

MASTER THESIS SOCIETY, SUSTAINABILITY AND PLANNING

ECOVILLAGES AS CATALYSTS FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITION IN THE GLOBAL NORTH:

A CASE STUDY ON WOLDWIJK'S ROLE IN CHALLENGING THE WESTERN DOMINANT SOCIAL PARADIGM



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Figure 1: Overview of Woldwijk. (Woldwijk Facebook, 2023)

Abstract

In the context of the ongoing climate crisis and unsustainable living practices, intentional communities emerged as alternative models for sustainable living. Among these, ecovillages stand out as experimental spaces for exploring self-sufficiency, sustainable practices, and innovative lifestyles. This study focuses on the potential role of ecovillages, using Woldwijk as a case study, in challenging the Western Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) towards sustainability.

The research encompasses ethnographic research within Woldwijk. Ecovillages like Woldwijk are envisioned as potential catalysts for societal transformation, challenging the dominant paradigms of continuous economic growth and consumption. Woldwijk, situated in the north of the Netherlands, operates under a temporary lease arrangement with a municipality, making it a unique living laboratory for sustainable practices. This research explores how Woldwijk's initiatives and practices align with the principles of sustainability, its challenges, and opportunities for integration into mainstream society.

The study reveals that while Woldwijk displays a high degree of inviting openness, fostering connections within the broader community remains a challenge. The allocation of private space influences social engagement, suggesting that communal spaces could enhance interaction. Woldwijk's embeddedness in the region is growing, albeit slowly, with activities enhancing the liveability of the surroundings. This recommends tighter collaboration between the municipality of Groningen and Woldwijk. The findings also highlight practices with the potential for translation. The research concludes that ecovillages like Woldwijk exhibit the potential to challenge the Western DSP by promoting sustainable practices and innovations. While not a panacea, they offer insights into alternative sustainable living. This study emphasizes the need for greater collaboration between ecovillages and mainstream institutions to maximize their impact.

Key Concepts: Sustainability Transition, Ecovillages, Degrowth, Western Dominant Social Paradigm, Translation, Upscaling, Configuration

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The world is in the middle of a climate crisis. The way the majority of the planet's population is living at the moment is exhausting natural resources, diminishing biodiversity, and contributing significantly to global warming (Escribano, 2020; Ergas, 2015; Ulug et al., 2021). Efforts to combat global climate change and reducing humanity's carbon footprint, have proven insufficient despite ambitious sustainability policies (Görg, 2021; IPCC, 2023; Stoddard, 2021). One significant reason for this inefficacy is the continued influence of the economic growth paradigm, albeit in greener variations (Boggadóttir, 2017; Stoddard, 2021). Critics argue that achieving genuine sustainability is challenging due to the Western Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) (Casey, 2020). The Western DSP consists of societal values and habits and is closely linked to economic and political liberalism, economic growth, and consumption (Arora et al., 2020; Casey, 2020; Stoddard, 2021). Sustainability policies within the Western DSP tend to prioritize conventional economic approaches like technological and market innovations, competitive advantage, and individualism (Arora, 2020; Savini, 2021). As of today, they have not produced the desired results regarding climate change (IPCC, 2023; Stoddard, 2021).

In reaction to this unsustainable nature of the Western DSP, an increasing number of people are forming intentional communities based on their ideals regarding sustainable living (Celeta, 2014; Ergas, 2010; Höflechner, 2011; Magnusson, 2018). There is a wide variety of intentional sustainable communities. An example of such a community is an ecovillage. In such ecovillages people attempt to live as self-sufficient as possible by growing their own food, making their own clothes, producing their own energy and/or building their own dwellings according to their sustainability ideals (Ergas, 2010; Höflechner, 2011; Magnusson, 2018). By doing this, ecovillages have become experimental spaces for new, sustainable ways of living that differ from most of society today (Escribano, 2020).

In the last couple of decades, a growing group of academics recognized the necessity for societal transformations to address the above-mentioned sustainability challenges (Anderson, 2011; Dentoni et al., 2017; Feola, 2015; O'Brien, 2018; Pelling, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021a). In what is called the transformative turn, researchers active in the field of sustainability attempt to address the unsustainable systemic roots in our society and confront different kinds of knowledge and experiences (Feola, 2015; Ulug et al., 2021). One such movement is called degrowth. Degrowth is a socio-economic and political concept that challenges the conventional paradigm of continuous economic growth as the primary driver of societal well-being and sustainability (Savini, 2021). It advocates for a deliberate reduction of economic production and consumption to create a more equitable and ecologically balanced society (Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021). Within the degrowth movement, ecovillages are conceived as living labs in which for ideal settlements for experimentation related to sustainable ways of life that are less harmful to the local environment and the world (Fotopoulos 2007; Latouche 2009; Trainer 2012). The majority of ecovillagers gladly participate in such research as they often see themselves as a model for mainstream society (Brombin, 2019; 2020; Ergas, 2010; Singh, 2019). However, sustainability is a broad concept, and thus perceptions and ideas often differentiate among members of an ecovillage (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021b). Sustainability is most generally described as "meeting the needs of the current society without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations, 1987).

Ecovillagers aim to live according to their idea of sustainability and the majority of ecovillagers desire to share their ambitions and practices with the world (Ergas, 2010). Ecovillages perceive themselves as protests current society and the components of the dominant system such as capitalism, consumerism, and individualism (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021). Numerous ecovillages aim to contribute to the sustainable transition of mainstream society in a variety of ways including educational activities, cultural events, and innovations in the field of sustainable technology and social structures. This strife for a better world does not come without challenges. Over the decades, many attempts have been made to establish ecovillages in the global North, and a multitude of those have failed

(Magnusson, 2018). Despite their desire to be autonomous settlements, most ecovillages are highly dependent on the DSP albeit legislative or financial (Celata, 2014; Magnusson, 2018). Experiments happening in ecovillages are often in conflict with legal frameworks such as construction laws. Certain practices by ecovillages such as greywater collection are not illegal, however, they are not (yet) legal either (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021). While engaging in such pre-legal actions, support from the dominating powers and the neighbouring community is essential for ecovillages to continue to exist (Ergas, 2010).

1.2 Woldwijk as a Testing Ground for Sustainable Transformation

Woldwijk is an ecovillage cooperation situated in Ten Boer, which falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Groningen in the northern parts of the Netherlands, as visualized in Figure 2. In 2008, the municipality purchased 40 acres of agricultural land to develop new housing for the expanding village. These plans were cancelled as a consequence of the financial crisis that same year. As a result, the municipality owned a large portion of unused land and a huge debt. This is why in 2014 the municipality invited citizens and stakeholders to come up with ideas on how to use the land. This led to the establishment of The Cooperative Association Woldwijk (Cooperatieve Vereniging Woldwijk). In 2017, Woldwijk was realized through a temporary lease contract between the municipality and the CAW. This contract granted the CAW the permission to pursue its sustainable ambitions and explore alternative, sustainable forms of living, working, and housing until 2027.

Presently, Woldwijk counts over 60 inhabitants including 50 adults and over 10 children. However, in 2027 the contract is subject to reevaluation, thereby imposing pressure on the cooperation. The municipality's expectation for financial returns from activities conducted at Woldwijk underscores the need for the ecovillage to demonstrate substantial socio-economic value to the broader community. As a result, Woldwijk's members are compelled to actively engage with the neighbouring population, foster meaningful connections, and organize activities that enhance the liveability of the wider region while advocating sustainable practices. The unique characteristic of Woldwijk pertains to its role as "Proeftuin" (testing ground) for the prospective Dutch Environment and Planning Act. Manifested through its legislative blueprint, Woldwijk assumes a pioneering role in the realm of sustainable living, housing, and working within the Netherlands. Woldwijk serves as an exemplar to both citizens and organisations harbouring similar aspirations in the realm of sustainability. Eliciting notable attention from municipalities and grassroots movements across the Netherlands, its frontrunner role imbues Woldwijk with an emblematic standing. Woldwijk augments its potential as source of inspiration in the Netherlands, deserving increased academical attention.



Figure 2: Location of Woldwijk within the Netherlands.

Source: Adapted from Clkr, kaart van Nederland, (2023)

1.3 Academic & Societal Relevance

For a long period of time, ecovillages were discarded as utopian social experiments and received little attention from researchers (Wiest, 2022). Although this has changed over the last 15 years, innovations and everyday sustainable practices in ecovillages remain under-researched (Ulug et al., 2021a). Scholars that have been working on research committed to ecovillages emphasized the role of these bottom-up initiatives in providing alternative pathways towards a sustainable transition (Celata, 2014; Wiest, 2022). Past research has proven the indisputable success of ecovillages in reducing consumption, reducing carbon emissions, designing new social structures and innovativeness (Bocco, 2019; Celata, 2014; Hausknot, 2018; Wiest, 2022). Ecovillages in the global north might contribute to changing the Western Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) through the diffusion of new concepts of normality (Casey, 2020).

Researchers therefore encourage academics to dedicate further research to the sustainable activities of ecovillages and how this might be diffused into the Western DSP (Cooper & Bear, 2015; Price, 2020). This thesis aims to contribute to the wider academic debate on how ecovillage practices may function as a source of inspiration for sustainability measures in the Western DSP. Through the synthesis of theoretical perspectives and

empirical observations, this thesis aspires to offer a comprehensive and intricate comprehension of Woldwijk's prospective contribution to the progression of sustainable principles and facilitation of constructive transformations in the larger societal framework.

By conducting a case study on the ecovillage of Woldwijk, this thesis aims to contribute to a more detailed understanding on how ecovillages, their activities and lifestyles might contribute to the sustainable transition by challenging concepts of normality. However, it must be acknowledged that ecovillages are not a panacea for sustainability issues. It is impossible to turn the entire planet into an ecovillage. Still, researchers call for increased support for such radical collectives for their potential contribution to the sustainable transition of wider society (Ulug et al., 2021a). Ecovillages deserve greater attention to disclose their potential as breeding grounds for alternative sustainable practices and identify opportunities to apply this to wider society (Ergas, 2010; Hausknot; 2018; Wiest, 2022).

1.4 Research aim

The primary objective of this research is to explore the potential contribution of ecovillages, exemplified by the case of ecovillage Woldwijk, to the sustainability transition within society. For this, the following research question was formulated:

- ***What is the (potential) role of ecovillages such as Woldwijk in challenging the Western Dominant Social Paradigm regarding the sustainability transition?***

To answer the research question this study employs a two-fold methodology. Initially, a comprehensive literature review is conducted to investigate prior research on diverse ecovillages and their sustainable practices, innovations, and activities. This theoretical framework serves as a foundation for subsequent ethnographic research conducted within the ecovillage of Woldwijk. The theoretical section of this thesis is guided by the following sub-questions:

- ***How are the sustainability transition and ecovillages conceptualized in current academic literature?***
- ***What are key factors determining the socio-economic stability of an ecovillage?***
- ***Through which methods do ecovillages contribute to the sustainability transition?***

Through ethnographic research, this study aims to identify and analyse the challenges and opportunities present in Woldwijk by drawing comparisons with case studies derived from the literature. Moreover, by reflecting on the findings from the literature review, the thesis strives to offer a detailed account of the sustainable practices, innovations, and activities in Woldwijk, while concurrently exploring possibilities for translating these sustainable endeavours into mainstream society. To aid the structure of this research process the following sub-questions were formulated:

- ***Does Woldwijk possess the qualities to be a socio-economic stable community, to contribute to the sustainability transition of society?***
- ***What forms of sustainable practices and developments take place at Woldwijk?***
- ***How are these practices and developments currently translated into mainstream society and how could this be improved?***

Given Woldwijk's need to demonstrate its value to the broader region, this research also strives to illuminate current and prospective activities at Woldwijk that hold the potential to enhance the overall liveability of the surrounding community. By unveiling the unique aspects of Woldwijk's sustainable initiatives, this study seeks to shed light on their prospective applicability and contribution to the sustainability transition within mainstream

society. The analytical reflection undertaken aims to mitigate the disparities between the microcosm of the ecovillage and the broader socio-cultural and institutional milieu. In doing so, it provides insights into the strategic incorporation of Woldwijk's initiatives to facilitate the cultivation of an environmentally aware and sustainable society within the context of the Western DSP.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Sustainability in the Western Dominant Social Paradigm

Sustainability is a fuzzy, normative concept (Arora et al., 2020; Ergas, 2010; Agyeman, 2016). One of the most common definitions of sustainability is “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (United Nations, 1987). This definition is still open to interpretation. What are our own needs (and those of future generations)? Which actions compromise the abilities of future generations? Whose needs are we actually thinking of? An understanding of what entails sustainability differs greatly depending on context and discipline (Agyeman, 2016). An economist may view sustainability to maintain economic growth while not further harming the environment. At the same time, an ecologist instead may focus on restoring and improving the environment, with less regard for economic growth (Hickel, 2022). A growing number of studies addresses systematic flaws in the perception of sustainability, sustainable initiatives and policies implemented by current world leaders (Arora et al. 2020; Casey, 2020; Eckersley, 2020; Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021).

Despite ambitious efforts announced through the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the Paris climate top (2015), and the EU's Green Deal (2020), global pollution and emissions keep increasing, humanity's carbon footprint has grown, and irreversible damage is still being done to society and the environment (Görg, 2021; IPCC, 2023; Stoddard, 2021). One of the key factors that contributes to the inefficiency of aforementioned policies is their rootedness in the economic growth paradigm, albeit in greener forms (Boggadóttir, 2017; Stoddard, 2021). A striking example of this is currently taking place in Covas do Barroso (FOE, 2021). Here, an EU-funded project to mine lithium for its green transition threatens to destroy an area that has been designated by the UN as a globally important agricultural heritage site. In other words, the area is one of the few places in Europe where sustainable agriculture still exists, full of life and biodiversity and with a resilient ecosystem and it is planned to be destroyed in the name of sustainability.

Developments such as in Covas do Barroso have led to criticism on sustainability-related policies by a growing body of scholars (Arora et al. 2020; Casey, 2020; Eckersley, 2020; Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021). They claim it is difficult to achieve real sustainability as the dominant social paradigm (DSP) hinders current sustainability efforts (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020; Price, 2020). The DSP consists of the values and metaphysical beliefs, habits, and institutions that collectively provide social lenses through which individuals and groups interpret their social world (Casey, 2020). The Western DSP is associated with economic and political liberalism, growth, and consumption (Arora et al., 2020; Stoddard, 2021). Within the Western DSP sustainability policies are dominated by an orthodox economic approach which prioritizes technological and market innovations, competitive advantage, and individualism (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020; Price, 2020). Presently these policies have not delivered the desired progress (IPCC, 2023; Stoddard, 2021). Instead of addressing the systematic barriers of the Western DSP to achieve the required socio-economic change for a sustainable future, individual consumers are being held responsible for unsustainable behaviour to deflect the attention of greater institutional flaws (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020). An overview of characteristics of the sustainability transition in the current Western DSP can be found in figure 3.

WESTERN DSP

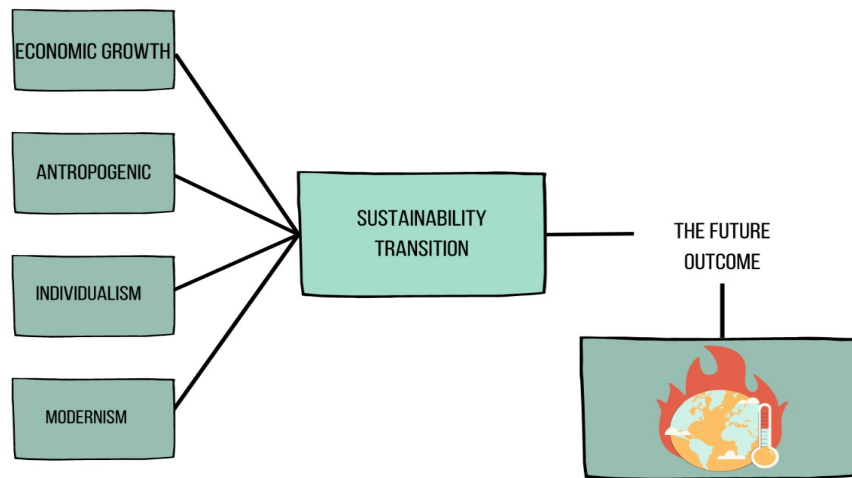


Figure 3: Characteristics of the sustainability transition in the Western DSP. Author's own image, 2023. Based on Andreucci, 2022; Arora et al., 2020; Casey, 2020; Price, 2020; Stoddard, 2021; Savini, 2020.

2.2 Critiques on the current sustainability transition

Critique on current developments in sustainability transitions focus on the modernistic nature of sustainability in dominant power structures (Arora, et al., 2020; Stoddard, 2021). This modernistic approach towards a sustainability transition is characterized by dominance of top-down experts with an obsession for control (Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021). This obsession for control leads to an extreme categorization of things that are too complex and different to generalize. This phenomenon is also known as reification (Arora et al., 2020). Examples of reification are Nature VS Culture, Developed VS Underdeveloped and Economy VS Ecology. Reification leads to standardization as everything needs to be bordered and similar, neglecting different contexts and needs (Arora et al., 2020). Finally, the modernistic desire for control creates a division between subjects and objects (Andreucci, 2022; Arora et al., 2020). In this division, humans are subjects, while all non-humans are objects. Subjects are superior to objects, as inferior objects are viewed as having no agency (Andreucci, 2022; Arora et al., 2020). According to this logic, people dominate all other living things. This is well illustrated in modern agriculture, where soil is predominantly perceived as a means of food production for humanity (Arora et al., 2020). This results in methods of agriculture that are primarily focused on maximum production and profit. Synthetic fertilizers are used intensively aiming to increase soil's efficiency at the expense of all other living beings such as animals and plants. Simultaneously, environmentally friendly methods of agriculture such as permaculture become inferior, as they are perceived as being economically inefficient and insufficient (Arora et al., 2020). Alternatively, Arora et al. (2020) propose the concepts of "values of care" and hopes of "conviviality" as a pathway to sustainability transition. Values of care discard the subject-object division. Rather they view humans and non-humans as equals and relational to each other. Values of care focus on local knowledge and context, which is viewed as inferior by the modernistic approach (Jackson, 2021). Instead, values of care provide pathways to social and ecological justice through solidarity and collective action (Arora et al., 2020). This

perspective increases the value of sustainable methods of agriculture such as permaculture, as economic gain and productivity are no longer the dominant aims of agriculture. Instead, biodiversity and taking care of nature become equally important (Hickel, 2022).

Conviviality goes a step further than the concept of values of care. Conviviality “focuses on possibilities for institutional transformations toward convivial societies, within which struggles are waged for technologies that are not shaped by ambitions to control and dominate” (Arora et al., 2020, p252). It promotes autonomy and self-realization (Arora et al., 2020). Conviviality also builds on the idea that technocrats hold a radical monopoly. Society has become too mechanized, and humanity is disconnected from nature. Instead, humankind should reduce consumption and live more self-sustaining by producing locally (Arora et al., 2020). Another main critique focuses on the economic nature of sustainability policies in the West. As illustrated through the example in Covas Do Barosso (FOE, 2021), sustainability policies within the West are sometimes more likely to harm the planet as they neglect environmental and social costs when calculating profitability (Casey, 2020; Savini, 2021; Stoddard; 2021). Sustainable development in the Western DSP is inseparable from economic growth, fixated on control, dominated by anthropogenic perspectives, and excessively top-down and expert-driven (Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021; Stoddard; 2021). For this reason, a growing group of scholars promote societal transformations focused on decreasing consumption, localized economies, communal living, and the importance of non-human actors (Arora et al. 2020; Eckersley, 2020; Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021). Instead of dividing regions into uneven ecosystems driven by centralized governments and the never-ending pursuit of capital accumulation, these societal transformations envision communities based on self-regulation, autonomy, self-realization, and self-sufficiency (Arora et al., 2020; Savini, 2021). Evidently, a swift and comprehensive global transition towards self-sufficient and sustainable autonomous communities remains an improbable scenario.

