such as locational data, shape movement and traffic flows, are used in predictive policing or to track and control 'unwanted' behaviours. In the era of "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2019), where digital data is extracted, processed, and sold for profit and efficiency gains, "citizens are sentenced to abide in cities that are algorithmically designed to modify behaviour for ad sales or tax revenue, not human thriving" (Makanadar, 2024, p.2).

Despite capitalist encroachments, such as the increasing commodification and financialization of land and social life, it has been argued that since the 1960's movements in which artists advanced demands for autonomy and democracy, artistic practices have lost their power to subvert the dominant hegemony, having been co-opted by capitalism (Mouffe, 2007). Artistic and cultural production now play a central role in the process of capital valorisation, illustrated for example by 'creative cities' policy frameworks that promote urban revitalisation through culture and creativity. Often driven by neoliberal agendas, creative cities policies can lead to gentrification, displacement, and an increased focus on consumption in public spaces (Pratt, 2011). Reclaiming the transformative potential of the arts in the anti-capitalist struggle requires an understanding of democratic politics as 'agonistic,' centred on difference and struggle rather than on false consensus, and conceptualisations of 'the political' as more than "a set of supposedly technical moves and neutral procedures" (Mouffe, 2007, p.3).

Artistic engagements with frictions are one way the critical power and political role of the arts may be reclaimed. While often perceived as negative or disruptive, for example in public participation contexts, frictions can be productive by highlighting issues people care about and around which they form "attachments," thereby mobilising their participation in politics (Marres, 2007). This sociotechnical understanding of frictions positions them in relation to public controversies and value tensions that arise among different groups within democratic societies. "Controversing" data and datification processes by making visible frictions has also

been proposed as an approach for citizens to challenge the top-down, opaque, and often proprietary algorithms that shape 'smart city' environments (Baibarac-Duignan & de Lange, 2021). In the context of globalisation and capitalism critiques, friction can also be seen as a source of creativity and transformation when universal ideas and practices encounter specific, localised situations, highlighting different perspectives and power relations (Tsing, 2005). Thus, making room for friction by creating "agonistic public spaces, where the objective is to unveil all that is repressed by the dominant consensus" (Mouffe, 2007, p.5) is a way in which critical artistic practices can disrupt dominant orders and contribute to the construction of new subjectivities.

The creation of new subjectivities – new ways of seeing and conceptualising the world – is a crucial dimension of transformation. As philosopher Herbert Marcuse put it, "the need for radical change must be rooted in the subjectivity of individuals themselves, in their intelligence and their passions, their drives and their goals" (Marcuse, 1978, pp.3-4, as cited in Alexander, 2017) and not externally imposed. In the context of the present ecological crisis, this brings to the forefront an important discrepancy with the global definition of the 'problem' in climate change discourse, which ignores how this affects people on the ground in their specific situations (Marres, 2023) and may also limit possibilities for mobilising toward postgrowth futures. Despite being supported by complex, data-rich climate models, calls to address 'global warming' and 'global climate change' present the problem at an aggregate, abstract level, failing to achieve radical change. This "conquering gaze from nowhere" (Haraway, 1988, p.581) is at odds with the ways weather and climate data are collected in specific contexts by machines that require human experience and sensory abilities (Polli, 2018). Similarly, the digital data aggregated to inform smart city solutions reflects place-based, experiential aspects of everyday life, as products of society, (local) culture, and specific moments in time (Dourish & Gomez Cruz, 2018). To achieve any meaningful change would require what Marres proposed in the context of the ecological crises, as a shift of attention from globalised and abstract views to "materiality, embodiment, and connectedness to the world" (Marres, 2023, p.10).

This need to engage people through embodied experiences rather than analytically is also relevant in the context of degrowth, particularly when aiming to foster new cultural values.

There is increasing recognition that cultural interventions and artistic approaches that stimulate embodied experiences can help relocate degrowth struggles from a purely macroeconomic level to lived reality, thereby making space for alternative practices and imaginaries (Alexander, 2017). This relates to the "aesthetic imagination" proposed by Alexander, as one mode of artistic/aesthetic operation through which art can shape new subjectivities and the consciousness needed to shape a postcapitalist world (Alexander, 2017, p.5). Highlighting how art can expand the imagination by providing visions that make new ways of living and being comprehensible, plausible, and attractive, Alexander also stresses that such visions develop social and political significance only when they move from imagination into the body. Rather than aiming for change through an analytic presentation of facts, embodied experiences of alternative futures can open new intellectual and emotional possibilities that shift the "routine ways of seeing, feeling, and acting, establishing the conditions for alternative modes of consciousness" (Alexander, 2017, p.8).

However, Alexander (2017) also points out a misalignment between the potential of critical art practices to emancipate and to shape a new consciousness beyond the rule of capital and the lack of a large mass of people ready for a radical vision. Prefiguration is one way in which the degrowth community has addressed the role of culture in inspiring change by presenting initiatives aligned with degrowth values that perform in the present what a future degrowth society might be like (Meissner, 2021). Prefiguration as a political philosophy and activist strategy prioritizes the performance and embodiment of alternative values and practices in the here-and-now over merely speculative propositions (Botha et al., 2025; Kinna, 2017; Yates, 2015). Prefigurative practices, such as urban agriculture, commoning, and anti-consumption initiatives, can show in tangible and experiential ways that other ways of living are possible, more sustainable, and even desirable. Nevertheless, it has been argued that some forms of degrowth-aligned everyday practices are not possible for everyone; for instance, when access to land or home ownership is needed to support them (Alexander & Gleeson, 2019). In this context, democratizing degrowth ideas and ways of living and generating an effective cultural politics of degrowth may need to go beyond prefiguration efforts. Popularisation has been proposed as one such approach, which could be achieved by building alliances with other social movements and connecting values, practices, and identities to collectively support a degrowth transition (Meissner, 2021).