2.3 Degrowth

An alternative scenario to the current situation can be generated when working with according to the degrowth paradigm. Degrowth originated from a critique on the growth economy. Instead, degrowth aims to provide pathways to sustainable societies which consume fewer natural resources and live in balance with nature (Kallis, 2014). Savini (2021, p.1076) describes de-growth “A collective and deliberative process aimed at the equitable downscaling of the overall capacity to produce and consume and of the role of markets and commercial exchanges as a central organizing principle of human lives.”. Present-day planning mechanisms maintain economic competition and economic growth through functional polycentrism, scarcity, and euclidean zoning and property rights (Savini, 2021). Moreover, public debate is colonized by the economic growth paradigm which relates economic gains to humankind’s wellbeing (Kallis, 2014; Jackson, 2021). Economic growth has been accomplished by replacing functioning local communities with bounded individual consumers competing for the never-ending accumulation of wealth and material goods (Lockyer, 2017). Instead, degrowth proposes alternative planning mechanisms that might contribute to a sustainable societal transformation. Degrowth calls for local communities that are self-sustaining and not entirely dependent on other areas for production and consumption (Jackson, 2021; Loker, 2021). The degrowth paradigm does not advocate for the total eradication of capitalism (Hickel, 2022; Savini, 2021). Rather, degrowth proposes socio-economic transformations that will gradually guide humanity to increased sustainability through greater harmony between economic imperatives and ecological considerations (Jackson, 2021; Hickel, 2022). These transformations aim to re-organize the economy around basic human needs, rather than elite consumption and economic growth. Following these societal transformations, it is expected resource consumption will decrease massively and will lead the world into a sustainable future (Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021). Geographical areas are to be designated as bioregions (Savini, 2021). Savini (2021, p.1087) describes such bioregions as “Conceived as a confederation of municipal settlements whose subsistence depends on the same living ecosystem, but which have a degree of material

and political autonomy". Rather than competition, degrowth aims to establish structures that enable people to maximize their capabilities and participate fully in the life of society, in less materialistic ways (Jackson, 2009). Another proposed alternative planning mechanism is the concept of finity (Savini, 2021; Jackson, 2021). The finity paradigm works through the idea that the earth's resources are not infinite. Instead of producing for a global market, communities adopt the principle of sufficiency, produce what is sufficient for the community, reduce demands and set maximum prescriptions on e.g., living space to avoid value setting (Lokyer, 2021). Furthermore, instead of euclidean zoning and property rights degrowth calls for habitability (Savini, 2021). Rather than designing places based on zoning like residential, commercial, or industrial, habitability "provides a compass able to inform interventions to restore, balance and maintain urban places" (Savini, 2021, p.1088). It designs places as an area where a calculated number of people can live healthy and balanced (Savini, 2021).

In conclusion, a sustainable transition according to degrowth principles will require more than switching to electric cars or promoting a vegan diet. It entails downscaling the economy and creating a society within the biocapacity of our planet by reducing production and consumption. Urban planning should be concerned with creating self-sustainable, autonomous, self-producing communities. For this to happen, urban planning itself will need to transform and break free from the same capitalistic modernistic approaches that hinder a sustainability transition (Hickel, 2022; Xue, 2022). Mainstream urban planning in the West follows a political ideal of neoliberalism, growth and competitiveness and functions as more of a hindrance than a blessing to a sustainability transition (Xue, 2022). Therefore, various scholars point to the potential role of grassroots movements in contributing to sustainable development (Brombin, 2019; Casey, 2010; Ergas, 2010; Magnusson, 2018; Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020; Singh, 2019; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al., 2021b). Ecovillages are a prime example of such grassroots movements.

2.4 Ecovillages: Goals and Motivations

During the 1960's the first Western ecovillages originated as intentional communities protesting the Western DSP (Brombin, 2019; Magnusson, 2018). An intentional community is defined as a group of people who choose to live together based on shared values and ideologies (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021b). These first ecovillages were established as spiritual communities for people with a desire to break with capitalism and consumerism (Casey, 2020; Ergas, 2010; Magnusson, 2018). Instead, these communities intended to decrease their environmental impact through the ideals of living with nature, self-sufficiency, and autonomy. Through participatory social and governance processes based on community-building and consensus, these communities aimed to critique the DSP by imagining alternative social structures (Brombin, 2019; Casey, 2010; Ergas, 2010; Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020; Singh, 2019).

In the early 1990's ecovillages increasingly developed into collective settlements incorporating sustainable practices into everyday activities (Singh, 2019). During this time, a shift took place from escaping society to instead attempting to be a role model for sustainable ways of living (Magnusson, 2018). Many ecovillages became sites of experimentation for innovations in the field of sustainability in various dimensions of everyday life such as food production, consumption, construction, and waste processes (Ergas, 2010; Magnusson, 2018; Roysen, 2020;). Furthermore, ecovillages test new social and cultural structures by emphasizing community living and balancing the relationship between nature and humanity (Brombin, 2019; Ergas, 2010; Singh, 2019). All inhabitants are considered in decision-making processes and ownership, resulting in deeper and more cooperative social relations. Consequently, numerous ecovillages evolved into models of sustainability (Casey, 2010; Ergas, 2010; Price, 2020). A concept where people are "actually doing it" which attracted researchers studying the transition of the Western DSP into a more environmentally friendly and sustainable form (Price, 2020; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al., 2021b).

Ecovillages explore revolutionary practices related to waste reduction and green technology (Casey, 2020; Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020) and emphasize alternative social

structures through spiritual paths of personal growth and collective awareness (Brombin, 2019; Cooper & Bear, 2018; Singh, 2019). Examples of the latter are getting back in touch with nature and living from local natural resources, as well as living according to community guidelines such as following a vegan diet, not using motor vehicles, and cohabitation (Brombin, 2019; Cooper & Bear, 2018; Singh, 2019).

Obviously, ecovillages are not a panacea for climate change. Ecovillages can be perceived as niche projects (Lockyer, 2017). Sustainable innovations and activities develop there because all residents share the same objectives and ideals: a more sustainable lifestyle. This makes it easier to propose and implement radical lifestyle changes as there is no need for consensus to shrink popular unsustainable activities (Hausknost, 2017). Furthermore, it is evident that the entire planet's population cannot be accommodated by ecovillages. Ecovillages require significant space and are efficient because of their small-scale community. (Wiest, 2022; Ulug et al., 2021b). Still, lifestyle aspects and activities of ecovillages might be partly integrated into the Western DSP and wider society. Some authors even point at potential negative contributions of ecovillages to the environment and wider society (Chitewere, 2010; Xue, 2014). Ecovillages in the global North are often labelled as white middle-class green enclaves that contribute to greater social inequality through segregation (Chitewere, 2010). In the past, this indeed was the case for the majority of ecovillages (Casey, 2020; Magnusson, 2018). However, in the last decade numerous ecovillages evolved into increasingly diverse communities that interact with their surrounding region (Bocco, 2019; Ulug et al., 2021a). Examples of this are providing affordable organic food for local lower-income households and education on sustainable living and agriculture (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020; Ulug et al., 2021a). Xue (2014) points out potential negative environmental effects of ecovillages through transport, land use, and housing. However, when this does occur, these negative environmental impacts are often related to the ecovillage's ensnarement into the DSP (Casey, 2020; Ergas, 2010; Price, 2020). A clear example of this is car dependency in the US. As infrastructure in the US is car-centric, and public transport options are lacking, ecovillagers in the US are often forced to use motorized vehicles for transport (Ergas, 2010). Despite the fact it is impossible to transform the entire world into ecovillages, aspects of the ecovillage lifestyle are worthy of being studied for their potential to be diffused in mainstream society (Ergas, 2010; Lockyer, 2017; Price, 2020). Furthermore, ecovillages might serve as an inspiration for mainstream society as places where people show change is possible and create familiarity with alternative ways of living (Casey, 2020; Wiest, 2017).

Still, many of these ecovillages are conscious of their frontrunner role in the sustainability transition and established a global network of ecovillages called the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in 1991, to share their ideas and innovations. GEN (2022, p.n.d) defines ecovillages as: "intentional, traditional or urban community that is consciously designing its pathway through locally owned, participatory processes, and aiming to address the Ecovillage Principles in the 4 Areas of Regeneration (social, culture, ecology, economy into a whole systems design)."

GEN's purpose is to support and connect ecovillages all over the world. Furthermore, GEN aims to educate the world about innovations and activities taking place in ecovillages. In this way, GEN hopes to empower and inspire other citizens to join ecovillages in their quest for a sustainable future (GEN, 2022).

2.5 Ecovillages and their activities

Within the degrowth movement, ecovillages are often regarded as the ideal human settlement for a sustainable future (Fotopoulos 2007; Latouche 2009; Trainer 2012). Ecovillages reflect the core principles of degrowth by being communal collectives based on balancing the relationship between nature and humanity through inclusion in various activities, decision-making processes, and ownership. Ecovillagers set rules and standards, such as banning motorized vehicles (Ergas, 2010), following a vegan diet (Bocco, 2019), engaging in permaculture, and using locally obtained construction materials (Brombin, 2019; Roysen, 2020; Singh, 2019). Ecovillagers confront dominant assumptions of sustainability

based on economic growth and market forces by promoting simple living and self-sufficiency. They do this by promoting the recycling of household and agricultural waste, the self-production of alternative energy, and a reduction in consumption by redefining basic human needs. (Brombin, 2019; Casey, 2010; Ergas, 2010; Magnusson, 2018; Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020; Singh, 2019; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al., 2021b).

Similar to the degrowth movement, ecovillages perceive sustainability as “living in a way that enhances the quality of life for not just humans but for other species as well” (Ergas, 2010, p.40) This ethos becomes clear through the manner in which ecovillagers communicate about their relationships with the environment (Brombin, 2019). Their discourse emphasises the importance of honouring diverse forms of connections, be they with plants, animals, or fellow human beings. Such articulation mirrors the symbiotic and circular association perceived by ecovillagers as imperative for a sustainable planet (Brombin, 2019; Ergas, 2010). The vitality attributed to entities derives from their tangible impact on the lives of those involved in the interaction. Rather than exploiting nature for products in the sense of food and resources, ecovillagers take care of the land and receive “gifts” in return (Brombin, 2019). This view on living with nature removes the reification of Nature vs. culture among ecovillagers. In the context of these ecological enclaves, nature is not merely a backdrop for human activities. Rather, it is accorded an active agency, contributing substantively to the comprehension of the intertwined dimensions within which both human and non-human entities operate (Singh, 2019). Animals, plants, and trees are bestowed pivotal roles in the construction of the significance attributed to communal practices. Nature transcends its conventional characterization as a mere object or resource to be manipulated or exploited. Instead, within ecovillages nature assumes the role of a dwelling, similar to a cherished home (Brombin, 2019). A place of intimate belonging ingrained within both lived experiences and collective memory (Singh, 2019).

An important aspect of the ecovillage life in contributing to sustainable ways of living is the culture of sharing (Casey, 2020; Price, 2020). By sharing assets such as vehicles and tools, and growing food for the community, consumption rates of ecovillagers decrease significantly. Moreover, this culture of sharing serves to achieve financial viability, as costs are spread out over members and a surplus of food can be sold to the market (Casey, 2020; Price, 2020). Furthermore, ecovillages constitute social movements as they challenge the DSP and its institutions, organizations, and cultural authority (Roysen, 2020). They confront ideological differences from the DSP that designates status in terms of material possessions that require the perpetual extraction of precious resources (Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020). An overview of ecovillage activities and what they impact can be found in Figure 4.

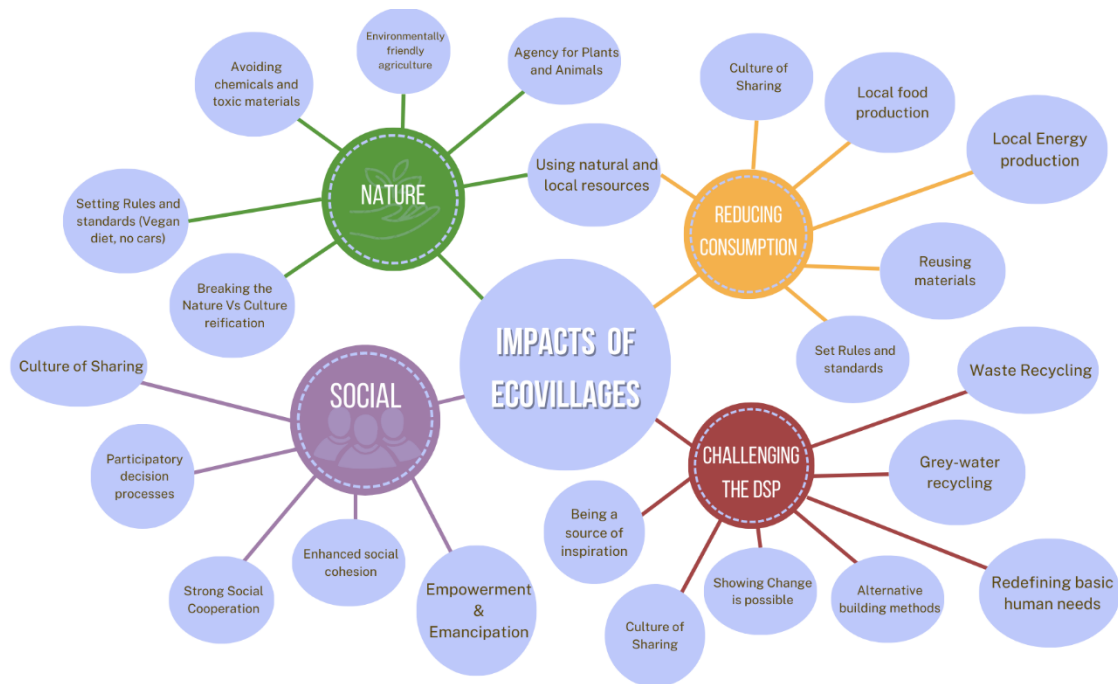


Figure 4: Overview of Ecovillage activities and their impact groups (Author's own figure, 2023. Based on (see footnote 1))

Confronting the DSP does not come without difficulties. The majority of ecovillages face constraints such as zoning laws and greywater restrictions imposed by institutions rooted in the DSP (Brombin, 2019; Casey, 2020; Ergas, 2010; Price, 2020). Furthermore, ecovillagers are often still embedded in the capitalist system through employment and connections to the modern market, or dependent on financing from outside parties (Cooper & Bear, 2018; Price, 2020). This in turn can lead to inner conflicts about values, what party to align with, and how to reach out to the world outside the ecovillage (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al 2021b).

Although the ecovillage concept originated from the desire to break with the DSP, various research has shown an ecovillage tends to be more financially stable and successful in contributing to the sustainability transition of society when it remains open towards the DSP (Andreas, 2013; Brombin, 2019; Ergas, 2010; Singh, 2019; Price, 2020; Ulug et al., 2021a).

2.6 Factors for Stability

Over the past decades numerous attempts to establish ecovillages have been made, yet a multitude of those attempts have failed (Andreas, 2013; Magnusson, 2018). Success is difficult to measure for ecovillages, as objectives may vary widely among initiatives. For the purpose of this thesis, an ecovillage is perceived as successful when it manages to bring forth changes related to sustainability in the Western DSP and mainstream society. To do so, ecovillages require to be economically and socially stable communities that enable residents to live according to their vision of sustainability and experiment with alternative lifestyles and technology (Avelino & Kunze, 2009). 26¹ texts on ecovillages and sustainable communities were analysed, paying special attention to what turned them into stable communities, what made them fail, strengths and weaknesses of described communities,

¹ Andreas, 2013; Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Avelino & Kunze, 2009; Bocco, 2019; Brombin, 2019; Casey, 2020; Celata, 2019; Chitewere, 2010; Cooper & Baer, 2019; Ergas, 2010; Escribano, 2020; GEN, n.d; Hausknost, 2018; Höflechner, 2011; Liftin, 2014; Lockyer, 2017; Magnusson, 2018; Price, 2020; Roysen, 2020; Savini, 2020; Sherry, 2019; Singh, 2019; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al., 2021b; Wiest, 2022; Xue, 2014

and their strategies. Consequently, three factors for stability were identified. These include openness, ownership, and private space. It must be acknowledged these are not the only factors determining the stability of ecovillages. Recurring factors in ecovillage stories include, though are not confined to, the unique capabilities of individuals, the dynamics of the political landscape, and the influence of sheer luck (Magnusson, 2018; Cooper & Baer, 2019). However, a deliberate choice was made to exclude these elements due to their remarkably broad and context-dependent nature. Consequently, their elusive and intricate nature renders them challenging to quantify. The political landscape is slightly covered by openness, as municipal willingness to support initiatives like ecovillages are incorporated in the definition of openness used for this thesis. Comprehending the factors contributing to stability could prove invaluable in assessing the potential value of Woldwijk throughout the course of ethnographic research.

2.6.1 Openness

One key factor to a stable ecovillage is openness (Andreas, 2013; Escribano, 2020). It is crucial for ecovillages to be more than merely green islands of sustainability in like-minded actors involved in sustainability practices. It is essential ecovillages open up to their local surroundings and involve mainstream society in their activities regarding sustainability, as increased interaction between ecovillages and their direct surroundings has proven to result in decreased differences between more sustainable ecovillage lifestyles and neighbouring communities (Ulug et al., 2021b). Ecovillages should be open to visitors, recognise the interest of their regional surroundings and contribute to regional development (Andreas, 2013). By engaging in community projects relevant to its surrounding bioregion and its cultural identity, ecovillages that did open up proved to be more successful in spreading their values and practices (Ergas, 2010; Singh, 2019; Price, 2020). Moreover, openness includes cooperating with local institutions. Institutional support from the municipality and research centres is often a decisive factor for an ecovillage's stability (Celata, 2019; Magnusson; 2018). To gain institutional support, ecovillages are required to take municipal interests such as regional development into account and invite researchers to study daily practices and innovations regarding sustainability (Celata, 2019; Magnusson; 2018).

2.6.2 Ownership

A second key factor for a stable ecovillage is the legal status of the space that a community possesses or uses (Escribano, 2020). To create a stable, successful community, it is crucial for ecovillages to have ownership over the land they live on. Ownership contributes to the capabilities and autonomy of ecovillages (Escribano, 2020; Ergas, 2010). Ownership might decrease limitations caused by zoning laws and regulations to experiment with alternative eco-friendly building materials and waste systems (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020). In addition, ownership increases stability and certainty about the future (Escribano, 2020). It encourages ecovillagers to invest in long-term sustainability projects such as the production of renewable energy and greywater recycling infrastructure (Casey, 2020; Lokyer, 2017). This in turn increases economic stability through self-realization and makes way for experiments regarding sustainability holding potential value for wider society. (Casey, 2020; Price, 2020).

2.6.3 Private Space

A third factor is the form of cohabitation. Although many ecovillages experiment with communal living, sufficient private space is essential for a stable community (Escribano, 2020). Communities where private property is bounded by distinctive households yet share communal spaces in the form of shared facilities (e.g., kitchen), recreational spaces and utilities show increased social capital and perceived life satisfaction (Lokyer, 2017). Communities that do not offer sufficient private space prove to be unstable and ineffective as this tends to lead to conflict and frustrations among residents (Escribano, 2020).