In this paper, I discuss an additional, complementary cultural strategy that focuses on how artistic practices can contribute to a societal transition beyond growth by challenging imagination through embodied and performative practices. Specifically, I address their role in enhancing awareness of transformative possibilities through embodied multi-sensory engagements in public space (here, involving walking) that place an emphasis on affect and emotion. Instead of generating new provocative or inspiring visions of postgrowth futures, this approach highlights the role of artistic practices in augmenting what is already there. This includes traces of past and present practices and local identity seen as glimpses into other futures and employed as part of participatory processes of co-creating alternative imaginaries aimed at stimulating change from the bottom-up. The process of co-creating alternative imaginaries departing from an enhanced awareness of the here and now – the mundane rather than the spectacular – will be discussed as another way in which artistic practices could prepare the ground for rooting transformation.

3. Enhancing awareness, participation, and imagination through walking: methodological traces

In her noteworthy book, *Wanderlust*, Rebecca Solnit establishes that walking can be performed not only for pleasure or necessity but also as a critical, political, and aesthetic intervention, tracing its origins as an artistic practice to the 1960s (Solnit, 2001). One important characteristic of walking as an intentional method is that it increases attention and prompts reflection on aspects that are usually taken for granted or missed because of our often 'autopilot' forms of interacting with the surrounding environment. Such aspects that tend to escape conscious rationalisation are linked to the multi-sensory and emotional experiences of space and considered 'non-representational' (Thrift, 2008). Walking methodologies that bridge artistic and scientific research emphasise situated, multi-sensory, and embodied experiences as a mode of learning and knowledge production.

This understanding that knowledge production can also occur through the body resonates with the concept of embodiment, which draws on the work of feminist philosophers, theorists, and artists (e.g., Butler, 1988; Dourish, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1962). The concept problematises the dominant modernist paradigm and the Cartesian dualities that

privilege the mind, the male, and the rational over the body, the female, and the emotional (Snepvangers et al., 2018). From this embodiment perspective, walking engenders a cognitive process that is "experiential, collaborative, and mediated, but also internal and deliberatively reflexive" (Snepvangers et al., 2018, p. 3). Moreover, when combined with deep engagement with a place, walking enables (new) connections to form, and relationships to be questioned and re-imagined (Sobel, 2004). This role of practice and embodied performativity as a mode of knowing and knowledge production has been interrogated and explored in the context of arts-based research (e.g., Leavy, 2015). In this context, walking-based approaches can help undermine taken for granted meanings and ideas, providing critical tools for creative thinking that stimulate new perspectives and forms of knowledge through the bodily senses.

The potential of walking to enhance critical reflection has more recently been adopted by urban media and critical data scholars and has informed the development of walking-based methodologies that investigate the datafication of culture, urban space, and society (van Es & Schäfer, 2017). Gathered under the umbrella of 'data walking,' these methodologies use walking to explore and understand the presence and impact of digital data and networked infrastructures in urban environments and on social life. With the aim of stimulating democratic debates on these topics, data walking has been proposed as a useful method to address digital data as material and situated (e.g., in a physical web of cables, wires, and tracking devices) and as constitutive of everyday life experiences (van Es & de Lange, 2020).

A well-known data walking method is the 'data walkshop' developed by Alison Powell[4]. The method emerged in the context of education as a process that encouraged students to observe data mediations in urban space and that combined participatory ethnography with performance. It was developed to widen civic engagement with datafication and to generate embodied knowledge about digital data through shared experience of observing and moving through urban space (Powell, 2018). According to Powell, the data walkshop is "a way of producing alternative knowledge about the city, using performance to destabilise social hierarchy and reform the potential for collective experience" (Powell, 2018, p.220). The method involves assigning specific roles to participants, who are divided into small groups

[4] https://www.datawalking.uk/

(e.g., navigator, photographer, mapmaker, note-taker, and collector), to enhance the intentionality of the walk and focus observation and reflection on a specific data-related theme that the group decides upon prior to starting the walk (e.g., ethics, surveillance, social justice). At the end, each group shares their experience and reflections with the others. Through her approach, Powell aims to create a "radically bottom-up process of exploring and defining data, big data, and data politics from the perspectives of […] citizens" (Powell, 2018, p.213), which allows for the production of "situated, everyday, emotional or non-expert knowledge" (Powell, 2018, p.229).

Another relevant approach for this study is illustrated by the 'Data Walking' project developed by David Hunter[5], which explores how different forms of data gathering and visualisation can build a rich and multidimensional picture of an area. A participatory and collaborative project, Data Walking acknowledges the coexistence of plural understandings and experiences of the urban environment and the city's richness in 'data' (Hunter, 2018), which, in his case, goes beyond digital data. The project experiments with analogue methods and digital tools, including smartphones and creative coding techniques, to collect and visualise data with the participants on issues relevant to their communities, like pollution, flora, or fauna. The walk is designed to stimulate an exploratory attitude among participants, prompting them to rediscover everyday environments by gathering data about them and to teach data literacy by experimenting with different methods and tools for data collection and visualization (Masson et al., 2020). Typically, multiple walks are conducted in the area chosen by the participants, sometimes over more than one day, to generate a "layered, multidimensional 'dataspace'" (Hunter, 2018, p. 12). In terms of data visualisations, participants are encouraged to decide what data to visualise and how, drawing on data art practice as a source of inspiration (Hunter, 2018, pp. 18-19). While not specifically focused on encouraging a critical scrutiny of "datafied" environments, which is the aim of Powell's (2018) walkshop, Hunter's walks foster generative knowledge and resonate with participatory and creative research practices, such as citizen sensing (van Es & de Lange, 2020). Their open format stimulates participation through learning-by-doing and autonomy over the thematic focus of the walks

[5] https://datawalking.com/

and the choice of tools for data collection and mapping, which can empower communities to produce knowledge relevant to them.