2.7 Ways of influencing the Western DSP

2.7.1 Embeddedness

Influence through embeddedness occurs by the mere presence of an ecovillage in a certain region, and through the activities produced by its residents (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). Embedding takes place when an ecovillage settles in vacant buildings or desolate areas and regenerates the property through sustainable methods (Hausknost, 2018). Examples of influence through embeddedness are Nazi working camps transformed into permacultural settlements (Lebensgarten Steyerberg, figure 5), deserts transformed into rain forests (Auroville, figure 6), and sand dunes into gardens and tourist sites (Findhorn, figure 7) and numerous others (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). These formerly neglected places are transformed into vibrant communities, producing various goods, activities, and events for the surrounding region (Hausknost, 2018). Cultural events give residents of mainstream society the opportunity to get familiar with the alternative lifestyles of ecovillagers and their everyday sustainable practices (Hausknost, 2018). In addition, ecovillages often organize educational activities where they spread knowledge on sustainable practices (Roysen, 2020).



Figure 5: Lebensgarten Steyerberg. Source: Flecken Steyerberg (2023):



Figure 6: Auroville. Source: Sri Aurobindo trust (2023)



Figure 7: Findhorn. Source: www.ecovillagefindhorn.com (2023)

Empowerment and emancipation of mainstream society is one of the main objectives of ecovillages (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). Citizens are invited to participate in demonstrations on sustainable food production, workshops on eco-friendly building methods, and lectures on daily sustainable activities (Hausknost, 2018; Liftin, 2014). During these knowledge-sharing events ecovillagers aim to teach participants the skills needed for a more sustainable lifestyle (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Escribano, 2020; Singh, 2019). Such educational activities contribute to wider impacts of ecovillages by teaching participants who in turn teach others and spread knowledge on sustainable practices (Ulug et al., 2021b). Moreover, embedded ecovillages might contribute to an increasingly sustainable food system by selling their organic products to a regional market (Ergas, 2010; Ulug et al., 2021a). Embedded ecovillages function as an inspirational place where ideals for sustainable living are materialized in technological and spatial applications. It materializes visions on alternative lifestyles, providing powerful mental images for mainstream society (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Brombin, 2019).

2.7.2 Upscaling

Upscaling is defined as the mainstreaming of ecovillage activities, lifestyles, and innovations from the bottom-up (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Liftin, 2014; Singh, 2019). Upscaling activities are lessons that have the potential to change mainstream society. Part of these lessons are found in the social structure and interactions of ecovillages such as its culture of sharing and do-it-yourself mentality (Liftin, 2014; Wiest, 2022). Ecovillages bring social innovation into everyday practice (Casey, 2020; Hausknost, 2018; Price, 2020). They change the rules of the Western DSP by collectively defining new rules that enable a lifestyle more in line with ecological boundaries (Hausknost, 2018). Interventions within ecovillages aim to enable sustainable practices while hindering unsustainable practices that allow recovering attitudes towards sustainability lost in the DSP through communalization. (Bocco, 2019; Hausknost, 2018). Sharing, self-help, dependence on local resources and reusing practices are aspects of this attitude (Bocco, 2019; Hausknost, 2018; Singh, 2019). This translates into second-hand goods exchange corners, community gardens and communal kitchens (Bocco, 2019; Ergas, 2010; Hausknost, 2018; Ulug et al., 2021a; Ulug et al., 2021b). On a smaller scale, this materializes as neighbourhood commons, where neighbours share tools, utilities and common spaces resulting in greater social cohesion and reduced consumption of goods (Liftin, 2014; Lockyer, 2017). Moreover, ecovillages empower citizens by showing the potential of their capabilities when they cooperate. Ecovillages show that by developing basic skills such as gardening, collecting rainwater, or bicycle repair, mainstream neighbourhood's residents are able to provide communal services that reduce travel costs and strengthen the community (Liftin, 2014; Hausknost, 2018; Wiest, 2022).

On a larger scale, ecovillage practices inspire a multitude of bottom-up citizen

initiatives. These include co-housing projects and social movements such as the Transition Town Initiative (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). The Transition Towns initiative is a collaborative effort among local communities, primarily involving urban neighbourhoods (TransitionNetworks.org, 2023). Its purpose is to address the challenges of peak oil and climate change by developing local solutions. Drawing inspiration from ecovillages, the Transition Town initiative applies community-based concepts to the urban environment, incorporating practices like permaculture. It encompasses various aspects of life, such as food, energy, transportation, health, well-being, economics, and livelihoods. It is worth noting that the Transition Towns initiative was founded by an individual who actively participated in the ecovillage movement, and it continues to receive support, advocacy, constructive criticism, and suggestions for improvement from other members of the ecovillage community (Avelino & Kunze, 2009; TransitionNetworks.org, 2023).

2.7.3 Translation

Translation can be defined as the adoption of ecovillage policies and practices by experts and politicians (Hausknost, 2018; Sherry, 2019). Through an institutionalized procedure, successful innovations and practices are reproduced and adapted to be applicable for the DSP (Hausknost, 2018). For translation to be truly transformative, tight cooperation between ecovillages and institutions is essential (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). When translation processes are not led through bottom-up residential planning, involving small-scale local economies, it increases the risk of regime absorption (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). In the case of regime absorption, translated innovations and practices lose their transformative value as they are diluted by characteristics of the current Western DSP (Avelino & Kunze, 2016, Hausknost, 2018). An example of regime absorption is developer-led eco-cities that abuse sustainable practices for green-washing activities (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). Such mega-projects are often subject to top-down planning. Their main objective is providing profit for established construction industries while neglecting local residents and economies (Avelino & Kunze, 2016).

It must be noted that it might be naive to assume successful changes regarding sustainability are exclusively possible through bottom-up, participatory processes. However, being technological and social sites of experimentation, ecovillages have proven to contribute to changing the rules of the game in the Western DSP (Casey, 2020; Price, 2020). Ecovillages provide places for experimentation that defy mainstream regulations and building codes (Brombin, 2019; Singh, 2019). Ecovillages are living labs for developments in eco-friendly agriculture and construction (Ulug et al., 2021a). In some cases, this led to mainstream appliance of methods developed in ecovillages. One example of a successful ecovillage translation developed in Sieben Linden, Germany (Bocco, 2019). Here, the ecovillage allowed room for the development of straw bale construction which led to the establishment of FASBA in 2002 (International association for straw building) (Bocco, 2019). The German government recognized the potential and started experimenting with straw bale constructions on a national scale (Bocco, 2019).

2.8. The Dutch Context

As this thesis consist of a case study on an ecovillage in the Netherlands, a brief explanation of the Dutch legislative context regarding spatial planning is required.

Spatial planning in the Netherlands operates within a distinctive legislative framework, requiring an understanding of the Dutch context. At the core of this framework lies the Dutch Spatial Planning Act (Wet ruimtelijke ordening), a pivotal legislative instrument governing land use planning and spatial development policies across the country (Dutch Spatial Planning Act, 2008). The Act serves as a crucial legal tool in guiding land use, zoning designations, and spatial development throughout the Netherlands.

The Dutch Spatial Planning Act mandates provinces and municipalities to formulate zoning plans that align with national spatial policies. These plans offer comprehensive guidelines and regulations for land use and development activities within their respective jurisdictions. The zoning laws categorize areas into distinct zones, including residential, commercial,

industrial, agricultural, and recreational zones, each subject to specific regulations governing permitted land uses, building heights, and environmental standards (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2021). Importantly, these zoning regulations apply uniformly to all properties, irrespective of their legislative status. Consequently, any deviation from the prescribed regulations, such as experimenting with sustainable building materials, is typically prohibited by the zoning laws. This constraint ensures standardized development practices and seeks to maintain consistency in spatial planning and land use across the country (Meijerink & Van Buuren, 2018).

As the robustness of the Dutch Spatial Planning Act might hinder sustainable development, the Dutch Government aims to reform the legislative framework (Meijerink & Van Buuren, 2018). The need for a comprehensive and integrated environmental law system led to the development of the Omgevingswet (Gerritsen & Van Buuren, 2021). The act consolidates over 26 existing environmental laws, simplifying procedures and providing a more coherent approach to environmental governance (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2021). The Omgevingswet introduces a coordinated approach to environmental decision-making, consolidating permits and approvals into a single integrated environmental permit (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, 2021). This streamlining aims to reduce administrative burdens and promote more efficient decision-making processes. While challenges lie ahead, the Omgevingswet aspires to provide a comprehensive legal framework to navigate environmental complexities and support the country's transition to a more sustainable and resilient future (Gerritsen & Van Buuren, 2021).

2.9 Summary

In conclusion, current academic literature regarding the sustainability transition states contemporary developments in sustainability are insufficient (Arora et al., 2020; Stoddard, 2021). This is a consequence of the rootedness of these developments into the Western DSP (Casey, 2020). The Western DSP is characterized by modernistic desire for control through technology and the capitalistic drive for unlimited economic growth (Arora, 2020; Casey, 2020). Ecovillages are conceptualized as important actors in contributing to the sustainability transition (Cooper & Bear, 2021; Ulug et al., 2021a). Not as a catchall solution, but rather as a model for alternative lifestyles and developments. Identified key factors determining the stability of ecovillages are openness, legal status of the property, and the form of cohabitation. However, this does not suggest a guarantee for success as various other factors such as capabilities of eco-villagers and sheer luck also influence an ecovillages fate. Three pathways for influencing mainstream society in the field of sustainability were identified. These include embeddedness, upscaling, and translation.

Chapter 3. Conceptual Framework

The research conducted for this thesis focused on the potential role of ecovillages in contributing to the sustainability transition, with a specific focus on the ecovillage Woldwijk in the Netherlands. Contemporary developments within the area of sustainability are inherently flawed as they exist within the Western DSP. Instead, certain researchers promote a degrowth paradigm for sustainability (Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Liftin, 2014; Savini, 2021). Degrowth is characterized by self-sustainability, finity, habitability, conviviality and living in balance with nature. Degrowth and its characteristics are reflected in the concept of ecovillages. Ecovillages might therefore function as living labs, experimenting with degrowth principles to change the Western DSP. Three factors are identified that determine the stability of an ecovillage’s community and its success in contributing to the sustainability transition of mainstream society. These are openness, ownership, and private space. Activities, practices, and innovations occurring in ecovillages contributing to increased sustainability in mainstream society and the Western DSP are categorized in three forms. These include embeddedness, upscaling, and translation. By studying developments in these three categories in Woldwijk, this research aims to contribute to a detailed understanding of opportunities for policymakers and researchers to apply sustainable practices, aspects of the ecovillage lifestyle and innovations occurring in ecovillages to mainstream society and the Western DSP. The entirety of the aforementioned concepts and theories led to the construction of the Conceptual Model depicted in figure 8. This model aims to illustrate the connections and relations between the various concepts.

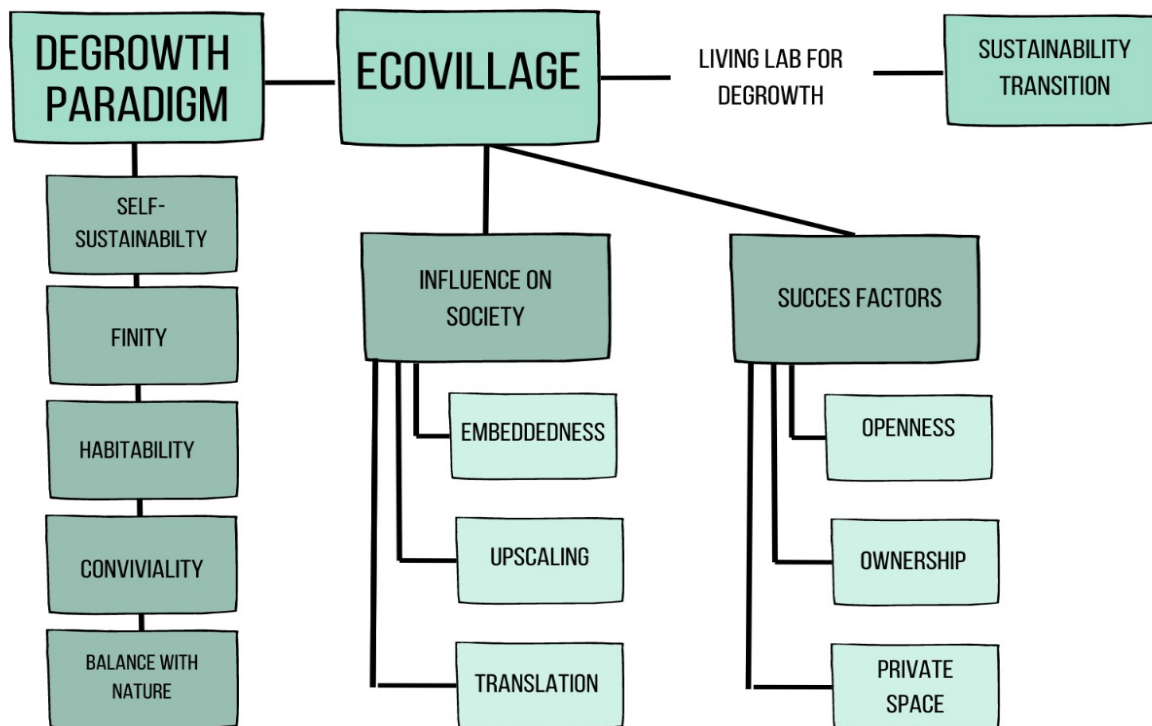


Figure 8: Conceptual Model. Author’s own (2023). Based on: Andreas, 2013; Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Ergas, 2010; Hausknot, 2018; Hickel, 2022; Jackson, 2021; Liftin, 2014; Savini, 2021; Singh, 2019; Sherry; 2019.

Chapter 4. Methodology

The following chapter will discuss the research methods and strategies utilized for this thesis.

4.1 Case Study

To commence, this research used a case study methodology, constituting an empirical investigative approach that analyses a modern phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2018). This strategy provides the means to conduct an extensive examination of a specific social entity (Kothari, 2004), illustrated in this context by the ecovillage Woldwijk situated in Ten Boer. Furthermore, the case study research design is suitable for the exploration of a series of contemporary occurrences, enabling the documentation of distinct circumstances or events (Leavy, 2014). Using a single-case study research approach, this investigation concentrated on the ecovillage of Woldwijk as its subject. The research aim of this thesis is to investigate the potential role of ecovillages in challenging the Western DSP regarding the sustainability transition. To achieve this objective, the first phase of the study involved an extensive review of relevant academic literature. This review encompassed an examination of theoretical frameworks and concepts that shed light on how ecovillages, as sustainable communities, have the capacity to influence established societal norms and practices linked to consumption, economic growth, and individualism. It aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the transformative potential associated with ecovillages. Furthermore, the literature aimed to determine key factors for stability through a synthesis of numerous academic texts related to ecovillages and sustainable communities.

However, to gain a practical understanding of how this potential for societal change manifests in real-world contexts, a more focused and empirical approach was deemed necessary. Consequently, the research design incorporated the selection of Woldwijk as the primary subject of investigation. Woldwijk was chosen as it serves as a tangible example of an ecovillage actively engaged in sustainable practices. This choice affords a unique opportunity to explore the practical application of sustainability principles within the specific context of a community, while also facilitating an examination of the broader societal implications and repercussions of these practices on the surrounding environment and communities.

A prevailing apprehension surrounding single-case studies is the perceived incapacity for generalization from a single case, thereby presumed to be less contributory to scientific advancement (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, the persuasive influence of exemplification is often underestimated. Case studies possess the capacity to serve as test subjects for hypothesis testing and theory examination (Greenstein & Polsby, 1975), a methodology explicitly embraced within this study to investigate the potential of ecovillages such as Woldwijk in challenging the Western DSP regarding sustainability.

This research used ethnographic research as the main research approach. Ethnographic research is a qualitative research approach that involves immersing oneself in a particular social setting or cultural context to gain an in-depth understanding of the people, their behaviours, and their lived experiences. This method provides unique benefits that contribute to the richness and validity of research findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Wolcott, 2010).

Ethnographic research is instrumental in providing a deep and contextual understanding of the Woldwijk community (Wolcott, 2010), which is pivotal for assessing its potential to challenge the Western DSP regarding the sustainability transition. By offering a comprehensive view of sustainable practices and developments within Woldwijk, ethnography allows researchers to observe and document a wide spectrum of activities and behaviours related to sustainability, presenting a comprehensive picture of the community's initiatives (Spradley, 1980). Moreover, ethnographic research facilitates direct observation and participation in sustainability practices and developments at Woldwijk, providing first-

hand insights into the practical aspects of these initiatives (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Researchers can gain a nuanced understanding of their effectiveness, challenges, and broader impacts (Wolcott, 2010). Additionally, ethnographic research is well-suited for examining the translation of sustainable practices and developments from Woldwijk into mainstream society. It offers a platform to investigate the mechanisms, hurdles, and opportunities involved in disseminating these practices beyond the community. Such insights are invaluable for devising strategies to enhance the spread of sustainable innovations. Finally, ethnographic research offered the opportunity to test the key factors for stability in practice.

During the ethnographic research, in-depth interviews were conducted with several members of the CAW, and a municipality worker closely linked to Woldwijk. These interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of residents' perspectives, motivations, and experiences related to sustainability and the stability of the community. Such qualitative data is essential for assessing the community's potential for contributing to the sustainability transition.

4.3 Literature review

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to establish a theoretical framework for subsequent ethnographic research. The review covered various aspects of ecovillages, including sustainability transitions, factors for socio-economic stability, activities, innovations, and their influence on the DSP regarding sustainability. Three factors for stability—openness, ownership, and private space—were identified. The study categorized ecovillage activities, innovations, and developments into three core concepts: Embeddedness, upscaling, and translation. Embeddedness refers to activities within ecovillages that influence both residents and the surrounding community. Upscaling involves bottom-up sustainability initiatives within Woldwijk, covering a wide range of contributions to sustainable practices and values. Translation refers to the adaptation of ecovillage practices by mainstream institutions within the Western DSP. These concepts aim to identify how Woldwijk can contribute to the sustainability transition of mainstream society.

4.4 Ethnographic Fieldwork in Woldwijk

A timeline of the ethnographic fieldwork can be found in figure 9. First, an introductory meeting was established in January 2023 with two board members of the CAW. Here the intentions of the research were discussed, as well as ambitions and aspirations of Woldwijk itself. After this introduction, a community meeting was attended in March 2023. Here the research aim was presented to the residents of Woldwijk. Through attending this community meeting, valuable insights were gained in the structure and organisation of the community by observing the participatory decision process, challenges discussed by residents, and declared ambitions and aspirations. Multiple connections with Woldwijk's residents were established here, eventually leading to the invitation for an extended stay at the ecovillage.

This extended stay consisted of three days and nights (7th -10th of June 2023) spent at Woldwijk in the Staatjevrij community. During the three days of ethnographic research the guest lodge of Woldwijk functioned as accommodation. This lodge did not include private basic facilities such as a toilet, shower, kitchen etc. This endeavour facilitated a deep immersion into the communal lifestyle of Woldwijk. Through participation in daily activities of Woldwijk's residents, it was aimed to achieve a genuine experience of ecovillage life and related sustainable practices.

In relation to the key factors for stability, the ethnographic fieldwork granted the opportunity to physically observe the amount of private space of the residents. As the three distinctive communities at Woldwijk (Staatjevrij, TinyHouse and Landjegoed) show different levels of communal living and facilities, special focus was put on the frequency of conflict and cooperation between members of these distinctive communities and their lifestyle. Immersion in the life of ecovillagers also provided the opportunity to achieve an authentic image of the openness of Woldwijk's residents through informal conversations. Obviously, this can be observed in interviews, yet the formality of interviews might cause an increased

awareness which in turn might lead to biased and exaggerated results. Moreover, it functioned as a first-hand experience to observe the activities and initiatives through which Woldwijk aims to open-up to mainstream society and how effective this proves to be.

To gain a deeper understanding of Woldwijk’s external activities, the ethnographic research included the participation in a workshop organized by Mas Con Menos, an organization based at Woldwijk. The aim of participating in this workshop was to observe first-hand how residents of Woldwijk actively empower and emancipate people from mainstream society by teaching them the skills and knowledge regarding sustainable building methods through a participatory process and an economic model based on sharing.

Finally, a cultural event called Lutjefest organized by Woldwijk’s residents was visited. This gave the opportunity to observe how Woldwijk aims to create a sense of familiarity with alternative ways of living and sustainable practices among members of mainstream society.

To improve authenticity, no notes were taken during the observation. Instead, a logbook was kept at the end of the day which can be found in the Appendix (A3)

4.5 In-depth Interviews

Additional in-depth interviews aimed to gather insights into the future aspirations of residents of Woldwijk concerning sustainable practices, innovations, and events, alongside an exploration of how the existing legal property status influences these aspects. The interviews were conducted with several members of the CAW, as well as a municipal employee in charge of communication between Woldwijk and the municipality of Groningen. The selection of interviewees was accomplished through purposive sampling, predicated on their community of residence, distinctive involvements, and the roles they assumed in relation to Woldwijk, thereby ensuring a diverse range of perspectives. The initial interviewee selection prioritized (former) board members due to their extensive insights into Woldwijk's activities and development. However, to mitigate potential bias resulting from solely engaging highly active community members, interviews were also conducted with regular residents not occupying leadership roles within the ecovillage.

Conducted interviews with Woldwijk residents served multiple objectives. Firstly, these interviews aimed to unveil undertakings and developments that might not have been readily observable through the ethnographic fieldwork alone, encompassing endeavours such as side projects, experiments, and social interactions facilitated by Woldwijk's social and legal framework. Secondly, these interviews delved into residents' motivations and ambitions for future projects and developments. Thirdly, insights were sought concerning residents' perceptions of interactions with the municipality and the broader region, probing the extent of their openness. A fourth thematic focus was the exploration of residents' perspectives on social interactions and cohesion within and across their distinct communities.

Beyond the Woldwijk community, the interviews engaged external actors. Foremost, an interview was conducted with a founder and former board member of the CAW. This discussion furnished deeper historical and developmental insights into Woldwijk as a

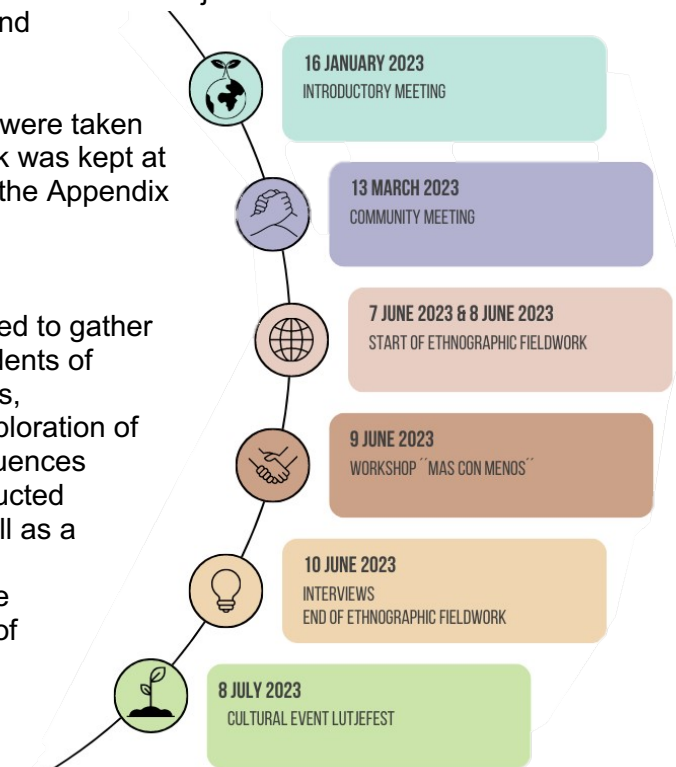


Figure 9: Timeline of the ethnographic fieldwork process. Author's own figure, 2023.

cohesive entity, shedding light on social cohesion and interactions between residents and the distinctive communities. Moreover, it offered an impartial viewpoint on challenges faced and opportunities for future development. Furthermore, this interview underlined the professional relationship between the CAF and the municipal authorities of Groningen (formerly Ten Boer) over the past years.

A final interview was held with a municipal employee serving as the connection between Woldwijk and the local government. This interview primarily centred on the municipality's perceptions of Woldwijk's present and potential value, the interplay between the municipality and the CAF, and the prospects for translating sustainability initiatives originating from Woldwijk into the Western DSP. In parallel to the present research, a complementary study was undertaken by a Master's student from the faculty of Spatial Sciences at Woldwijk (Siebert, 2023). This other research focused mainly on the relevance of interaction between ecovillages and their broader community. Close collaboration between the distinctive research opened the possibility to share insights and to prevent over-burdening the residents with request for interviews and other research related questions. Through a case study, Siebert (2023) aimed to unveil how Woldwijk might involve the community of Ten Boer more effectively in their activities to tackle some urgent sustainability issues. It is important to note that certain interview transcripts of this separate research initiative have been consulted in the compilation of this thesis. Prior to incorporating these data, authorization was obtained from the other student and the thesis supervisor for use some of these data in present thesis. For an overview of the interviewees, see Table 1.

Table 1: Interviewee's characteristics

Name	Living in	Roles
Dennis	Staatjevrij	Resident, member of Mas Con Menos
Erik	Staatjevrij	Resident, Gardener, Member of Mas Con Menos
Albert *	Landjehoed	Resident, Former board member
Gijs	Landjehoed	Resident, member of Mas Con Menos, electrician
Tim	Landjehoed	Resident
Arjan	TinyHouse	Resident, board member
Bert *	TinyHouse	Resident, Former Board Member
Anna *	TinyHouse	Resident
Leendert*	TinyHouse	Resident
Nellie *	TinyHouse	Resident
Bob*	TinyHouse	Resident
Karel	Mainstream Society	Founder, Former board member
Pieter *	Mainstream Society (Ten Boer)	Resident, Local police officer
Luuk	Mainstream Society	Municipality Worker
* These interviews were conducted by Siebert (2023)		

4.6 Data Analysis

4.6.1 Deductive Coding Scheme

The development of an inductive interview scheme was undertaken to facilitate the systematic examination of the compiled interview data. In contrast to deductive methodologies, which operate within predefined categories and hypotheses, the practice of inductive coding operates unburdened by preconceived frameworks (Silverman, 2016). This inherent adaptability imbues the analysis with a malleable quality and aided the analytic trajectory to respond to emergent patterns that materialized within the collected data. As this research ventured into the relatively uncharted realms of ecovillages, especially in the Netherlands, it frequently encountered the challenge of navigating unexplored terrains. In this juncture, inductive coding emerges as a methodological scaffold, furnishing researchers with the tools necessary to navigate unexpected discoveries and unforeseen thematic trajectories that may elude conventional foresight (Charmaz, 2006). Central to the essence of inductive coding is an unwavering commitment to the depth and intricacy embedded within the data. This commitment ensured that interpretations remained intricately interwoven with the tapestry of interviewees and their lived experiences and perspectives, infusing the analysis with an authenticity and rootedness that harmonizes with the empirical reality (Flick, 2014). The coding scheme can be found in the appendix (A1).

4.6.2 Ethnographic Research Data Analysis

After the completion of data collection, the diverse activities, practices, and developments observed at Woldwijk were categorized into three distinct groups based on the theoretical framework's definitions. The primary aim of this thesis is not merely to illuminate the activities taking place at Woldwijk but to explore and discuss their potential implications. The concept of embeddedness holds the potential to significantly influence the sustainable transition of mainstream society by fostering familiarity with alternative practices and serving as a source of inspiration for other citizens. These embedded activities can contribute to the liveability of the wider region, and their occurrence is a determining factor in evaluating Woldwijk's level of embeddedness.

Concurrently, the categories of upscaling and translation serve as evaluative tools to gauge the value of Woldwijk concerning the sustainability transition. Notably, even though the farmers mentioned in this research are part of the larger cooperative Woldwijk, they are included in the category of translation. This classification arises from the fact that these farms function as businesses, producing food for mainstream society. Hence, they are placed in the translation category. The overall value of Woldwijk is bolstered by an abundance of activities in the embeddedness and upscaling categories. Embeddedness and upscaling activities were predominantly identified during the fieldwork, with active participation in various initiatives providing a more comprehensive understanding of their nature and impact. The interviews conducted during the research facilitated a deeper exploration of these activities and provided valuable insights into the future ambitions of Woldwijk's residents. Translation activities, on the other hand, were predominantly discussed during the interviews, as they are more challenging to identify directly within Woldwijk given their intended occurrence in mainstream society. Residents were asked about their perspectives on how translation could occur, while a municipal worker was questioned about existing or potential mechanisms for such translation to take place in the future.

In the final phase of this research, the findings obtained through the ethnographic research were critically analysed in the context of the established theoretical framework. Through an in-depth and comprehensive discussion, this thesis seeks to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Woldwijk, based on the previously identified factors for stability, namely openness, ownership, and private space. Subsequently, the study will delve into the various activities, developments, and events observed at Woldwijk, aiming to determine their potential contributions to fostering a sustainable transition within mainstream

society and the Western DSP.

4.6.3 Additional Documents

In addition to the ethnographic fieldwork, the following list of documents related to the history, establishment, objectives, ambitions, and legislation of Woldwijk were analysed. These documents were provided to the research by board members, and obtained through www.woldwijk.nl:

- Achtergrondinformatie en vraagstelling Fieldlab Woldwijk PDF (2022)

-Beleidskader Woldwijk PDF (2017)

-Beleidskader Woldwijk Bijlage 4 (2017) > <https://www.woldwijk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Bijlage-4-FAQ-Beleidskader-Woldwijk.docx>

-Bijlage Woldwijk Definitief Oktober 2015; Tijdelijk Gebruik Van Woldwijk (2015)

-Gegevens handelen in strijd met regels openbare ordening (2017) > <https://www.woldwijk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2017-08-23-Bijlage-2-gegevens-handelen-in-strijd-1.pdf>

-Kansen voor de Hoeve PDF (2021)

-Prestatievergunning Ten Boer (2017) > <https://www.woldwijk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/prestatievergunning-ten-boer-10-5-2017.pptx>

-Prestatievergunning document (2017) > <https://www.woldwijk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2017-10-13-prestatievergunning-Woldwijk-1.pdf>

-Woonlaboratorium Hoeve Dijkshoorn PDF (2021)

-Woldwijk Magazine PDF (2023)

4.7 Ethics

During the ethnographic fieldwork, an abundance of data was collected through informal conversations and observation which were written down in the logbook. All residents were aware of the ethnographic research as it was introduced at several community meetings and mentioned during every conversation. Still, as no permission was sought for these activities, beyond the permission to take part in the activities, information gathered through these methods will be referred to anonymously. Prior to the interviews, the participants signed an informed consent form through which they granted permission to use the collected data in this thesis (the same is the case for the data from Siebert 2023). Nevertheless, although not all participants asked to remain anonymous, the decision was made to use pseudonyms when referring to them. While at first glance no harmful statements were made, it is impossible to foresee what damage the collected data might bring to the participants and their community. For this reason, pseudonyms are used.

Furthermore, the subject of positionality requires some remarks. This research was undertaken with the standpoint perspective that ecovillages could potentially wield a significant role in driving sustainable transitions, thus inherently bearing a considerable supportive stance towards ecovillages. Throughout the research process, this approach greatly facilitated data collection, as both participants and villagers displayed enthusiasm in aiding the research, influenced by a sense of support. The inhabitants of Woldwijk exhibited exceptional openness and hospitality. However, the potential drawback of this supportive position could be a challenge in maintaining critical objectivity. The research orientation

predominantly emphasized exploring possibilities and positive potentials, directing less attention towards potential negative aspects of ecovillages.

Chapter 5. The Case: Woldwijk

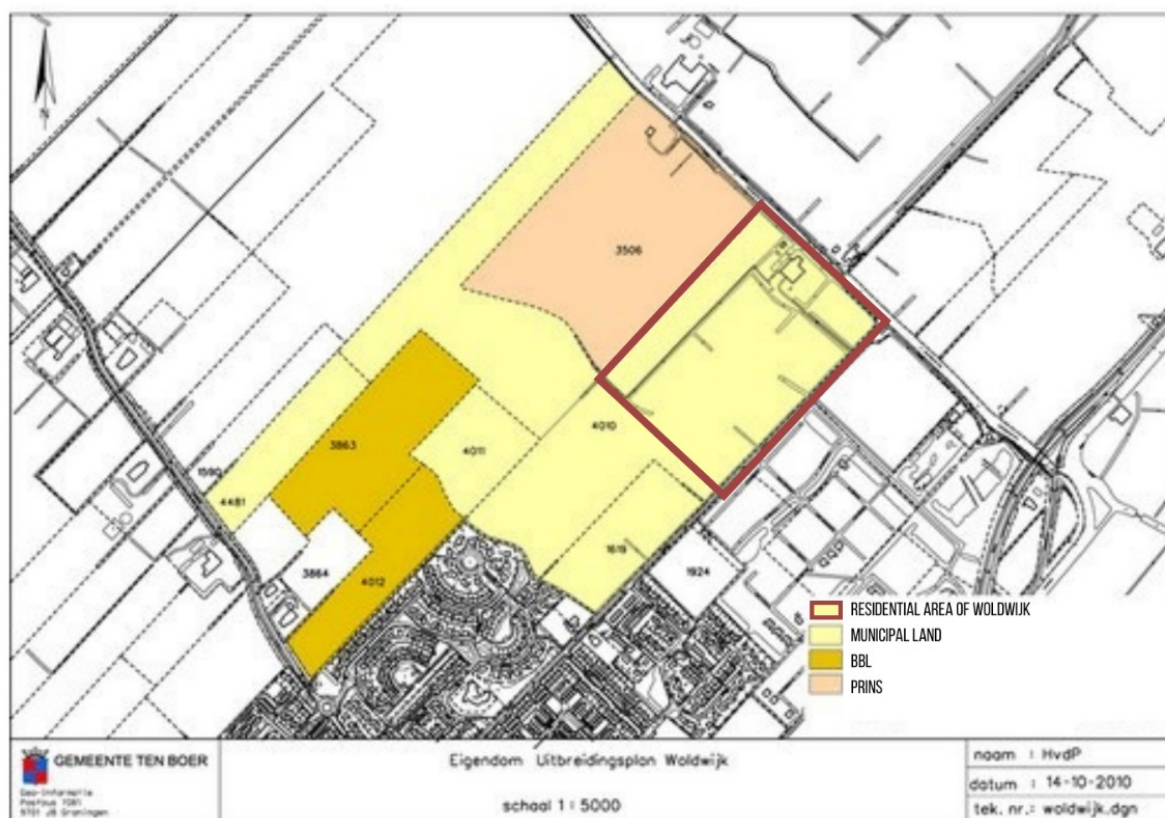


Figure 10: Map of Woldwijk with the location of the residential area demarcated by the red rectangle, Adapted from www.woldwijk.nl (2023)

In 2008 the municipality of Ten Boer, located in the North of the Netherlands, purchased a large plot of land for the development of real estate. However, due to the financial crisis it eventually lacked the funds to realize these ambitions. Consequently, the municipality started to explore different kinds of land uses for the area, and cooperated with some ambitious professionals who envisioned a project centred around alternative sustainable ways of living, housing, and working. This led to the development of Woldwijk (Tijdelijk gebruik van Woldwijk. 2015). Woldwijk is a cooperation home to three different communities. These are Staatjevrij, Landjegoed and TinyHouse.

Despite all being part of Woldwijk, significant differences were observed between these three communities. Members of Staatjevrij were the first settlers of Woldwijk. The majority of them already knew each other from past connections through the organisation Mas Con Menos. Among the three communities under consideration, Staatjevrij exhibits the closest semblance to an ecovillage. Basic facilities are communal, and each member assumes specific responsibilities on the property. Activities, such as communal meals, transpire in a shared environment with a substantial reliance on locally sourced resources.

Landjegoed bears similarities to Staatjevrij, although it entails a relatively lower degree of facility sharing among its members. The prevalence of private toilets, showers, and kitchens is more pronounced at Landjegoed. However, resource-sharing, particularly tools and vehicles, remains prevalent within Landjegoed. Given its recent establishment, the majority of Landjegoed's members became part of the community through invitation. Following an introduction phase, the community collectively evaluates the compatibility of the individual with the community's ethos.

In contrast, the TinyHouse community differs significantly from the conventional ecovillage paradigm. Here, residents lead a more autonomous lifestyle on individual plots. Communal buildings and sharing are less prevalent within the TinyHouse community.

Nonetheless, residents are warmly encouraged to utilize amenities such as the communal garden and repurposed materials sourced from the ecovillage, and they can actively participate in events hosted by the other communities. Prospective members of the TinyHouse community underwent an entry process based on subscription. This process entailed signing a contract and formulating a sustainable aspirations plan. Although the TinyHouse community itself doesn't strictly align with the conventional ecovillage model, it nevertheless constitutes an integral component of the broader collaborative framework within Woldwijk. Given its semblance to a more conventional neighbourhood setting, investigating the TinyHouse community remains essential for comprehending its functionality within the wider ecovillage setting, and furthermore for examining its potential applicability within the Western DSP. An overview of the three different communities can be found in figure 11.

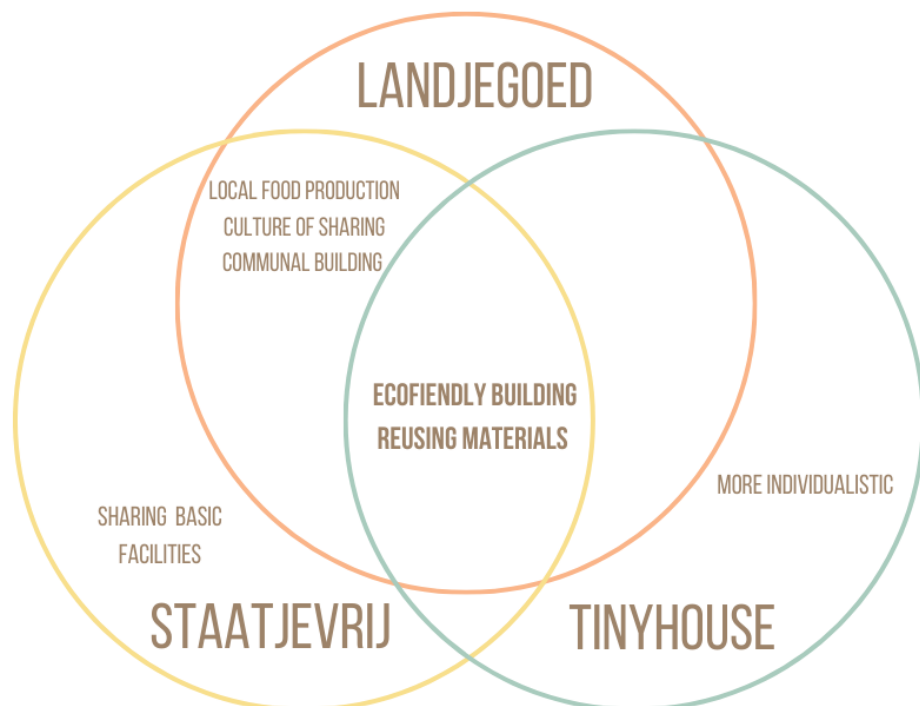


Figure 11: Overview of ecovillage elements identified within the distinctive communities. Based on observations during the ethnographic fieldwork (Author's own figure, 2023)

Furthermore, the cooperation includes an energy cooperation and two farmers and houses various initiatives experimenting in the field of sustainable development. Over the years, the cooperation has been run by a board consisting of a mix of external professionals that support the community's ambitions and inhabitants of Woldwijk. Nowadays, Woldwijk provides housing to over 60 people. These people form a community whose main objective is to live differently. This entails reducing their consumption, living in balance with nature, and communal forms of living. Over the years, Woldwijk developed into a living laboratory for sustainable development that aims to be a source of inspiration for mainstream society (Fieldlab Woldwijk PDF, 2022). An overview of the organizational structure of Woldwijk is illustrated in figure 12.