These examples of data walking formats illustrate the potential of walking methodologies to generate new knowledge and promote reflexivity through embodied and multi-sensory engagements with the environment. Importantly, they can enhance bottom-up participation, foster a sense of publicness by helping to identify 'matters of concern' (Powell, 2018), and form public spaces around locally relevant issues (Hunter, 2018). When combined with artistic practices, walking, data gathering and representation can challenge taken-for-granted ways of knowing, experiences, and singular perspectives, opening space for collective creativity and imagination. At the same time, the enhanced awareness and reflexivity that intentional walking fosters can bring to light frictions between different values and paradigms, particularly when dominant or top-down visions collide with lived experience (Baibarac-Duignan & de Lange, 2021; van den Eijnden et al., 2022). These connections between walking, data collection and expression, frictions, and collective imagination are at the core of the study and methodology discussed below.

4. A multi-sensory experiment in public space

Building on the methodological traces discussed previously, this paper reflects on how artistic practices involving experiential engagements with an environment can prompt imagination and open emotional possibilities about alternative futures. In doing so, the aim is to open a discussion about the importance of affective engagement with everyday environments and the creation of experiential, imaginative, and emotional space for postgrowth futures in everyday life. This paper employed walking to draw attention to coexisting alternatives that offer glimpses of what a future beyond the growth paradigm might be like in the present. While possibilities for other futures are likely to be all around us, they can be easily missed or even ignored (van den Eijnden et al., 2022). This is because they might not align with our usual frames or ways of looking at the world, often preconditioned by dominant paradigms reproduced through everyday practices, or perhaps because of a lack of memory of and emotional connection with how things could have been otherwise.

The significance of emotional connectivity has been addressed in academic work investigating the effects of loss of places on individuals and communities, including through neighbourhood gentrification processes (Shaw & Hagemans, 2015), environmental damage, and climate change (Albrecht et al., 2007; Elliott, 2018). Concepts such as solastalgia (Albrecht et al., 2007) and ecological emotions (e.g., eco-anxiety, eco-grief, and eco-hope) highlight the significance of sense of place, cultural identity, and emotions in stimulating imagination and action towards alternative, more sustainable futures (Herr, 2022). Moreover, ecological emotions have been shown to influence pro-environmental and more frugal consumption behaviours and potentially generate a sustainable consumption culture in urban communities (Gkargkavouzi et al., 2025). As such, affective relations with an environment and emotional connectivity could offer an important entry point into shaping postgrowth transformations.

The methodology of this paper is centred on a 'walkshop' format that emerged from my collaboration with an artist collective, in the neighbourhood where they situated their practice at the time. The neighbourhood, located in the Dutch city of Utrecht, has been undergoing (re)development for the past few years. This characteristic of being in between states of development was seen to offer tangible examples of how this area was intended to become (e.g., through urbanisation policies), while still retaining glimpses into how the future could have been otherwise (e.g., building on its agricultural past identity). The overall methodology combined elements from the data walking approaches developed by Powell (2018) and Hunter (2018) and was infused with the specific creative practices of the collaborating artists.

What is 'Data' in the Neighbourhood? A Walkshop Outline

Leidsche Rijn, the neighbourhood where the workshop took place, is a relatively new 'Vinex' neighbourhood of Utrecht, built in an area with a thriving agricultural past. 'Vinex' stands for "*Vierde Nota Ruimtelijke Ordening Extra*" (in English, the "*Fourth Memorandum on Extra Spatial Planning")*. This was a policy briefing note of the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, released in 1991 that designated large outer city areas for large-scale new housing development. The wider Leidsche Rijn area is the largest Vinex

neighbourhood project in the Netherlands, housing over 100,000 residents in 2025[6]. Its size and presence of new 'datafied' shopping districts have raised interest among creative data practitioners and researchers in exploring existing and potential interactions between people and data. One example is *Cirque du Data* project[7], which was a collaboration between City Lab RAUM, a placemaking organisation in Leidsche Rijn, and a data design agency, CLEVER°FRANKE. The aim of the project was to engage visitors with locally collected open data that exposed the urban life of the neighbourhood's residents through installations, visualizations, and a theatrical show. At the same time, beyond providing an experimental terrain for critical and creative data engagements, the neighbourhood's development on former agricultural lands makes it a rich site for researching questions of sustainability and the role of data in this context.

The study was inspired by these parallel avenues of inquiry and began with a relatively pragmatic question about how to involve citizens in meaningful discussions about 'data' and how this might enhance an area's 'sustainability'. Both concepts ('data' and 'sustainability') tend to remain abstract and elusive in everyday life, remote from other daily preoccupations, despite provocative artistic endeavours, such as the example above. To address this issue, this paper set out to experiment with creative methods that could engage Leidsche Rijn residents with these topics in ways that addressed the everyday experience of local environments and to explore how neighbourhood data could help shape sustainability values for the area. Reaching out to an artist collective situated in the area was prompted by the need to better understand the context and create opportunities to engage with residents. The artists who became involved in the collaboration (a group of three women) have extensive knowledge of the area and established relationships with local communities over time through their ongoing projecst; for example, "*The Travelling Farm Museum of Forgotten Skills" (TFM)*[8], a form of live and collaborative archiving of stories and forgotten past agricultural skills. As TFM illustrates, their artistic practice is not about creating artefacts or objects; it aims to foster relations and collaborations between people (e.g., farmers, artists,

[6] https://utrecht.incijfers.nl/mosaic/monitor-wonen/bevolking-en-huishoudens
[7] https://www.cleverfranke.com/project/cirque-du-data
[8] https://tfmdepot.hotglue.me/

residents, researchers, students), the land, and its non-human inhabitants, while focusing on commoning sustainable food-related practices and knowledge (Zwarts et al., 2024).