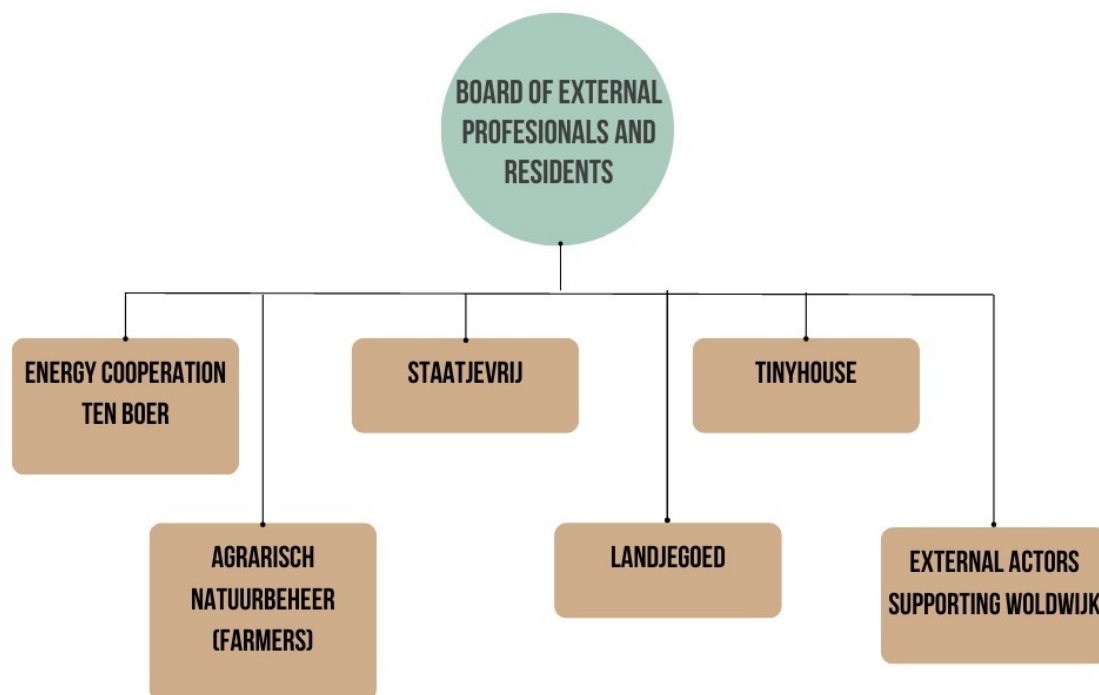


Figure 12: Overview of the CAW (Author's own figure, 2023)

Chapter 6. Results

6.1 Stability

6.1.1 Woldwijk; A Model for Society

Through the ethnographic fieldwork, the realization emerged that Woldwijk stands as an inclusive public space, freely accessible to all who wish to visit. Except for private residences, the grounds are open for public access and aspire to function akin to a communal park. It extends an open invitation for individuals to leisurely stroll through its expanse, relish the picturesque surroundings, and seek opportunities for social engagement. Each member encountered during the fieldwork held a shared perception of Woldwijk as an exemplar of alternative lifestyles, brimming with eagerness to enlighten others about their sustainable everyday practices. These endeavours, while not directly tailored for contemporary market consumption, aim to provide the local market with a supply of organically produced goods sold for prizes a little bit above breakeven. Nevertheless, they provide services to mainstream society. This takes form in “harvest subscriptions” for the communal garden, selling homegrown organic products, organizing workshops on eco-friendly construction, and organizing cultural events. Members also expressed their willingness to be more active for educational purposes than they currently are. When the residents of Woldwijk that participated in the interviews were asked if Woldwijk would be open to receive elementary school classes to teach them about sustainable food practices the answer was a decisive “yes”. The respondents see the community as a model for society and are eager to share this with the world.

“I think we simply really express our view of the world. We are living that. Some kind of exemplary living². If there are other people that want to learn more about that, or have questions, they are always welcome to visit.” – Gijs, Resident

While the above quote by Gijs illustrates his general openness, the following quote by Erik, Arjan and Tim serve as examples of how activities at Woldwijk aim to engage with the surrounding residents. According to the literature, ecovillages that do this are more successful in spreading their values and practices (Ergas, 2010; Singh, 2019; Price, 2020). Erik explains how surrounding residents are invited to utilize Woldwijk’s garden to learn about growing organic food. This aims to spread the community’s values of self-sufficiency while contributing to a local sustainable food system.

“Our garden is some kind of an invitation. We produce vegetables and everyone can utilize that. People can come and harvest the veggies at the garden. They can become a member for a monthly contribution. And that serves as an opening to show them all the possibilities. Growing your own vegetables for example.” – Erik, Resident

Andreas (2013) emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interest of their regional surroundings. During the interview with Arjan, he expressed his concerns on the deteriorating quality of youth care in the municipality of Groningen. In a reaction to that, he aims to organize activities at Woldwijk aimed at adolescents, providing them with a safe space while spreading Woldwijk’s values of self-sufficiency, sustainability, and autonomy:

² Exemplary Living: Translated from “voorleven”. The respondent uses this made-up word to express how the way of life in Woldwijk serves as an example of how more people should live their lives. A model for society.

"I would like to focus on youth, youngsters, below the age of 18. Adolescents that are often restricted by taboo and has few opportunities. Also, elderly that are nearing the end. I want to become a place for them too. A place where they can come and enjoy the surroundings, watch the animals and have a chat. To give them the feeling they still matter." – Arjan, Resident

Furthermore, additional activities are geared towards fostering a sense of openness between Woldwijk residents and their neighbours, with the aim of enhancing social interaction with neighbouring communities. As highlighted by Ulug et al. (2021b), these interactions play a vital role in reducing differences between ecovillage lifestyles and those of neighbouring communities. An example is provided by Tim as he talked about the pizza night organized by Woldwijk's residents where residents from the vicinity were invited. This event increased interest in Woldwijk's sustainable lifestyle. Subsequently, residents from Ten Boer visited Tim to gain insights into his house construction methods, which prioritize reused materials and eco-friendly building techniques.

"There is a regular pizza night and stuff like that. Or small groups [people from the vicinity] are invited. And this was not intentional, it just happened, but a couple of weeks ago I spent a whole Saturday afternoon showing people around in our new home." – Tim, Resident

Despite the general openness of the respondents and other residents encountered during the fieldwork, social interaction with inhabitants of the surrounding region did not start out smoothly. During the ethnographic fieldwork various respondents expressed difficulties between Woldwijk's residents and residents of the vicinity. At the beginning, some residents of Ten Boer and its surroundings held strong prejudices towards Woldwijk. Weird hippies, environmental loonies and similar judgements were made. However, through a strategy Dennis calls "the charming offensive" Woldwijk has managed to change the majority of these prejudices. By actively inviting neighbours to the property for dinner nights and tours, organizing cultural events, and providing space for "street / neighbourhood festivities." The interviewees mention this has improved significantly the last few years, but there is still some work to do. For example, some neighbours frequently call the police because they mistrust what happens at Woldwijk. Therefore, Woldwijk's quest to win the hearts of Ten Boer's residents continues. The following quotes illustrate this so-called charm offensive:

"Through different workshops and other things, we tried to draw people to Woldwijk. And we had to do this actively because people had a weird view of what was going on here. All that while we are a public space, you can walk in whenever you want. But people were a little scared, -what kind of things are going on there? It's a bit freaky isn't it?- We actively invited them to "street gatherings". So not the whole village at once, but street by street. Or a neighbourhood, or the other village in the other direction [Ten Post, Woltersum]. We invited them for some food or a drink. To show them what we do, and what we plan to do with the farmhouse. And then they are always surprised. "oh, you guys are actually quite normal". -Karel, Founder

"Some people do know we do nice things and have nice plans. But we still have a long way to go. When this [Woldwijk] just started, we had to work so hard to prove ourselves, against all the prejudices. Of course, there will always be people that don't like us. That's okay. But sometimes

they say the weirdest things. And sometimes we hear parents saying the weirdest things to their children. But then they visit us, we organize a little festival or an open day. After they visit us, their attitude completely changed. That changed a lot during these last 4 years. (...) Unknown makes unloved. So, we need to invite them here first. Then they change their opinion. Because to the outside world we might look a little different. That produces prejudices. And we need to get rid of those” – Arjan, Resident

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that despite recent endeavours by Woldwijk to foster greater openness towards the surrounding region, a range of preconceived biases and prejudices held by some residents within the ecovillage towards the neighbouring community also persists. Notably, during the interviews conducted by Siebert (2023), a prevailing sentiment among interviewees emerged wherein residents of Ten Boer were largely characterized as conservative and reticent. Consequently, these perceptions seemed to deter the interviewees from displaying any significant inclination towards active engagement within the social milieu of the broader regional context. This phenomenon might inadvertently result in missed prospects for collaborative attempts, as underscored by the insights gathered from the interview with Pieter, who highlighted several commendable sustainability initiatives that, when synergized with the competencies of Woldwijk’s residents, could potentially yield substantial impact. Despite the prevailing reticence towards social interactions with the surrounding community, a statement by Anna illustrates Woldwijk’s residents realize this might require some improvement:

“Maybe it would be beneficial if we’d also participate in activities that are being organised in Ten Boer. Well, in general schlager music festivals and bingo nights are not really interesting for many residents of Woldwijk. So, we really have to search for an interesting activity. Sometimes there are concerts or special services with a nice choir at the village church. I do like that.” – Anna, Resident

Celata (2019) and Magnusson (2018) underscore the pivotal role of institutional support from municipal authorities in determining the stability of ecovillages and their success in disseminating their sustainability-related values and activities. To gain this support, ecovillages must align with municipal interests, particularly those concerning regional development (Celata, 2019; Magnusson, 2018). During ethnographic fieldwork, several interviewees (including Dennis, Karel, Ellen, Erik, and Tim) and local residents consistently asserted that Woldwijk holds significant social and cultural value for the municipality of Groningen. This assertion holds weight in light of the challenges faced by numerous areas in Northern Netherlands due to declining populations and the disappearance of facilities (Dagblad van het Noorden, 2022), resulting in decreased liveability (Provincie Groningen, 2016). These interviewees highlighted how Woldwijk actively endeavours to enhance the liveability of the surrounding region through cultural events and educational initiatives. Dennis emphasised the value of the events, as Ten Boer is troubled by shrinking population and the disappearance of cultural facilities:

“Culturally speaking Ten Boer has nothing to show for. You can have dinner at the snack bar, or the Chinese restaurant. But that’s it. The last couple of years all facilities that remained disappeared. This is a consequence of the shrinking population and lacking liveability. The facilities disappear one by one.” -Dennis, Resident

Additionally, Woldwijk’s provision of temporary housing for individuals affected by earthquakes stemming from gas exploitation in Groningen (Woldwijk Fieldlab PDF, 2022)

further underscores its commitment to the well-being of the broader community. Notably, Woldwijk's sustainable housing and activities align with the sustainability objectives of the municipality of Groningen, encompassing sustainable living and housing (Gemeente Groningen, 2021). This alignment positions Woldwijk as a model of sustainable living that resonates with the broader regional development goals of the municipality.

Openness in the sense of interaction between Woldwijk and government institutions has known its ups and downs. When Woldwijk was established, the area belonged to the municipality of Ten Boer. This municipality was much smaller. Getting in contact with the municipality was easy. Lines were “short” and everyone knew each other:

“I could so to speak walk to city hall [Ten Boer], enter and straight up talk to the mayor. “-Name of mayor-, dear mayor or alderman, we are working on something but we are having difficulties with this”. And we could have a chat about that. There were also various aldermen granted with a specific budget and time to maintain and supervise Woldwijk.” – Dennis, Resident

“When we started this was still part of the municipality Ten Boer, so relatively small. You are close to each other, I could bike right into city hall, to the mayor and fix things with him” – Arjan, Resident

That changed when in 2017 Ten Boer merged with Groningen. All respondents stated this scale enlargement led to a lot of ignorance. Many new municipality workers had never heard of Woldwijk. In combination with the Covid-19 pandemic this led to a period of frustration and miscommunication between Woldwijk and the municipality. Still, it was not disinterest that caused this. The municipality workers that did know about Woldwijk recognized its value:

“When you view the progress from 2016/2017 until now, then I think it [Woldwijk] really proved its value. In a sense that the people that live there are very happy. The organized gatherings, activities, and events not just for residents of Woldwijk, but also for inhabitants of Ten Boer and its surroundings also proves its [Woldwijk] value. They contribute in a physical sense to the liveability of the village [Ten Boer]. So, I really think it's a great project for Ten Boer” – Luuk, Municipality

The emergence of an impression of ignorance among Woldwijk's members was attributed to a combination of amplified scale and sluggish bureaucratic processes, resulting in a form of unawareness. All interviewees expressed how this gave rise to a chain of miscommunications and dissemination of inaccurate information, ultimately exerting an adverse impact on the rapport between Woldwijk's residents and the local municipality. The following quotes from the interviews with Karel and Tim illustrate what happened after the municipalities of Ten Boer and Groningen merged:

“The whole file ³ moved to Groningen. That's the idiotic thing. When I encountered a group of municipality workers at substitute homes, they asked me what this whole thing [Woldwijk] was, and what was happening here. They had no clue. So, within the municipality it is not a

³ Translation of the word “Dossier”. In this context it refers to the “case of Woldwijk” for the municipality of Groningen

hot topic. When they talk about Woldwijk, they talk about TinyHouse. But nothing more. Not about Woldwijk. You never hear them say a word about what we are doing here.” -Karel, Founder

“There was a classic municipal information event at the village centre in Ten Boer. A group of officials were present, but it was obvious they had never visited Ten Boer before. They did not have a single clue about who we were and what this plan could bring. Well, that’s when we pulled the breaks and asked them: What is the meaning of this? You can return when you’re actually planning to listen to us. We want to have this conversation again, but we want to do it right.” – Tim, Resident

The last two years (2021-2023), significant improvements have been made in the relationship between Woldwijk and the Municipality of Groningen. After the assignment of a new board in the municipality, and the financial support granted to Woldwijk by Roemte⁴, Tim, Karel, and Dennis said the interactions between Woldwijk and the municipality entered an “euphoric stage”. Even Waterschappen⁵ showed genuine interest in a greywater recycling project in Woldwijk, but this proved to be too expensive. Still, the negative sentiment remains among the encountered residents of Woldwijk that the municipality does not always acknowledge the capabilities and value of Woldwijk’s residents. This is predominantly the result of the lack of certainty given by the municipality regarding Woldwijk’s future:

“I think that’s what the residents [of Woldwijk] mean in a sense that they have a good live there, but that might end in 4 years. They expect the municipality gives some certainty on that matter. Until now, we [the municipality] have been unable to give that certainty because there are many other challenges for the village of Ten Boer regarding real estate, traffic regulation and more. We need to weigh all those interests. How can we maintain or change that in the future for Ten Boer? That’s the main question.” -Luuk, Municipality

6.1.2 The Struggle of Uncertainty vs The Blessings of Temporariness

The land and farmhouse making up the property of Woldwijk are not in the possession of the cooperation and its inhabitants. Instead, the property is owned by the municipality of Groningen, which has a contract with Woldwijk to work and live on the property until 2027 (Prestatievergunning Woldwijk, 2017). According to Escribano (2020), this forms a significant barrier in becoming a stable self-sustaining community for ecovillages. Previous research on ecovillages state ownership might decrease limitations caused by zoning laws and regulations (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020). The collected data for this thesis however does not fully conform with this statement. In fact, lack of ownership comes with various benefits for Woldwijk. This is the result of the experimental permits, legal constructions and unique exemptions granted to Woldwijk by the municipality through a temporary contract (Prestatievergunning Woldwijk, 2017). Examples of these are permission to use reused materials otherwise prohibited by Dutch building codes, experiment with unconventional building methods and a significant rent reduction. This legislative framework is described elaborately in section 6.2.3 (p.84). In the situation when this contract ends and the land will be granted to Woldwijk, the cooperation will have to work with regular legislation such as land use plans and building codes. This will significantly decrease certain freedoms Woldwijk is now enjoying thanks to the temporary contract. When asked how this will take form when Woldwijk will gain legal possession over the property, Karel answered the following:

⁴ Foundation that finances social initiatives within the province of Groningen

⁵ Regional governing body charged with the management of water in the environment.

"I can't say things will remain the same, this is not possible because everything will become more formal. When that happens, we could lease the ground and buy the farm. But then everything has to be rearranged. And hopefully according to the spirit that's here now. To build a more sustainable future. For it to become a truly sustainable neighbourhood. That will mean for example, everyone currently pays 200 euros monthly for 1000 hectares. That won't be possible when we will lease the ground. This will have to increase a lot. So, everything will need to become denser." - Karel, Resident

The residents of Woldwijk seem to understand this situation. They recognize the value of the current temporary contract and the freedom to experiment it grants them. However, to increase certainty and room for further development the respondents do not call for direct ownership, but rather the extension of the contract. The following quotes illustrate this:

"The primary freedom, which feels like a restriction, is the temporariness of this area. That grants us certain freedoms. Now we don't have to comply with certain legislations. And apparently, this does not have to go wrong. (...) That temporariness, those first 10 years that it's tolerated, with an option for 10 more years. It would be amazing if this form of temporariness continues. Like an eternal temporariness." – Gijs, Resident

"We have a contract with the municipality which states we can use the land for 20 years and live there for 10 years. When our 10-year contract ends and we gain ownership of the land, we will enter a different legal game. Without that temporary status, we will lose the freedoms and space we need to experiment. This will be much harder. So, if the next 10 years will also be part of that temporary contract, it would be much easier for us to arrange things"⁶– Dennis, Resident

The interview data does not point out that ownership is the primary barrier to sustainable development in Woldwijk. Instead, the main factor that blocks potential developments that might contribute to the stability Woldwijk and it in the sustainable transition is looming uncertainty when the current contract ends. The perspective that there is a chance the inhabitants of Woldwijk will have to leave their property by 2027 creates high feelings of uncertainty. For large-scale and long-term investments in sustainable alternatives to be viable, certainty on the future of the municipality is essential. This uncertainty has already led to the cancellation of the development of a greywater recycling system as this proved to be too costly for a period of 5 years. For this same reason, the uncertainty also prevents the community from developing a self-sustainable renewable energy system:

"Wouldn't we rather fix it by ourselves [Sewage system]? I still believe we would be capable to do that. However, within the temporary

⁶ Here the respondent refers to activities related to sustainable development and improving the self-sufficiency of the community. E.g.: investing in ways to produce renewable energy at Woldwijk.

perspective of 10 years, by now 5, we are unable to afford some experiments for which a certain investment is necessary. Not within 5 years. We can filter our own water in a natural way, and we actually do this. But it does cost a lot of money. If we know we could live here for a longer period of time, this wouldn't be a problem. Then we'd just divide it over the years and all the inhabitants. But now people were not willing to pay for it. The same goes for our energy supply. That we can produce our own energy. Through solar panels or wind turbines. All the knowledge to do this is present within this cooperation. Still, it is impossible to spread those investments over 5 years. That's not profitable. That is not our main goal, but it has to be balanced. So now we are still connected to the grid, but when we are certain the current contract gets extended by 10 years, we have 15 years to spread the investments... Then it would be a possibility.” – Dennis, Resident

“So we are a temporary project. We don't have any guarantees granted by the municipality that we can stay here. And for me and many others that forms a barrier for sustainable developments. We cannot realise a self-sustaining renewable energy system through solar panels or windmills. We also cannot establish a helophyte filter. The investment is too large for the limited amount of time. It becomes not worth the effort, or too expensive and not everything can be removed easily. And the municipality demands everything we build must be able to be removed easily. So that's a real restriction.” – Albert, Resident

During the interview with Luuk, he claims the municipality acknowledges the value of Woldwijk and claims to support the initiative. Still, it is unable to provide a concrete vision for its future. Interests regarding traffic regulation and housing shortage make it impossible to foresee the future.

“I cannot speak for the entire municipal college, but I think the municipal college appreciates what is happening here. So, when we look into the future after 2027, a well thought weighing of interests will take place on what will happen there [Woldwijk] and what is most important at that time.” - Luuk, Municipality

Although this uncertainty does prevent Woldwijk's residents from fulfilling some of their desires regarding sustainable development, Dennis claims it motivates them to work even harder to prove their worth and achieve their ambitions to create a sustainable, self-sufficient community that might teach society about alternative ways of living:

“In some way, there is a good side to those dynamics [the uncertainty]. It motivates us to keep going. You cannot just lay back and hope it will be alright. We are fighting for something. We are working on a charm offensive aimed at the municipality, and the village [Ten Boer]”. – Dennis, Resident

Tim shares Dennis's defiant attitude. During the interview he expressed his concerns on how some of the recently constructed buildings may have to be demolished when the temporary contract ends. This might either be because the residents will have to leave the property, or regular building codes come in effect that prohibit used building materials and techniques (Prestatievergunning, 2017). However, this possible outlook does not break

Tim's spirit. It rather motivates him to further strengthen Woldwijk's presence in the area:

"We are not affected by the fact that we might in theory only be able to live here for 5 years. And you can say we are crazy for pushing on and constructing another communal building. But that is not the flow we want to be in. Otherwise, it is useless. So, we choose to ignore that and keep on going" – Tim, Resident

6.1.3 Finding the Balance Between Private Space and Communal Living

According to the literature, a crucial factor for the stability of an ecovillage is the balance between private space and communal facilities. Lack of private space increases the chance of conflict and frustrations (Escribano, 2020), while the presence of communal facilities increases social interaction and perceived life satisfaction (Lokyer, 2017). One of Woldwijk's focal points is communal living (Fieldlab Woldwijk PDF, 2022). Still, plots at Woldwijk offer an abundance of private space. A gradual difference was observed between the 3 distinctive communities that call Woldwijk its home. Most private space was observed in the TinyHouse area. In the TinyHouse area, every dwelling has all the facilities regular housing has. Personal bathrooms, kitchens, and gardens. Plots are distinctly separated by elevated slopes and high vegetation.

The TinyHouse area does not have a communal building, however the residents are welcome in the communal spaces of the other initiatives. During the ethnographic fieldwork usage of these other communal spaces by residents from TinyHouse was not observed. From both the interview data and informal conversations during the ethnographic fieldwork it became clear internal conflict was most apparent among the residents of TinyHouse compared to Landjegoed and Staatjevrij. While Karel claimed cooperation among members of Landjegoed went rather smoothly, TinyHouse struggled as a consequence of their strict selection procedure including expectations and promises each resident brings.

According to Karel, TinyHouse residents stay more in their personal dwellings. Building upon Lockyer's argument (2017), the social dynamics observed at the Tiny House community could indeed be linked to the absence of communal facilities. Consequently, this absence contributes to rougher cooperation. As illustrated by Karel's quote below, the initial mentality of the community to share facilities at Landjegoed facilitated smoother communication and decision-making processes. While Karel predominantly attributes the increased conflicts within the Tiny House community to its strict rules, it's worth noting that Landjegoed (and Woldwijk as a whole) also operates under rules and guidelines. The crucial distinction might lay in the presence of communal facilities at Landjegoed, aligning with Lockyer's (2017) assertion that such facilities foster greater social interaction. In contrast, the lack of these communal amenities among the Tiny House residents results in residents keeping more to themselves, ultimately leading to less cooperative interactions.

"They [TinyHouse] had the highest objectives and expectations written in their description. Initiative description they called it. What is your plan? Everything related to ecology was written down there. Those were their holy rules. So, what happens? That leads to trouble. You start working on an objective, and then people argue about that. -this is not what we agreed upon- etc.. Meanwhile, Landjegoed followed a different strategy. They already had infrastructure that was created without strict rules and bickering about holy rules. The funny thing is, that originated automatically in a community that's relatively young. But they tell each other -we will share this; we will make a common building here- That goes without saying. That makes me think: The less you keep to your own club, the more carefree you are and the more possibilities there are" – Karel, Founder.



Figure 13: Picture of plots in the Tiny House area. Special focus on the elevated slope covered by vegetation that functions as demarcation between the plots. (Author's own image, 2023)

Despite the existing tensions within the Tiny House community, as highlighted by interviewees Bob and Nellie, there is a notable culture of sharing within the community. However, this sharing primarily revolves around borrowing tools and garden equipment, such as lawn mowers and hoses.

Similar to TinyHouse, plots at Landjegoed have an abundance of private space. Most dwellings at Landjegoed also have all regular facilities such as a bathroom, kitchen, and private garden. The area of Landjegoed included a recently built communal building. This building was constructed by members of Landjegoed in cooperation with members of Staatjevrij. Through informal conversations with members of the community, it became clear this building was essential for creating a healthy balance between private space and communal living. Members stated it was beneficial for the social interaction within the community to have a shared space that offered the opportunity to cook, eat, and hang out outside of the private dwelling. A place where spontaneous social activity took place. During the ethnographic fieldwork it became clear residents of Landjegoed were more involved in daily activities at Woldwijk such as working in the garden or fixing things around the property. A stronger culture of sharing was observed among the community of Landjegoed compared to TinyHouse. As observed during the fieldwork and interview data (Albert, Gijs) members of Landjegoed have access to shared, communal goods such as vehicles, household appliances and tools. Albert explained how this culture of sharing made it possible for the community to lease high quality household appliances that further contribute to the sustainable way of life of the community:

"We at Landjegoed share great quality laundry machines that are being leased. They are top notch in terms of sustainability. And that is possible because you do it together. Not every resident needs their own laundry machine or dryer. We also have a communal e-bike, and a lawn mower. And that building over there is a communal bathroom with a toilet and a shower. "

Albert, Resident



Figure 14:: Picture of Landjegoed dwellings (Author's own image, 2023)



Figure 15: Picture of the communal "Wereldhuiskamer" (living room) at Staatjevrij (Author's own image, 2023)

The highest degree of communal living was found in the Staatjevrij community. Individual plots of land were still quite spacious, and clear boundaries existed through high ranks of vegetation and slopes. However, dwellings in the Staatjevrij area did not hold facilities like private bathrooms and kitchens. Unlike TinyHouse and Landjegoed, members of Staatjevrij were dependent on a communal toilet and shower. Daily activities like cooking, having dinner, lunchbreaks, were mostly communal. Like Landjegoed, a strong culture of sharing was found in Staatjevrij. Life for members of Staatjevrij was most similar to living on a farm, as its members were occupied by chores essential for their basic needs. Ranging from tending the garden, cutting wood for the fire, preparing dinner for its members,

Staatjevrij proved the most self-sustaining and self-providing. Members were observed working all day to sustain the community or working on little side projects related to sustainable practices. This includes selling homegrown tea, lemonade and salves or constructing a natural swimming pool regulated by mechanics fuelled by wind energy and solar panels.



Figure 16: Picture of plot at Staatjevrij. To the right stands the wind-solar mechanic that regulates the swimming pond (Author's own image, 2023)

6.2 Interaction with Society

6.2.1 Reviving Nature, Enhancing Liveability, and Empowering Society: The Transformative Objectives of Woldwijk

Following the definition of embedding based on Avelino & Kunze (2016) and Hausknost (2019) the influence of Woldwijk through embeddedness is evident in the mere presence of the ecovillage in its region and the activities undertaken by its residents (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). The process of embedding occurs as Woldwijk emerged as a response to the pressing need to repurpose barren farmland, following financial constraints that hindered the realisation of desired housing projects by the municipality of Ten Boer (Fieldlab Woldwijk PDF, 2022; Tijdelijk Gebruik Woldwijk, 2015;). Collaborative efforts undertaken at the present location transformed the once desolate area into a lively space that endeavours to coexist with nature. To achieve their view of coexistence, Woldwijk established community guidelines that strictly prohibit the use of pesticides and chemical materials. By adhering to these sustainable practices, Arjan, Dennis and Tim claim the landscape has undergone a transformative journey from initial degradation by exhaustive

agriculture and monoculture to its present state of lushness, teeming with diverse flora, insects, and avian life. This landscape is publicly accessible and functions as a park. Throughout the course of its development, Woldwijk established diverse facilities that extend their services to the general public. An illustrative instance of such provision is the Teahouse, also known as "Theehoes." Functioning as a local shop, the Teahouse offers an extensive range of commodities, including tea, herbs, spices, and various other organic products made by Woldwijk's residents.



Figure 17: Theehoes (Author's own image, 2023)



Figure 18: Inside the Theehoes (Author's own image, 2023)

Furthermore, the process of embedding entails provided facilities and increasing socio-cultural value of the wider region (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). Karel and Dennis claim Woldwijk has played a pivotal role in restoring the cultural significance of the monumental farmhouse within the region (Kansen voor de Hoeve PDF, 2021). Despite facing considerable challenges in garnering support from the municipality of Groningen, recent developments indicate a positive shift towards the renovation of the farmhouse. This encouraging progress owes much to the intervention of Roemte.

The farmhouse possesses substantial potential to enhance the economic, social, and cultural value of Woldwijk. Collaborative efforts with the municipality and local businesses have already yielded a range of plans. One such proposal involves transforming the farmhouse into office spaces, catering to small local enterprises:

“There is a local business association, they visited us with 30 people. They had never been here before. (...) When they saw the stables, they said “oh my god so much space”. And we told them about our plans. They showed a lot of interest in it. If we can turn it into multiple units, we can provide space for smaller businesses. So, we keep them updated now.” – Karel, Founder

Additionally, Dennis envisions the farmhouse as a vibrant “culture barn”, encompassing a theatre, brewery, and music stage, creating a space where individuals from across the region can converge to have a locally brewed organic beer, watch a play, or participate in jam sessions:

"I keep dreaming of a culture barn. That we can use this farm as a mini brewery that uses locally grown barley and grain alongside a pub where you can have food from our own garden or drink a beer while you watch a theatre performance in the farmhouse. Or an open stage, a stage for musicians to practise. A place to visit on a Sunday or Saturday; let's go to Woldwijk for a bite and a pint from the local brewery" – Dennis, Resident

These initiatives exemplify the commitment to revitalise and repurpose the farmhouse, aligning it with the evolving cultural landscape of Woldwijk, and fostering its integration as a dynamic hub for artistic and economic activities within the region. The following quote by Jan sums up a fraction of the multitude of events and activities taking place at Woldwijk:

"And sometimes cooperation with them [Ten Boer] led to certain activities. Some examples: There was a sustainability market, a clothing fair, those kinds of things. But we also organized larger gatherings. Toukomst, for example, well at some point we had 150 visitors walking around the farmhouse." -Karel, Founder

Numerous residents are actively engaged in organizing a diverse array of activities and events, welcoming residents from the broader region. These engaging activities encompass a wide spectrum, encompassing everything from yoga classes and pizza nights to art galleries and music events. Notably, Woldwijk recently hosted a highly successful festival called "Lutje Fest". According to Dennis, this attracted over 400 visitors to the ecovillage. The aforementioned activities revolve around the fundamental principle of sustainability, seeking to acquaint visitors with the alternative ways of living embraced within the Woldwijk community, while simultaneously enhancing the liveability in the surrounding region. Through the indirect introduction of innovative sustainability concepts through these events, Woldwijk aspires to inspire its visitors to incorporate incremental changes into their daily lifestyles, fostering a broader adoption of sustainable practices beyond the confines of the ecovillage. Throughout the interviews, participants asserted that these events exhibit gradual yet tangible fruition. The subsequent quotes exemplify this assertion:

"All those events function to bring people together, to initiate a cross-pollination of ideas and initiatives. We display a map on the table here, on which you can see what other places like Woldwijk are in the vicinity. When people visit, they see that there is a lot going on. That gradually, many places are opting for change." -Gijs, Resident

"People that visit often tell me that they might be able to live like this. A bit bigger, a kind of different form. But when they visit, they see that a lot of different people live here, and that makes it more accessible. They visit Woldwijk once and it completely alters their opinion and attracts them. And consequently, more and more people are interested in living more sustainable" - Bert, Resident

Aside from cultural activities, Woldwijk additionally hosts an abundance of educational events, including workshops and lectures. Noteworthy examples of such events are "De duurzaamheidsmarkt" and "De Groene Dag" Another recurrent undertaking comprises nature hikes, wherein participants are enlightened about the various offerings of

nature and how these resources can be incorporated into culinary practices. As noted by Anna, these events primarily emphasize interactive learning experiences rather than adhering to conventional educational methods:

“We organize hikes through nature so people can learn about it. What things they can pick, what they can eat, and what they can process into a healthy dinner. Or what products they can create with it. They are taught what they can find in their backyard. So, it’s interactive, not boring.”
– Anna, Resident

An important aspect of embedded ecovillages is that they serve as inspirational places where ideals for sustainable lifestyles are materialized and provide powerful mental images for mainstream society (Brombin, 2019; Hausknost, 2018). During the ethnographic research all encountered residents claimed that one of the core ambitions of Woldwijk is spreading knowledge on sustainable ways of living. All interviewees living at Woldwijk stated that they see the place as a model for society, and everyone interested in their daily activities is welcome to see how they are living it. The majority of Woldwijk’s residents encountered during the fieldwork claimed to be eager to teach people about organic food production, cooking, reusing materials, and numerous other things. Furthermore, Woldwijk organizes gatherings for similar initiatives to visit and learn about the organization, how Woldwijk was developed and the structure of the cooperation.

The empowerment and emancipation of mainstream society is one of the main strategies of ecovillages to achieve changes in the Western DSP (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Liftin, 2014) This also proved to be a primary objective of Woldwijk residents. A significant proportion of Woldwijk’s inhabitants encountered during this research stated they aim to exemplify the potential in making incremental adjustments regarding sustainable living. Just one of the interviewees (Leendert) stated he was not interested in teaching other people about sustainability, and rather kept to himself. All others (10/11) perceived themselves as a model for mainstream society and recognized the responsibility to contribute to transforming it. During the ethnographic research, this attitude was reflected in all people that were encountered at Woldwijk. The majority of interviewees (10/11) aims to achieve self-sufficiency enhancement and the propagation of a do-it-yourself ethos among members of mainstream society. The underlying purpose is to bestow individuals with the confidence and agency to proactively address various aspects of their lives regarding sustainability. Evidential support for this mindset can be gleaned from interview data, which is presented as follows:

“During the construction of my house I used mainly reused materials. Because of my profession, and what I work on in the garden, this is “Little Wonderland”. Here anything is possible. People are welcome to walk in. Just take a look around when they are in the vicinity. Find inspiration, like “oh this is what you can do with it”. This used to be this, and now it’s this. You created that from that?” – Arjan, Resident

“What’s most important to me is to be self-sufficient in life. I materialize that through developing the skills necessary to be self-sufficient. I learned how to produce my own food and build my own house. Those are the basic security things you won’t learn that quickly in mainstream society. (...) And now I’m capable of coaching others and to teach them how to build a house and how to grow their own crops. To pass on that knowledge.” – Erik, Resident

6.2.2 Challenging the Western DSP Through Core Values of Sharing, Autonomy and Circularity

The definition of upscaling involves mainstreaming ecovillage activities, lifestyles, and innovations from the bottom-up (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Liftin, 2014; Singh, 2019). These activities hold the potential to reshape mainstream society. Lessons from ecovillages, including their culture of sharing and do-it-yourself ethos, play a pivotal role in this transformation (Liftin, 2014; Wiest, 2022). Ecovillages serve as hubs of social innovation, translating novel concepts into everyday practices (Casey, 2020; Hausknost, 2018; Price, 2020). They challenge and redefine the norms of the Western DSP, collectively establishing new principles that align with living within ecological boundaries (Hausknost, 2018). The following section will focus on initiatives and activities taking place at Woldwijk which aim to do this.

During the interviews conducted at Woldwijk, the residents were queried about their active involvement in fostering sustainability-related innovations to uncover lessons from living at Woldwijk for mainstream society. The responses elicited a diverse array of outcomes. Specifically, the 6 respondents residing in the TinyHouse accommodations consistently highlighted the utilization of reused and eco-friendly materials in the construction of their dwellings, as well as their conscientious efforts to reduce consumption.