The collaboration with these artists through the TFM project allowed the connection between my research interest in data with wider techno-social issues concerning culture and sustainability. Just at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in September 2020, we co-organised a workshop entitled "*Sowing Sustainable Prospects: Explore the Landscape of Leidsche Rijn and Imagine the Future*." As suggested by its title, the initial aims of the workshop were to enhance participants' awareness of their everyday environments, identify data they found important, and stimulate imagination on alternative and more sustainable neighbourhood futures.

However, neither of us were coders nor had experience with processing digital data, which led to reflections regarding knowledge-power dynamics and epistemological issues in the datafied city. The enchantment with digital data and knowledge (among decision makers and technology corporations as well as some creative organisations) tends to eclipse attention to the significance of non-digital forms of knowledge, raising questions about the role of (absent) embodied, tacit, situated, and non-codified knowledges about the city (de Hoop et al., 2021). Contestations surrounding digital data often involve their lack of meaning, decontextualization, and false portrayals of smooth and frictionless visions of a city improved by data and smart technology, which limit democratic engagement and debate. Even well-designed and aesthetically pleasing data visualisations risk overlooking the decisions and choices that underpin their making, and the fact that what is made visible (or left out) can significantly influence perceptions and discourse (Baibarac-Duignan & de Lange, 2021).

In our walkshop, we wanted to highlight this tension surrounding data by exploring questions such as: *What is data and how it can be meaningful for the future of the neighbourhood*[9]. These questions were intended as a provocation to engage with everyday environments differently, to encourage the observation of power structures and knowledges at play through material rather than digital data, and to reflect on how they shape or limit possibilities for

[9] https://tfmdepot.hotglue.me/?workshop

more sustainable futures. Drawing on my research interest in data walking methods and the artists' practice involving mobile artistic interventions and a participatory museum on wheels (a repurposed 'bakfiets,' or cargo bike[10]), the workshop method was co-created as a low-tech experimental and speculative 'walkshop.'

Instead of engaging with data understood in a technological sense (e.g., like in Powell's (2018) walkshops), we decided to invite our walkshop participants to openly explore the landscape 'data' of the neighbourhood in an area centred on the artists' studio, through the broad themes of sustainability, nature, and food. Inspired by Powell's (2018) approach, the participants walked in small groups with the tasks to take (instant) photos and collect any fragments of the landscape that made them think about these themes (e.g., objects or discarded items, non-living elements from nature, stories from people they met) (Figure 1). After this 'data walk,' the groups organised the physical materials in thematic collections, on a large tablecloth placed on the floor of the artists' studio (Figure 2). Together, we discussed the meanings of the various items and mapped the collective data. The data mapping was done by making associations between the items and grouping them into emerging themes, with an emphasis on the meanings and values they reflected. The relationships between the items were marked with paper tape and annotated with a brief explanation or word. At the end of the mapping, a 'data constellation' emerged, comprising the collected items (objects, photos) and the links between them (tape) (Figure 3).

[10] https://tfmdepot.hotglue.me/?ebryonmuseum

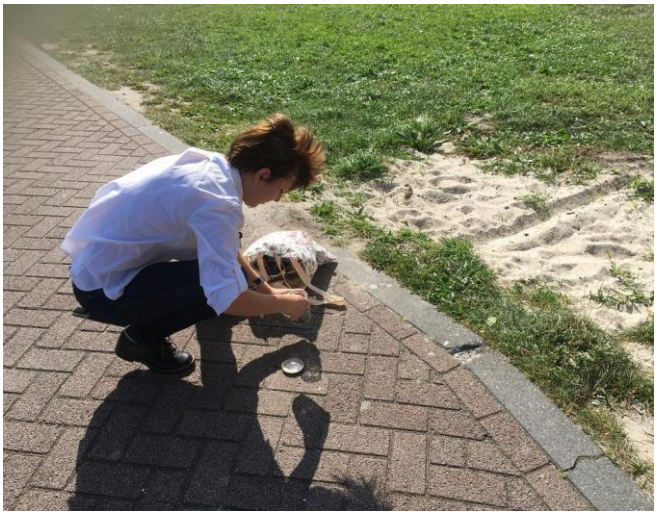


Figure 1: ‘Data’ collection (image credits: Asia Komarova)



Figure 2: ‘Data’ analysis (image credits: Tamalone van den Eijnden)

Subsequently, we used the constellation as a prompt to re-imagine alternative futures for the neighbourhood in the form of writing speculative postcards (or stories) from an imagined future. To creatively make the transition from awareness (*the here and now*) to speculation (*imagined futures*), we used a short artistic video[11], which projected the participants into an a-temporal, post-COVID-19 future. The timeframe was not predetermined but opened to their imagination. The participants were asked to relate the postcard to a theme from the constellation, connect it to a place of interest from their walk, and then write it from the perspective of a non-human actor present or suggested in the collected data (Figure 4).