Conversely, all 5 participants residing at Landjegoed and Staatjevrij areas conveyed their perception of communal living, a pronounced culture of sharing, and an austere lifestyle as social innovations that are actively embraced and practiced within the community of Woldwijk. In this context, 7 out of 11 respondents living at Woldwijk stated that the need for further sustainable innovation is relatively minimal, as the very essence of living at Woldwijk is intrinsically sustainable:

“When you don’t need a lot, then there’s not much to make it more sustainable. If you’re footprint is low, then you are on the right path. If you require a lot of energy, then you can develop solar panels that make it sustainable. But you can also lower your energy needs so you don’t need the solar panels.” -Erik, Resident

“People here [Woldwijk] have an electrical connection that is limited to 3600 watts. That is all they can use, simultaneously. We can use all household appliances regular people have in their home, but you can’t use it all, and all the time. An electrical oven, for example, needs 3000 watts. Add an electric boiler of 1000 watt and you have a short circuit. Those are thing people need to delve into before they purchase electrical equipment. They are restricted in that sense, so they need to be more conscious about it.” – Gijs, Resident

“My [ecological] footprint is small. I live in a TinyHouse that compromises 30m2. With my 2 children and my girlfriend. The space you occupy and energy you need for heating and electricity is so much lower. We built our house with ecological materials, really well isolated. We eat straight from the garden. A big share of our food, from spring to autumn, we take it straight from our backyard. Within walking distance” – Dennis, Resident

Notwithstanding 7 out of 11 participants asserting their passivity towards sustainable innovations, Woldwijk houses various initiatives that exemplify the community's social values, including communal living, a culture of sharing, and the conscious reuse of materials. Multiple residents underscored the design and social structures of Woldwijk as exemplifying

a form of social innovation. Specifically, Dennis' response focused on the socio-economic model employed by Woldwijk in constructing buildings and organizing activities. This model is characterized by a distinct departure from traditional arrangements involving third-party entities, such as construction companies or financial institutions. Instead, Woldwijk embraces a "do it yourself mentality" inherent within the community, thereby evading entanglement with the prevailing dominant economic system. Noteworthy is the financial efficacy of this cooperative model, which not only proves economically advantageous but also facilitates the dissemination and reproduction of knowledge among participants while emancipating members of mainstream society. Dennis highlighted that this approach to self-reliance fosters a sense of empowerment within participants. It inspires individuals to take charge of their endeavours and bypass reliance on external entities in the Western DSP:

“The will to shape the world around you from bottom-up. Right now, we are sitting in the living room. We worked at this with more than 100 people. Everybody who worked on this, learned from this. That’s also how we were able to finance it. And that simply is a new model. Without a bank, without debts, without a mortgage. It’s free. And it’s for everybody. (...) That way, in a really practical manner, by doing it together and creating it for everyone. That way, a lot of things can be done differently.” – Dennis, Resident

One of these initiatives residing at Woldwijk is the organization called “Mas Con Menos”. Mas Con Menos has adopted this cooperative model in the workshops they host, thereby attesting to its applicability and effectiveness in the context of knowledge dissemination and community emancipation. These workshops invite people from all over the world to participate in a communal building process enabling them to acquire proficiency in eco-friendly construction techniques. Financing for these workshops is facilitated through an entry fee levied upon the participants. Beyond the mere physical construction of eco-friendly buildings, the core objective of Mas Con Menos encompasses the emancipation of individuals by imparting knowledge pertaining to sustainable construction practices. All participants expressed how their participation in these workshops served as a profound source of inspiration, inciting transformative changes in their lives. The workshops served as a catalysing force, affirming their individual capacity to effect meaningful change, and reaffirming the inherent potential of collective action. Central to these workshops is the emphasis on the group process, where collaborative dynamics are at the forefront. A notable ritual exemplifying this approach is observed at the commencement and conclusion of each day's activities, during which all participants convene in a circular arrangement. A symbolic artifact known as the "talking stick" is passed sequentially among the participants, permitting the holder to freely express their emotions, frustrations, and conflicts with the group without eliciting immediate responses. This ritualistic practice was consistently acknowledged by all participants as a pivotal aspect of the workshops, facilitating enhanced comprehension of the behavioural nuances exhibited by fellow participants, thus fostering a sense of empathetic understanding among the community members. The following quote illustrates this:

“The way we have a workshop like that, the past days feel really special. When you can create something permanent like that, in such an atmosphere. That is amazing. The atmosphere you create as a group, through communal dinners and stuff. It would be great if more people could taste it. That the world is full of possibilities. That instead of stealing each other’s flies, people will start working together and can make things happen.” – Gijs, Resident



Figure 19: Workshop by Mas Con Menos (Author's own image, 2023)

In this pursuit, Woldwijk offers a conducive space and operational base for the organization, allowing them to experiment with novel building techniques and sustainable materials. While Mas Con Menos was not originally established at Woldwijk, the organization decided to establish its presence there due to the manifold opportunities provided by the setting for further experimentation, refinement, and realization of their sustainable aspirations in the domain of eco-friendly building methods. Examples of such experiments are the design of loam heaters and use of hemp lime plaster for isolation. These techniques are now being sold to customers in mainstream society. In the following quotes Dennis explains how these innovations work and emphasizes the value of a place like Woldwijk to make such experiments happen:

“A part of our community works on the design of loam heaters. This is an open-source technique called a rocket stove. In these heaters, wood burns really clean, at really high temperatures with high efficiency. We started a company based on that open-source technology called “vrij lemerij”. We build loam heaters. We have experimented a lot with that. (...) That way we were able to learn a lot and managed to design a prefab system that we built here in our workshop (...) This is an example of experiments in the field of sustainable innovation we are able to conduct here at Woldwijk, because it gives us the space to do so.” – Dennis, Resident

*“We use hemp lime plaster as an isolation material. Hemp is produced in the east of Groningen (Local province). It is a plant that absorbs more CO2 than is needed to produce it. So, working with hemp lime plaster results in a co2 negative footprint for your building.” -
Dennis, Resident*

Another initiative is the community garden, known as "Zelfoogsttuin." Departing from conventional practices of producing food solely for internal consumption or direct market sale, Woldwijk adopts a distinctive approach by offering a "harvest service" to inhabitants of the surrounding region. Under this arrangement, members contribute a monthly fee and receive timely notifications when specific products are ripe for harvest. Employing a system of personally designated flags, members from neighbouring regions visit the garden to claim their allocated share. Moreover, members of the Zelfoogsttuin are frequently invited to join in the cultivation processes and learn about sustainable agriculture. This method of food production is favoured over direct market sales, as it not only contributes to a more sustainable food system by providing organic products but also mitigates transport costs while fostering a sense of shared responsibility among the 60 participating members:

“We produce food for members of the garden. Everyone can become a member for a monthly contribution. We do not restrict ourselves to Ten Boer or Woldwijk. Members are from Woldwijk, members are from Ten Boer, but also from other parts of the surrounding region. Even From Groningen. Beijum, Lewenborg. Those neighbourhoods. So yes, we don't really restrict that. It's for all those people. The good thing is that it keeps the food kilometres low for all those people. They can get here by bike or even walking. That's the way we want to produce it.” – Erik, Resident

*“Members receive a weekly email. That email says which vegetables are ready for harvest. People can find little flags at the garden saying where they can harvest. And they take the vegetables themselves. That means that because people are actively engaged in harvesting, the customers are always in the vicinity. So, it is a local food provision, and all different chains and links are removed. Its producer and customer. Nothing more. If there is a bad harvest, you share the costs. It's not just the farmer that loses. If there is a good harvest, everyone benefits.” – Dennis,
Resident*



Figure 20: The communal garden 1 (Author's own image, 2023)



Figure 21: The communal garden 2 (Author's own image, 2023)

Members of Woldwijk also established a cooperative venture dedicated to renewable energy production, known as the "Energiecooperatie Ten Boer" (ECBT). The cooperative's primary undertaking involves harnessing renewable energy through solar panels installed atop the farmhouse. However, it is important to note that this energy generation is not intended for Woldwijk's internal consumption but is rather directed toward benefiting the residents of Ten Boer, the local municipality. The inception of this endeavour dates back to 2018 when the cooperative was founded as a collaborative effort to support the municipality of Groningen in its pursuit of achieving energy neutrality by the year 2035. Through the implementation of what is colloquially referred to as the "sunroof," Woldwijk extends the opportunity to Ten Boer's inhabitants to partake in solar energy production, which would otherwise have been inaccessible due to space constraints. Dennis further explains how this arrangement works in the following excerpt:

"We (Woldwijk) founded the ECBT that installed 70 solar panels on the roof of the farmhouse. Villagers [of Ten Boer] that lack the suitable roof for solar panels, can install them here. Simply put, the energy produced here gets reduced from their energy bill. ECBT facilitates this." -Dennis, Resident



Figure 22: The sunroof (Author's own image, 2023)

6.2.3 Pioneering Sustainable Living in the Field of Legislation: Woldwijk's Influence on Nationwide Projects and Unexplored Municipal Potential

The following section aimed to discover if practices and activities taking place at Woldwijk have already been noticed by institutions in the Western DSP and have been

translated into mainstream society. Based on Hausknost (2018) and Sherry (2019), translation is defined as the adoption of ecovillage innovations, policies, and practices by institutions in the Western DSP. As of the present, the developments at Woldwijk have not resulted in significant instances of widespread translation to other contexts within the municipality of Groningen. During the interview with Luuk, it was evident that the municipality has not incorporated any of the sustainability concepts and practices employed at Woldwijk into broader applications or initiatives. Despite this observation, Luuk did acknowledge that the specially tailored legislative framework implemented for Woldwijk could prove to be of interest for potential application in future alternative housing projects.

During the early stages of Woldwijk's development, the designated agricultural land posed a significant obstacle to the realization of the envisioned project. To establish a framework conducive to the evolution of a project like Woldwijk, a novel legislative approach had to be forged. Through collaborative efforts with both the central government and the local municipality, Karel and the other founders of Woldwijk initiated an experimental venture in conjunction with the Environment and Planning Act (Omgevingswet), which is still under development. The government sought to explore alternative projects such as Woldwijk through this evolving legislative framework. The outcome of this endeavour was the establishment of a distinctive form of a "Prestatievergunning" (performance permit), which granted a limited exemption from conventional legislation for a designated area of 5 hectares.

"We designed all those permits by ourselves. We did have some assistance from the central government because they were working on the new Environmental and Planning Act. They watched over our shoulders to see what the possibilities were to do it differently." - Karel, Founder

This new temporary legislative system was devised to accommodate permits that would be unattainable under normal circumstances (Prestatievergunning, 2017). Karel explained how the founders of Woldwijk meticulously crafted these permits themselves, which were subsequently incorporated into a more comprehensive "koepelvergunning" (umbrella permit). This all-encompassing permit encompassed all planned activities related to habitation, living, and working within the Woldwijk project. Arjan, Dennis and Karel described how this innovative approach resulted in a plethora of possibilities for Woldwijk's residents. Notably, they were afforded the liberty to bypass conventional building decrees, which allowed for experimentation with alternative building methods and materials that would have been otherwise proscribed. Furthermore, the establishment of legal addresses for plots of land enabled residents to initiate businesses and engage in various economic activities.

One of the most advantageous outcomes of the all-encompassing permit was the streamlining of administrative procedures. By consolidating all individual permits under a singular umbrella permit, regular bureaucratic procedures could be circumvented, expediting the development and implementation of projects within Woldwijk. This legislative innovation effectively created a more flexible and accommodating regulatory environment, empowering the community to explore and manifest their sustainable aspirations in an unprecedented manner. This was explained in more detail by Luuk:

"A frequently recurring subject is the special permit of the area. For 5 hectares inside the 40 hectares of the whole area. Where more is allowed, where things can be built outside of the building decree. So, there are alternative constructions on some TinyHouse plots. For which no regular permit procedures were necessary. Alternative building methods are possible too. It [the legislation] has been created by the municipalities,

including an environmental team, and a reflection team that tests which initiatives can become part of Woldwijk. I think that is a wonderful system. Still, it's only based on a temporary permit, and that permit expires in 2027" – Luuk, Municipality

Although the municipality of Groningen has not pursued broader application of Woldwijk's initiatives, the legislative framework specifically designed for the community has garnered substantial interest from various other municipalities and organizations seeking to establish comparable sustainable neighbourhoods and communities. In June of the past year, the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) conducted a visit to Woldwijk, seeking to gather valuable insights into its developmental trajectory (<https://gen-nl.nl/ecodorpen-zomergathering/>, 2023). Moreover, Dennis and Jan highlighted those numerous initiatives throughout the country have drawn inspiration from Woldwijk and are actively attempting to establish similar eco-friendly communities. This phenomenon underscores Woldwijk's pioneering role in advancing the concept of ecovillages within the Netherlands. Despite the municipality's restrained embrace of the innovations fostered at Woldwijk, the community's unique legislative framework has become a beacon of attraction for entities beyond the immediate region. The noteworthy interest from other municipalities and organizations further exemplifies Woldwijk's capacity to inspire and influence the emergence of sustainable living models across the nation:

"Yes, there is a lot of interest in Woldwijk. It has been a national experiment for the Environment and Planning Act because of the distinctive framework. (...) So many knowledge institutions show interest, but also other municipalities that have a similar area and or have the ambition for a TinyHouse village. And ask themselves "where to start?" They knock on our door, or Woldwijk's, and visit to hear its story." – Luuk, Municipality

Woldwijk takes an active role sharing their story. As Dennis explains in the quote below, residents actively visit or invite interest groups to spread their story and inspire initiatives to set up similar communities. According to Avelino & Kunze (2016), this is beneficial to prevent regime absorption.

"We attended a meeting of ecovillages and such, a national network. There were about 40 groups represented that were all developing land for projects like this. We told Woldwijk's story there, and how the legislative framework was designed and functions. Various parties built further on that, and that's amazing. We pass it on. We are a pioneer, in the Netherlands at least." – Dennis, Resident

On a much smaller scale, Woldwijk's principles are gradually implemented in the agricultural sector. In collaboration with two neighbouring farmers, Woldwijk has embarked on pioneering experiments in nature-inclusive forms of agriculture with the overarching ambition of serving as a model for the broader agricultural sector. Among these experimental initiatives, the adoption of the "plas-dras" method stands prominent, involving the temporary flooding of a field to enhance the habitat and well-being of bird populations. Furthermore, the farmers have embraced several additional measures, such as reduced mowing, cessation of pesticide use, diversification in sowing techniques, and experimentation with various livestock practices. Dennis, Karel, and Albert proudly attribute this development to the strong cooperation and communication between Woldwijk and the farmers. Notwithstanding the

successes achieved, it is important to acknowledge that the path of collaboration has not been without difficulties. Participants in the interviews readily acknowledge the farmers' entrepreneurial interests, recognizing the inherent pursuit of financial gains within their agricultural enterprises. Consequently, tensions have arisen at times, particularly when certain proposals necessitated additional effort or compromise from both parties involved. Despite such occasional obstacles, the prevailing sentiment among the interviewees is one of pride in the progress achieved and optimism for the prospects of harmonizing ecological objectives with agricultural enterprise:

“The fact that we have cooperation with all residents and farmers come together and have a talk about how we want the farmers to stop using pesticides. The farmer reacts saying he would love to do that, but then his yield will diminish. Or that will lead to lots of weeds. To which some residents propose to remove those weeds for him. Then the farmer agrees on not using pesticides. This way we come to a solution.” – Dennis, Resident

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Challenges and Opportunities in Establishing Woldwijk as a Stable Ecovillage

Upon reviewing the data collected during this research in conjunction with the existing literature, Woldwijk demonstrates the attributes necessary for the establishment of a stable ecovillage. Firstly, the unique situation related to ownership creates a fertile ground for sustainability experiments and alternative lifestyles. Secondly, the residents of Woldwijk, as encountered during the research, exhibit a remarkable degree of openness towards mainstream society and the Western DSP. Thirdly, Woldwijk's residents enjoy ample private space, which according to findings of Escribano (2020) should contribute to the social stability of the community. Nonetheless, certain challenges related to their dependency on the Western DSP persist. The existing literature underscores the significance of legal ownership for the establishment of an ecovillage on a specific piece of land (Ergas, 2010; Escribano, 2020). However, the intricacies of Dutch zoning laws and environmental planning regulations present a situation wherein it is currently more advantageous for Woldwijk to operate under a leasing arrangement for the property. Under the present leasing agreement, Woldwijk benefits from specific legislative constructs and exemptions that facilitate its status as a living laboratory for sustainable practices and developments. However, upon obtaining legal property rights to the land, the current legislative privileges and exemptions will cease to apply, leading to the termination of Woldwijk's status as a living lab, as dictated by Dutch planning acts that prohibit such endeavours. The provisional nature of the existing leasing contract significantly hampers substantial efforts in sustainable development and innovations. The uncertainty surrounding the future legal status dissuades residents from making substantial investments in terms of finances and time into sustainable projects. As a result, the residents are inclined to seek an extension of the current arrangement from the municipality of Groningen. Securing such an extension necessitates that Woldwijk elevates its publicity and demonstrates its value for the surrounding region to the municipality of Groningen.

Findings from the research underscore a high degree of openness among most Woldwijk residents. However, this openness is predominantly limited to "inviting openness". The ecovillage actively hosts numerous events and activities to fulfil diverse functions that enhance the cultural and living liveability of the surrounding region. A spirit of inclusivity permeates, as Woldwijk welcomes visitors and researchers to explore and familiarize themselves with the activities and initiatives taking place on the premises. However, despite this inviting openness, the research reveals a limitation in terms of "outward openness". Residents express a relatively limited interest in engaging with social activities and developments transpiring in the wider neighbouring region. This inward focus presents a missed opportunity, as Ten Boer hosts several commendable sustainability initiatives, such as the repair café and the give-away shop. Embracing greater openness to collaborate and connect with these initiatives could reinforce Woldwijk's bonds with the neighbouring community and augment its overall value to the surrounding region (Andreas, 2013; Ulug et al., 2021b). Strengthening these bonds is crucial, as Woldwijk will need the support of the municipality and the inhabitants of the surrounding region to secure its existence in the future (Celata, 2019; Magnusson, 2018). Woldwijk shows a high degree of inviting openness which has led to more familiarity among residents of the neighbouring area. Yet, to truly anchor itself within the region, increased outward openness is recommended.

The extent of openness exhibited within Woldwijk's community appears to be correlated with the allocation of private space to its residents. The research findings revealed that the TinyHouse segment, where residents have the greatest amount of private space, experienced the most challenges concerning openness and social interaction within the community. In contrast, Staatjevrij and Landjegoed, despite not being immune to conflicts, demonstrated a more amenable environment for communal engagement and sharing. The

culture of sharing and active participation in sustainable development was notably less pronounced in the TinyHouse community compared to Staatjevrij and Landjegoed.

The high degree of private space observed in the TinyHouse segment may potentially contribute to a tendency among its residents to adopt a more insular approach, leading to reduced interaction both within the Woldwijk community and the broader region (Andreas, 2013; Lockyer, 2017). To foster a greater sense of community engagement, it is recommended to create more communal spaces and facilities akin to those available in Landjegoed and Staatjevrij. These areas strike a balance between offering sufficient personal space to residents while promoting the sharing of core facilities, tools, and vehicles, resulting in limited conflicts, and fostering significant interaction between community members (Escribano, 2020; Lockyer, 2017).

Additionally, the level of active engagement in sustainable practices and developments exhibited a positive correlation with the degree of private space allocated to residents. With less private space, community members tended to demonstrate greater participation in sustainable initiatives. However, it is noteworthy that the TinyHouse community exhibited the highest level of interest in future developments related to alternative housing. This interest stems from its resemblance to a conventional village, requiring fewer sacrifices in comparison to the communal living arrangements of Landjegoed and Staatjevrij.

In summary, Woldwijk will need the support of the municipality and the inhabitants of the surrounding region to secure its existence in the future. Woldwijk shows a high degree of inviting openness which has led to more familiarity among residents of the neighbouring area. Yet, to truly anchor itself within the region, increased outward openness is recommended.

7.2 Woldwijk's Path Towards Embeddedness Within the Region

In the existing literature, "embeddedness" refers to the influence an ecovillage exerts on mainstream society solely through its presence (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). In the case of Woldwijk, the embedded activities primarily revolve predominantly around enhancing the liveability of the surrounding region. This strategic focus is a direct outcome of the ecovillage's objective to demonstrate its value to the municipality and its inhabitants. While these activities invariably include an element of educating visitors on sustainable practices, they do not constitute the primary goal. Over the past few years, Woldwijk has faced the challenge of gaining recognition from the neighbouring community. Preconceived notions and biases held by both Woldwijk residents, and the wider region have impeded interaction between them. However, recent developments indicate a shift, and Woldwijk has started to establish a firm footing within the region.

The interview findings suggest that Woldwijk's growing presence significantly influences the familiarity of mainstream society with alternative sustainable practices in ecovillages, challenging norms, and values of the Western DSP. Measuring the direct impact on the wider region remains difficult, as Woldwijk has only recently begun to garner substantial attention within its surroundings. Nevertheless, the majority of Woldwijk's residents display great ambition, and the future promises a multitude of events and activities focused on enhancing the region's liveability while disseminating knowledge about sustainable practices.

Additionally, Woldwijk's transformation of degraded farmland into a flourishing landscape, where harmonious coexistence with nature is practiced, stands as a remarkable achievement. However, this accomplishment is still undervalued in the Western DSP primarily dominated by economic considerations (Arora, 2020; Jackson, 2021). As a result, conventional housing options may still be regarded as more lucrative by the municipality.

7.3 Lessons from Woldwijk for the Western DSP

The ethnographic research conducted at Woldwijk has brought to light several practices that offer potential for implementation within the Western DSP. One notable example is the concept of "share sheds." While it may be challenging to immediately persuade larger communities to adopt extensive shared facilities like communal laundry machines, it appears feasible to initiate trials involving communal tool sheds. To mitigate potential security concerns, it may be advisable to first limit such initiatives to apartment blocks with enclosed communal spaces. Another practice with potential for translation is the establishment of communal gardens. At Woldwijk, the garden is primarily maintained by designated greenkeepers, producing organic food for both community members and external individuals who pay for its products. This model has the capacity to be replicated in neighbourhoods across mainstream society. Housing associations could conduct experiments involving enclosed gardens and appointing residents to care for the garden in exchange for a reduction in rent or through a voluntary system. However, the success of this approach relies on a shared vision among the majority of residents within the apartment block.