[11] https://vimeo.com/426724495



Figure 3: 'Data' constellation (image credits: Merel Zwarts)

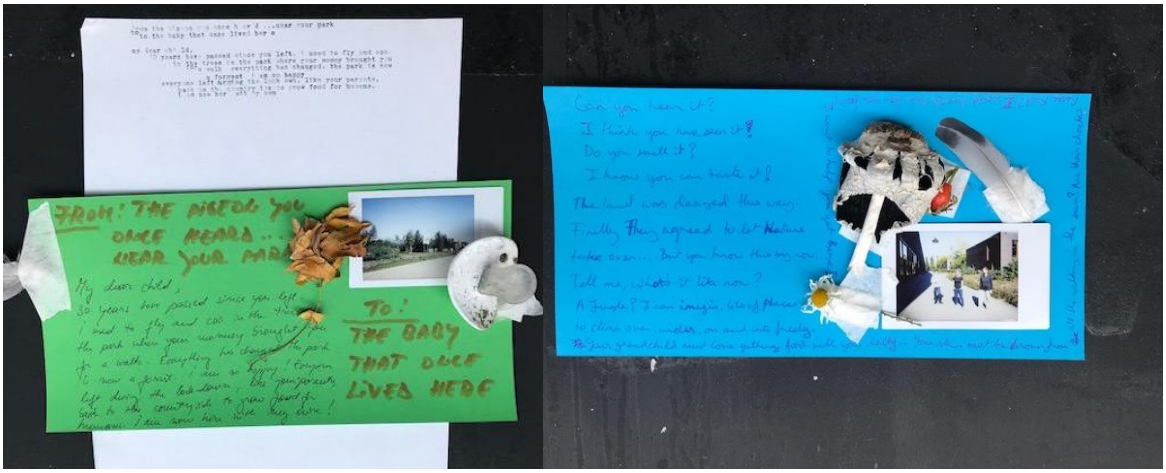


Figure 4: Examples of postcards from the future (credits: the author)

Walkshop Reflections

The walkshop was small in scale (six participants) and experimental in nature. The participants included artists from the collective and residents, most of whom were women. It was the first methodological iteration in our collaboration (see also Baibarac-Duignan & van den Eijnden, 2025) and an experiment that combined different methods and ways of working. Moreover, it brought together academic and artistic knowledge and practices in response to a specific context (a new residential area and shopping complex in Leidsche Rijn) and a moment in time (the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also limited the number of participants).

Nevertheless, the walkshop experiment enabled the emergence of new understandings around the notion of 'data' and insights into the role of arts-based approaches in stimulating collective creativity and imagination about alternative futures.

The types of physical data collected (Figure 5) ranged from branches, stones, wilted flowers and feathers to plastic wrappings of pasta, trashed cans, a baby's lost pacifier, a broken audio cassette, and an old horseshoe. They all told the participants something about the environment they walked through, pointing out signs of human and non-human past or present existence. Moreover, the task of collecting physical objects or other environmental fragments as tangible data prompted participants to reflect on them. This included their volume, weight, and degree of cleanliness, as they needed to be touched and transported. This conscious decision-making about data led to the collection of items that raised some specific concerns and matters they cared about. For instance, some participants discussed the amount of trash in the streets and green spaces, as well as the limited play areas for children. While digital data and the algorithms used to transform them are abstract, invisible, and intangible, they rely on processing systems that require large quantities of energy and water as well as human labour, which arguably perpetuates the extractive capitalist paradigm and ecological harm. In this case, the physical data collection task and the slow pace of the walk invited attentiveness and care for the environment being explored, reflecting the notion of "just good enough data" in the context of citizen sensing projects (Gabrys & Pritchard, 2018, p. 6).

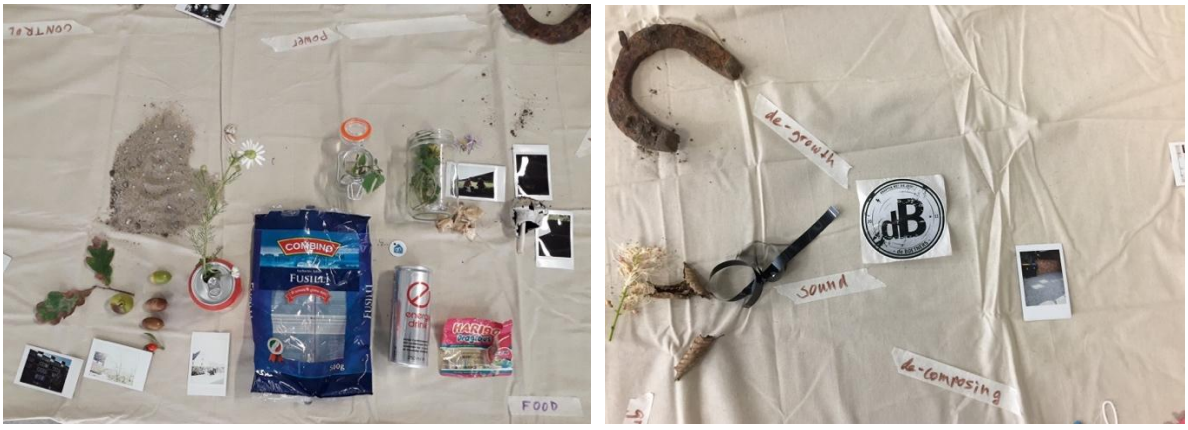


Figure 5: Examples of collected data (image credits: Tamalone van den Eijnden)

Walking with the task to explore the environment in an attentive way brought to light values and visions embedded in the environment that would have otherwise been missed or not considered. Physical aspects of the built environment suggested a design vision centred on consumption-oriented places, illustrated by the many wellness and yoga establishments observed in the area. Moreover, two themes that typically come up in technology-focused data walks –'power' and 'control' – also came up during the discussion of the walk experience and mapping, expressed on paper tags in the mapped constellation. Here, and possibly inspired by the area's agricultural past, they were associated with extractive relationships with nature and human control over crops and plant species. Participants discussed their feelings of sadness and rejection of nature (and un-wanted humans) provoked by the tall hedges around specific spaces, the highly manicured lawns and pre-selected biodiversity (e.g., cultivated 'wild' flowers, designated "honden toilet" / "dogs' toilet"; see Figure 6). Thus, observing the surroundings (even known places) in an attentive way introduced discussions around the themes explored closer to the participants lived experience. It stimulated new ways of 'seeing' and relating to one's surroundings and public spaces, beyond what is normally visible because of (financial) interests or power relations.

The mapping task, which involved articulating meanings for the items collected, making sense of connections or frictions between them, and identifying emerging themes, helped to make more tangible the feelings and values brought up by the walk. A branch of a hedge and a handful of stones, both hard and coarse materials, illustrated control and rejection. A 'dB' sticker, the magnetic tape from an old music cassette, and an old horseshoe served as metaphors for the friction between the noise of a busy shopping area and the intimate sounds of a bygone agricultural era (Figure 5, right).



Figure 6: Designated toilet (image credits: Tamalone van den Eijnden)

This mapping part of the walkshop connected individual group collections and it was a form of collaborative performance: the participants physically interacted with the data collected, moved it around, and linked the items through discussion and negotiation (Figure 2). The outcome – the data constellation – was shaped by the group and their discussion; it was co-created, situated, and relational. While experiential and embodied aspects of datafication are addressed through data walking (Baibarac-Duignan & de Lange, 2021; Powell, 2018), this walkshop illustrates an example of a discursive and performative method that can help make sense of data in ways that engage imagination and prompt affective relations (Dourish & Gómez Cruz, 2018) in accessible ways. Even if only a partial and subjective 'map' of the area, the constellation of items, tape, and words on a white canvas was the negotiated and co-created result of the participants' experiences, thoughts, and feelings. It was not a mapping of a problem, and even less so of a solution, but rather a way of creating a shared understanding and common ground from which to imagine (and maybe start to desire) other futures than those made possible by others.



Figure 7: Fragments of neighbourhood futures (image credits: Merel Zwarts)

The process of crafting together the data constellation gave the participants a sense of achievement, contrary to the passive and invisible labour involved in digital data generation, extraction, and processing. The constellation was a tangible result of the collective mapping effort. Thus, despite feelings of sadness or loss that some participants experienced during the walk in connection with specific places and elements of the environment, the performative map-making seemed to support a level of optimism that encouraged creation. Through the making of the collective artefact, frictions and tensions symbolised by the collected items were translated into issues that the participants cared about. These issues of care, in turn, raised new (or now articulated) values and affective relations with the neighbourhood, subsequently expressed in the postcards from the future:

> "*Tiny acorn, what will you become?*
> *A mighty oak growing strong and tall,*
> *Seeing the neighbourhood rise and fall, witnessing the lives of men big and small.*
> *Will you see this place survive and thrive,*
> *Seeing children playing with your leaves,*
> *Grown ups talking in your shade.*

Nature in balance with the works of man? [...]" (fragment of postcard).

At the same time, the postcards pointed to connections between enhanced awareness (fostered by the walk), affective and sensory engagements with data (during collection and mapping), and agency in imagining alternative futures (through formulating future stories):

"Can you hear it?
I think you have seen it?
Do you smell it?
I think you can taste it?
The land was designed that way.
Finally, they agreed to let Nature take over…
But you know things now…
Tell me, what's it like now? [...]" (fragment of postcard).

Thus, while public participation is often reduced to data visualisations that narrow down what can be discussed or imagined (Baibarac-Duignan & de Lange, 2021), fostering a multi-sensory engagement with everyday neighbourhood data brought to the forefront aspects that were meaningful for the participants. This walkshop built on an enhanced awareness of its past and present, and thus 'visibility' of alternative paradigms and possibilities. During the final group discussion, the postcards were brought together as fragments of alternative neighbourhood futures that opened reflections on human and non-human coexistence (Figure 7). As one of the artists later pointed out, bringing to life and relating diverse (past, present, or speculative) stories about the neighbourhood could be a way to foster more personal, intimate relationships with its human and non-human nature, helping to generate a sense of place and connectedness. This could become a collective process of re-storying the future of the neighbourhood, questioning (or 'controversing') the status quo, and potentially paving the way towards more sustainable futures.

5. Discussion: cultivating degrowth sensibilities through multi-sensory arts-based pedagogies

In this section, I will reflect on the walkshop experiment in the context of the degrowth debate and articulate a proposition for how the insights gained from it could be expanded beyond this situated experience. Earlier in the paper, I discussed the increasing interest in the role of culture in fostering transformations towards a society beyond growth. Cultural interventions and artistic approaches focused on embodied experiences are seen as offering the potential to shape new values and practices that break away from the present emphasis on continuous production and consumption (Alexander, 2017). For instance, the notion of prefiguration has gained popularity within the academic and artistic realms as an embodied way in which people can experience what a postgrowth future might be like by constructing alternative (utopian) social relations in the present (Botha et al., 2025; Meissner, 2021). What the study shows is that artistic practices could add a further dimension to current efforts of (re)creating engaging alternatives and prompting the realisation that more sustainable futures that encapsulate degrowth values are possible and desirable.

Instead of generating new visions of inspiring alternatives to engage the public, the walkshop experiment indicated the value of augmenting what is already there; the coexisting alternative paradigms present in the cracks of the present but often invisible from sight. The data walk allowed breaking the routine of everyday interactions with the neighbourhood and thus seeing the present beyond the consumerist culture and power relations embedded in the environment. Sharing the walking experience and crafting the collective artefact (the data constellation) allowed the articulation of questions regarding power and control raised by aspects that might otherwise remain unquestioned, unobserved, or simply taken as a given (e.g., designated dog toilets and elected plant species in green areas). The performative approach to the data mapping, where physical data was brought in relation and collectively discussed, highlighted the affective and cultural dimensions of the area explored. These were further articulated through individual reflection and expressed in the postcards from the future.

While eco-emotions are often connected to feelings of hopelessness or powerlessness in the context of climate action (Albrecht et al., 2007), the postcards pointed to alternative futures where values like care for a (re)connected human and non-human world have materialised. There is a fine line between complex emotions, like eco-grief, and pro-environmental and less consumerist behaviours, due to how the perception of a lack of agency or power to change current patterns can block action. Nevertheless, eco-emotions are important for achieving a sustainable consumption culture in urban communities (Gkargkavouzi et al., 2025). While this small-scale walkshop experiment did not lead to environmental action (which was also beyond its scope), its artistic components seemed to indicate a change in how the participants related to the neighbourhood and non-human nature, even if temporarily. Moreover, a sense of agency in reshaping its future seemed to emerge in the process of formulating the postcards, bringing to the fore the values, meanings, and desires held by their authors.

These observations regarding the emotional dimension of the walkshop methodology open relevant questions for the wider degrowth community. Before grand aspirations for futures beyond growth, *how do we first cultivate other ways of seeing and feeling, in the here and now? How do we create conceptual and experiential space for making futures beyond growth desirable, not only for some but for many, situated in their lived realities and everyday life?*

The need for new ways of seeing and conceptualising the world and, particularly, for the emergence of a *new consciousness* has already been raised in the context of degrowth, as necessary to drive transformation towards a postcapitalist world from *within* individuals (e.g., by Alexander, 2017, drawing on Marcuse,1978). More broadly, in the context of enhancing democracy and fostering societal transformations, other thinkers also emphasised the need for a new consciousness. For instance, in his influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire adds the significance of power relations in the development of a new consciousness, which is particularly relevant for wider societal transformations (Freire, 1978). Central to his pedagogy is the power imbalance expressed in the existence of an ‘oppressed’ consciousness and an ‘oppressor’ one; he further argued that liberation and emancipation require praxis, which he defined as the “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1978, p. 133). From Freire’s perspective, liberation cannot be externally imposed on (or even gifted to) the oppressed - it must be achieved through praxis.

Reflecting on the walkshop experiment, I extend Freire's proposition to the development of pedagogies for postgrowth futures to support the emergence of a collective new consciousness needed for transformation. While this is an incipient proposition, I argue that such pedagogies could help address the questions formulated above regarding the 'how' behind achieving the necessary cultural shifts to a society beyond growth: how to foster new ways of seeing and feeling, and how to desire (in hearts and bodies) other futures. Calls for degrowth pedagogies have been recently made in the context of education. For instance, calls to stimulate sustainability innovation in business schools (Liuzzo & Tsai, 2025) as an alternative to the Education for Sustainable Development Goals framework (Kopnina, 2020). In addition, I propose exploring and developing *civic* pedagogies that bring the degrowth debate into the streets, outside formal or even informal educational environments, as a means of generating civic praxis.

Building on critical pedagogies, civic pedagogies have been expanding across the fields of urban design, education, and geography, at the intersection of academia and (critical) spatial practice (Antaki et al., 2024). Ultimately, the aim of civic pedagogy is to empower citizens and build agency to take transformative action on their built environment, using the environment as a site and place of learning (Martinez, 2019). In the context of degrowth, such pedagogies would situate processes of imagining alternative futures in communities and help cultivate degrowth sensibilities by drawing on an enhanced awareness of the present and reflection on everyday life and its (infra)structures. In Freirean terms, this would support the articulation of "generative themes" (Freire, 1978) drawn on lived experience, while connecting to broader social and ecological issues, and widening participation in societal transformation. Importantly, civic pedagogies for degrowth would address issues of power and paradigm, which are embedded in public space but often remain unacknowledged and unquestioned. Beyond using a place as a starting point for sensory and experiential learning (Sobel, 2004), such pedagogies would need to foster creative, community-based processes that build agency and prompt transformative action.

Inspired by the study discussed here, civic pedagogies for degrowth could therefore have a specific focus. This could consist of an emphasis on multi-sensory arts-based practices that, even if only temporarily, break the monotony of everyday life, making space for questioning

the status quo, for friction, and for seeing otherwise. Methods such as data walking highlight the significance of experiential engagement with the environment for interrogating what is normally taken for granted and generating situated knowledge (Masson et al., 2020). The walkshop experiment indicated that multi-sensory engagements with physical neighbourhood data, through collection and collective mapping, can support imagination by augmenting attention to embedded values, meanings, and alternative paradigms. To become meaningful, data needs to be seen, heard, and smelled: *"Can you hear it? I think you have seen it. Do you smell it? I think you can taste it"* (from one of the postcards).

This emphasis on senses can trigger affective relations to the neighbourhood and generate new emotions and a sense of place, even in the absence of memories or historical connections to it, which is particularly significant in new communities. It has been noted that place-based pedagogies could enhance children's sense of place and heritage knowledge in post-industrial urban communities, while stimulating their participation in civic life and shape pro-environmental behaviours (Grimshaw & Mates, 2022). In new communities, such as Leidsche Rijn, with disappearing or neglected agricultural heritage, multi-sensory arts-based pedagogies could foster new place attachments, generate new stories and memories, and potentially stimulate more sustainable and less consumerist practices.

Moreover, the walkshop experiment illustrated how artists and artistic practices could help mediate the process of co-creating situated narratives of alternative futures that reflect degrowth values, while retaining and reflecting local specificities and community knowledge. What degrowth means on the ground and how this might materialise in different communities and their everyday lives will likely vary in different contexts. Artistic approaches could play an important role in stimulating meaning-making about alternative perspectives and values that depart from the cracks and fringes of a dominant present, and in crafting new situated stories that inspire transformation from within a community rather than being externally imposed. Reflecting on Freire's (1978) position that liberation and emancipation must come from within, this suggests the need to open space for a multiplicity of futures beyond growth.

This multiplicity will likely come with its frictions. Yet, allowing for it could address what some scholars highlighted as a burden of proof upon defenders of degrowth to demonstrate how their policies will avoid harming the most vulnerable (Lenzi, 2025). Reclaiming the streets through civic-artistic practices may be one way in which the degrowth debate is brought into communities, democratising the future and helping to shape meaningful visions rooted in lived realities and knowledge. While a challenge remains in how to connect and organise diverse and multi-sited future visions and practices, this may add further strength to wider societal and cultural moves towards popularising postgrowth futures, from the bottom-up.

6. Conclusion

Twenty years ago, François Schneider crossed France on foot in an attempt to popularise degrowth among the wider public. Many decades before, in the early 1960s', Situationists developed a critical artistic and political practice centred on walking – the dérive – aimed to reclaim public space from a place of consumption to a place for citizenship, where power relations and dominant social orders could be challenged. Inspired by these examples, in this article I focused on how the ordinary mode of walking could be reclaimed through artistic interventions in processes of cultural transformations towards a society beyond growth. There has been an increasing acknowledgement within the degrowth community that cultural shifts are needed in parallel with, or possibly even before, an economic transition to degrowth – what Latouche (2105) called a "cultural revolution" that challenges current imaginaries, values, and practices. This is reflected in the growing interest in artistic practices, particularly in how artists can generate aesthetic propositions that provide alternative narratives and inspire possibilities for change through embodiment and affect.

Drawing on diverse literature from science and technology studies, urban media studies, political theory, and environmental philosophy, I discussed a further role that artistic practices could play in a societal transition to degrowth and that would reclaim their critical power in challenging dominant paradigms. This would place an emphasis on making room for frictions, both as attachments that mobilise participation in politics (Marres, 2023) and as a source of creativity resulting when globalising ideas encounter local specificities (Tsing, 2005). Artistic engagements with frictions, from this perspective, could disrupt dominant orders generating

agonistic public spaces (Mouffe, 2007) and contributing to the construction of new subjectivities – or new ways of seeing and conceptualising the world so that a future beyond consumerism and growth becomes desirable. To ground this claim, I discussed an experimental walkshop format that drew inspiration from data walking approaches in critical data studies – a domain in which the growth paradigm is reflected in the notion of datafication and its democratic-deficit consequences. Developed in collaboration with an artist collective, the walkshop placed an emphasis on multi-sensory engagements with the environment, collective sense-making and speculation, and situated discussions around data and sustainability in the context of a specific neighbourhood.

The material, embodied, and performative engagements with data encountered in public space illustrated how intentional walking could open space for new values and meanings, focusing attention on matters of care and stimulating agency in imagining alternative futures. The sustainability challenge and the futures discourse moved down, from a globalising glance to the everyday, the spaces we commonly encounter but rarely ponder on, and which if paid attention to, can tell us stories of power and control while drawing attention to alternative possibilities. Thus, instead of generating new visions that aim to engage an audience with alternative futures (often, in spectacular ways), this approach foregrounds the role of artistic practices in augmenting the present to stimulate collective imagination about alternative futures that challenge the status quo. This reflects the concept of 'gluing' alternative futures (Baibarac-Duignan & Medeşan, 2023) by creating possibilities for reconfiguring human and non-human relations through situated, mediated, and relational processes. Situated encounters with the neighbourhood and mediated by artistic practices showed glimpses into other potential futures. This illustrates how finding cracks in the present, putting them in relation and amplifying them through participatory processes of co-creating alternative stories rooted in place and local knowledge could be a way through which artistic practices prepare the ground for the degrowth transformation.

However, this approach also shows how limitations to possibilities for transformation remain. While the experimental walkshop was carried out in public space (public streets, squares, and green areas), it also brings to light a certain lack of 'publicness' of designed urban space - a space of control rather than desire, which limits possibilities for democratically shaping

alternative futures, beyond the mainstream visions of growth. This raises critical questions about the very possibility of achieving postgrowth futures without liberating (physical, imaginative, and emotional) space from commodified paradigms of a good life. Civic-artistic pedagogies, as proposed above, could be a way to cultivate the kinds of sensibilities and affective adaptations needed to reconfigure relations and generate new values and meanings. In this paper, I have tried to explore and elaborate on a potential way through which this could unfold, activated by artistic-academic collaborations and locally driven questions. More research is needed to further position and unpack what these civic-artistic pedagogies may entail and what ingredients may be needed in practice.

For instance, such approaches to degrowth might require a different way of thinking about 'public space' – not as predetermined functions but as "democratic ateliers" (Asenbaum & Hanusch, 2021) for participation in shaping postgrowth futures anchored in lived realities and everyday life. It would also need artistic practices that can operate outside the capitalist structures and where artistic and cultural production do not have to align with notions of capital valorisation. As one of the artists who participated in the walkshop put it, statements like "I don't sell anything" are often met with wonder that artistic outputs may not always entail some form of consumption, or the creation of an artefact or object for sale. Can space be made for artistic practices to really regain their critical power without subscribing to the mainstream and escaping the everyday pressures of survival[12]? Yet, speculative and creative methods can 'glue' diverse future imaginaries by giving room to multiple perspectives and voices, while exposing diverse values, worries, and aspirations about urban futures. Can space be made for a multiplicity of postgrowth alternatives, co-created and situated in their contexts and communities? What frictions might this multiplicity bring and how might a diversity of local alternatives come together and generate larger scale change? Answers to these questions, while not easy to find and needing transdisciplinary approaches, may help us better understand how departing from the here and now could help assemble new practices in the present so that other futures can actually come about.

[12] Ireland, for example, has been piloting a scheme to introduce a Basic Income for the Arts to support artists and creative workers (https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/basic-income-arts/).

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Use of artificial intelligence

In accordance with Degrowth Journal policy, generative AI was not used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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