Ultimately, if implemented effectively, these practices could lead to the proliferation of localized organic food systems within mainstream society. Careful consideration of context, and security measures will be essential in ensuring the successful integration of such practices into the Western DSP.

As of the present day, the legislative framework at Woldwijk stands as its most influential aspect, drawing considerable attention from municipalities and sustainability initiatives nationwide. Key principles of the ecovillage life, such as sharing, the do-it-yourself mentality, and self-sustenance (Bocco, 2019; Ergas, 2010), manifest in a myriad of bottom-up initiatives rooted in Woldwijk. Through these initiatives, Woldwijk aims to educate individuals on sustainable practices and, more importantly, to empower and inspire members of mainstream society towards embracing a more sustainable way of life. Despite the municipality acknowledging the value of Woldwijk, the ecovillagers express doubts regarding the municipality's comprehension of the activities undertaken at Woldwijk. At present this appears to be hindered by sluggish bureaucracy, leading to limited visibility of upscaling opportunities, and disregarding the prospects for translation.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1. Achievements and (Future) Challenges

The research question central to this thesis is ‘*What is the (potential) role of ecovillages such as Woldwijk in challenging the Western Dominant Social Paradigm regarding the sustainability transition*’. In conclusion, Woldwijk demonstrates significant potential to establish itself as a stable and influential ecovillage, contributing to the advancement of sustainability within mainstream society while challenging the norms and values of the Western DSP. Despite facing certain challenges, such as the current provisional leasing arrangement that hampers substantial sustainable development and the need to foster outward openness to collaborate more with neighbouring initiatives, Woldwijk exhibits a high degree of inviting openness, making strides in promoting sustainable practices and innovations. The research reveals that Woldwijk's legislative privileges and exemptions have played a crucial role in facilitating its status as a living laboratory for sustainability. However, the uncertain future legal status poses challenges to long-term planning and investment in sustainable projects. Thus, securing support from the municipality of Groningen becomes vital to ensuring Woldwijk's continued existence and growth.

Furthermore, Woldwijk's transformation of degraded farmland into a flourishing landscape, its collaboration with neighbouring farmers, and its experimentation with alternative building materials and heating methods exemplify the potential for translating its practices into mainstream society. The establishment of share sheds and communal gardens are two such practices that hold promise for replication in broader societal contexts, contributing to localized organic food systems and sustainable living.

This research provides valuable insights into Woldwijk's potential and challenges, paving the way for future investigations to explore specific aspects of its impact on sustainability and to cultivate deeper cooperation and engagement between Woldwijk and mainstream society. As the ecovillage evolves and expands its activities, continued research will be vital to grasp its transformative capacity and to actualize its contributions to a more sustainable future.

8.2. Unlocking Woldwijk's Potential: A Call for Closer Collaboration

One of the objectives of this thesis was to investigate the extent to which the practices and developments occurring at Woldwijk have been integrated into the broader societal context and how this might be improved. To accomplish this, the study delineated three key concepts: embeddedness, upscaling, and translation. Ecovillages exert an influence on the Western DSP through embeddedness, as their mere presence in the region and the activities they produce contribute to this influence (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). Upscaling involves bringing ecovillage lifestyles, activities, and innovations into mainstream society from the bottom-up (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Liftin, 2014; Singh, 2019). Translation, on the other hand, signifies the adoption of ecovillage developments and practices by institutions within the Western DSP (Hausknost, 2018; Sherry, 2019). The findings of this research reveal that, despite initial challenges, Woldwijk has gradually enhanced its embeddedness within the region, engaging in a variety of activities aimed at spreading knowledge about sustainable lifestyles and practices. Furthermore, the study demonstrates the existence of numerous bottom-up initiatives stemming from Woldwijk, through which they seek to promote their values pertaining to sustainable living. Although Woldwijk has played a pioneering role by establishing a unique legislative framework, the findings do not indicate a substantial number of direct translations into mainstream society yet, an abundance of opportunities have been identified. Woldwijk has enjoyed considerable interest from similar initiatives and municipalities in other regions of the Netherlands. While the municipality of Groningen does acknowledge the value of Woldwijk's sustainable and societal aspirations, it seems the lack of cooperation leaves a lot of potential unchecked. Consequently, this thesis advocates for closer collaboration between

the municipality of Groningen and Woldwijk. It is essential, however, to strike a balance between the processes of translation and upscaling. Woldwijk's impact on the Western DSP regarding shaping attitudes toward sustainability could be substantially amplified through the strengthening of cooperation between the municipality and Woldwijk. Collaboration is key in this context, fostering mutual trust and preventing the potential for regime absorption (Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018). Figure 24 aims to explain how this works in theory.

The results show the majority of respondents residing at Woldwijk expressed their willingness and capability of contributing to a more sustainable society in various ways. Examples of this are inviting school classes to learn about sustainable food production, grey water recycling experiments, workshops in eco-friendly building and more. This will however require a stronger involvement of mainstream institutions in the ambitions of Woldwijk (Bocco, 2019; Price, 2020).

For instance, the case of Mas Con Menos exemplifies a different socio-economic model wherein the objective transcends mere economic gain. Instead, the organization aims to impart eco-friendly construction skills to participants, fostering empowerment and inspiration through communal building processes. The outcome is the creation of environmentally friendly communal buildings that hold significant meaning for their participants due to their participatory involvement.

This socio-economic model holds relevance for the wider region, given the earthquake repercussions stemming from decades of gas exploitation in the province of Groningen, necessitating the renovation or reconstruction of numerous village centres and communal structures. Rather than relying on external subsidies and real estate companies, the municipality might cooperate with Mas Con Menos to facilitate the realization of such projects in the wider region. To conduct this strategy on a larger scale, the government might investigate promoting the establishment of similar initiatives. A partnership with Mas Con Menos might provide useful insights into how this can be realised. Collaborative efforts supported by the municipality could give rise to bottom-up organizations promoting eco-friendly construction through empowering, participatory building procedures. Following such a strategy also decreases the chance of regime absorption as the process is still largely guided by bottom-up initiatives (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). Apart from the financial advantages derived from cost-sharing among a larger group, these models would also perpetuate essential skills among citizens, foster social cohesion, and create meaningful communal spaces (Lifin 2014; Savini, 2021).

Several additional examples of noteworthy practices at Woldwijk include their robust collaboration with neighbouring farmers and dedicated experimentation with alternative building materials and heating techniques. Residents admit these experiments are largely facilitated by the distinctive legislative framework provided by the municipality, which enables such developments. Nevertheless, despite this enabling environment, residents of Woldwijk frequently perceive a lack of receptiveness and support from the municipality when articulating their ideas and aspirations. Enhancing the level of cooperation between the residents and the municipal authorities, could potentially foster more successful initiatives and enhance Woldwijk's impact on challenging norms and values regarding sustainability in the Western DSP.

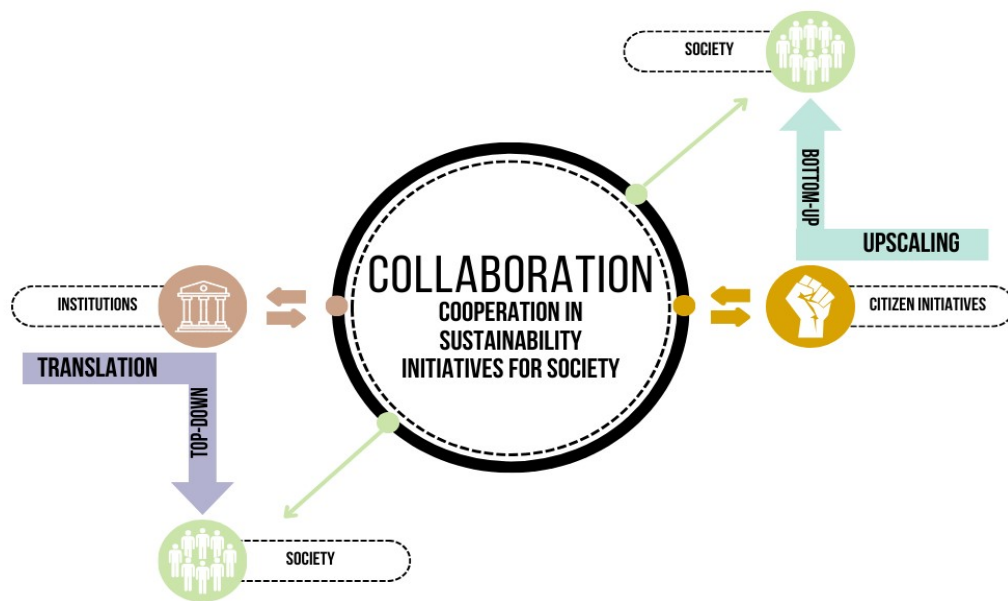


Figure 23: Model illustrating for fostering collaboration between institutions in the Western DSP and bottom-up initiatives at Woldwijk (Authors own figure, based on Avelino & Kunze, 2016; Hausknost, 2018; Liftin, 2014; Sherry, 2019; Singh, 2019).

8.2. Future research implications

Further research on degrowth and its implications is essential to enhance its visibility within the Western DSP (Wiest, 2022; Ulug et al., 2021a). This increased exposure may lead policymakers to adopt a more receptive stance towards initiatives akin to Woldwijk, recognizing the potential for innovative configurations (Escribano, 2020; Price et al., 2020). Additionally, Woldwijk itself warrants deeper investigation to underscore its value and potential impact on the broader region. While the present ethnographic research has shed light on Woldwijk's activities and their effects on mainstream society, more extensive and prolonged studies would serve to definitively establish the influence of Woldwijk.

Similar studies such as those conducted by Bocco (2019), Cooper & Bear (2019), and Wiest (2022) could serve to corroborate the effects of Woldwijk's lifestyle in terms of carbon footprint reduction and decreased consumption. Furthermore, a thorough investigation into the activities and initiatives highlighted in this thesis is imperative to explore their applicability in mainstream society. Currently, Woldwijk is in its nascent stage of integration within the region. Overcoming prevailing prejudices, it is gradually garnering increased support from residents of the broader society.

Crucially, Woldwijk's future development does not necessitate constant handholding from the municipality. The community comprises highly skilled and motivated individuals, driven to pave the way towards a more sustainable future. However, this hinges upon the recognition and trust bestowed upon them by modern institutions (Bocco, 2019; Casey, 2020). Ultimately, research efforts in both degrowth principles and Woldwijk's specific activities will contribute to advancing its potential as a transformative model for mainstream society, facilitating a transition towards more sustainable practices (Avelino & Kunze, 2016). Another subject for future research might focus on the population of Ten Boer and the wider region to determine their perception of Woldwijk and how they would like to see how Woldwijk can play a role for the wider region similar to recommendations in the work of Andreas (2013), Ulug et al. (2021b) and Escribano (2020).

8.3. Degrowth potential

The activities observed at Woldwijk exhibit a strong alignment with the degrowth paradigm, emphasizing principles of autonomy, self-sufficiency, harmonious coexistence with nature, and a culture of communal sharing (Jackson, 2021; Savini, 2021). These distinctive features, characteristic of Woldwijk and other ecovillages, hold promising implications for potential integration into mainstream society. Although it is not feasible to accommodate the entire global population within ecovillages, certain aspects of the ecovillage lifestyle hold the potential to be adapted and implemented in broader societal contexts.

Regrettably, contemporary institutions, including municipalities, often fail to recognize the potential of ecovillage initiatives like Woldwijk due to their persistent adherence to the Western DSP, characterized by a focus on control and relentless pursuit of economic growth (Arora, 2020; Stoddard, 2021). Consequently, initiatives such as Woldwijk find themselves in competition with more lucrative objectives like traffic regulation or conventional housing projects that promise greater financial gains.

This thesis aimed to unveil the inherent value and potential ramifications of Woldwijk's activities within the Western DSP. While an immediate shift to degrowth policies within the Western DSP may not be realistic, a potential exists for fostering familiarity with alternative sustainable lifestyles and enhancing the autonomy and capabilities of citizens. The abundance of skilled individuals at Woldwijk who are eager to impart their knowledge presents an opportunity to establish structures aimed at maximizing citizens' capabilities, thereby promoting localized production and self-sustainability. Drawing parallels with the degrowth movement, Woldwijk demonstrates the capacity for profound changes among people. Provided they are granted the autonomy to pursue such transformations, they might achieve much more than the addition of vegan snacks to the local snack bar's menu.

Chapter 9: Reflection

One evident limitation of this research pertains to its constrained time span. Although a considerable duration was allocated to immersing in the milieu of Woldwijk, gaining an understanding of its activities and enabling lifestyle, a more protracted period of observation might be imperative to comprehensively apprehend the ramifications of Woldwijk on the broader region. A lengthier stay would afford an opportunity to monitor and assess the long-term effects and transformations engendered by Woldwijk's sustainable practices.

Moreover, another limitation emanates from the timing of the research visit. The research coincided with a period when a significant portion of Woldwijk's active members was engaged in workshops organized by Mas Con Menos. While this presented an opportunity to interact with some members during the workshops, it curtailed the chances for more in-depth interviews and direct engagements with a broader cross-section of the community. Such interviews could have offered deeper insights into sustainable practices and ongoing developments within Woldwijk, thereby enriching the understanding of the community's ethos and dynamics. The absence of a substantial number of residents during the research visit likely impacted the observations, as those present were notably occupied with chores and communal activities due to the reduced population at the village. Consequently, the overall experience of living at Woldwijk during this specific period might not have fully reflected the vibrancy and liveliness characteristic of the community during more typical circumstances.

An additional limitation pertains to the positionality of this research. The thesis is inherently shaped by a decidedly supportive stance towards ecovillages, which at times, may have hindered the ability to maintain a fully critical perspective. In retrospect, certain interviews could have benefited from incorporating more critical notions to ensure a well-rounded analysis. The interviews conducted with residents of Woldwijk have largely contributed to the perception of a tightly knit community highly engaged in sustainable developments. However, supplementary interviews with a board member and active participation in a community meeting brought to light numerous conflicts and struggles that had not been prominently mentioned during the majority of interviews. A more critical standpoint could have prompted greater attention to these aspects of Woldwijk's dynamics, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of its challenges and areas for improvement.

Acknowledging the influence of researcher bias and embracing a more balanced approach during data collection and analysis would have facilitated a more nuanced exploration of both the positive and negative dimensions within Woldwijk. The adoption of a more critical stance would have allowed for a more thorough assessment of the community's strengths and weaknesses, thereby enhancing the depth of the research findings. Subsequent research endeavours should be mindful of this limitation and strive for greater objectivity to present a comprehensive and well-balanced portrayal of ecovillage communities and their implications.

Presently, Woldwijk is still in the process of establishing its presence within mainstream society, making it difficult to accurately quantify its effects on the surrounding region. The prevailing lack of awareness regarding Woldwijk's existence among the majority of residents in the municipality of Groningen and the wider area further compounds this difficulty. Consequently, it may be deemed premature to ascertain the full extent of Woldwijk's influence on sustainable changes in mainstream society. As a result, the scope of this research was constrained to a relatively broad focus.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the primary objectives of this research were to reveal the potential societal value of Woldwijk and its contribution to the broader sustainability transition within society. As Woldwijk continues to evolve and diversify its activities, future research can build upon the propositions set forth in this thesis to delve into specific aspects of Woldwijk's and other ecovillage's impact on sustainability. By exploring and analysing these specific aspects in greater depth, a more comprehensive understanding of Woldwijk's role in promoting sustainable practices and its potential implications for wider society can be attained.

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APPENDIX

13. Interview coding scheme

Interview Coding Scheme



13.2 Interview Guides

13.2.1 Residents

-Intro:
Allereerst bedankt dat u wilt deelnemen in dit interview voor mijn master scriptie. Met mijn master scriptie hoop ik bij te dragen aan een beter inzicht in hoe ecodorpen zoals Woldwijk kunnen bijdragen aan de duurzame transitie van de bredere maatschappij. Het interview zal tussen een half uur en een uur duren. Ik zou het interview graag willen opnemen. Dit is uitsluitend voor doeleinden relevant voor de scriptie. Gaat u hier mee akkoord?

-Intro Vragen:
-Wie bent u? (Voorstellen)
-Wat is uw rol mbt Woldwijk

-Motivatie en ervaring:
-Hoe bent u in bij Woldwijk betrokken geraakt
-Wat was uw motivatie om in een cooperatie zoals Woldwijk te gaan wonen
-Kunt u een dag in Woldwijk beschrijven?
-Wat doet u zelf om duurzamer te leven?
-Hoe draagt wonen in Woldwijk hier aan bij?
-Bent u actief bezig met duurzame innovatie hier op Woldwijk?
-Vindt u het belangrijk dat de manier waarop u hier leeft wordt gedeeld met anderen?

Houding tegenover openstellen:
-Ziet u Woldwijk als een model waar de samenleving een voorbeeld aan zou kunnen nemen?
-Staat u er voor open om op Woldwijk mensen te ontvangen en te leren over duurzamere manieren van leven?
-Hoe zou u dit willen / kunnen doen / Doet u dit al?
-Hoe zou u het vinden als Woldwijk doormiddel van educatieve en culturele activiteiten verbinding zou zoeken met de bredere omgeving?
Hoe staat u tegenover de plannen voor de boerderij?

Samenwerking proces
Wat
-Hoe vindt u dat de samenwerking binnen de cooperatie verloopt? Wat kan er beter? gaat er goed?
-Wat merkt u van eventuele boemoeienis van de gemeente?
-Wat vindt u van de plannen die worden gemaakt voor de boerderij?

- Hoe vindt u dat de gemeente zich opstelt tegenover ontwikkelingen binnen Woldwijk? Wat kan er beter? Wat gaat er goed?
- Hoe ziet u de toekomst van Woldwijk tegemoet?

Afsluiting

- Dit waren mijn vragen. Is er nog iets wat u zelf wilt toevoegen of bent vergeten te antwoorden?
- Ontzettend bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit interview. Dan stop ik nu de opname.

13.2.2 Founder

Intro: Allereerst bedankt dat u wilt deelnemen in dit interview voor mijn master scriptie. Met mijn master scriptie hoop ik bij te dragen aan een beter inzicht in hoe ecodorpen zoals Woldwijk kunnen bijdragen aan de duurzame transitie van de bredere maatschappij. Het interview zal tussen een half uur en een uur duren. Ik zou het interview graag willen opnemen. Dit is uitsluitend voor doeleinden relevant voor de scriptie. Gaat u hier mee akkoord?

Intro Vragen:

- Wie bent u? (Voorstellen)
- Wat is uw rol mbt Woldwijk ?

Over de Boerderij:

- Wat is de huidige waarde / status van de boerderij voor Ten Boer e.o
- Wat kan de boerderij in potentie betekenen voor Woldwijk?
- Is er al een beoogde invulling voor activiteiten/functies (educatie, cultureel) in de boerderij?
- Wat kan de boerderij gaan betekenen voor de bredere omgeving?

Process / Gemeente Algemeen:

- Hoe verloopt het contact met tussen de gemeente en Woldwijk over het algemeen
- Vindt u dat de gemeente in het algemeen voldoende met de plannen meewerkt?
- Wat doet de gemeente goed? En slecht?

Process Boerderij:

- Hoe verliep het proces mbt de boerderij met de gemeente
 - Wat zijn de plannen voor het renoveren van de boerderij?
 - Wat verwacht de gemeente van de toekomstige boerderij?
- Hoe gaat dit gefinancierd worden? - >
- Staat heel Woldwijk achter deze plannen?

Afsluiting:

- Dit waren mijn vragen. Is er nog iets wat u zelf wilt toevoegen of bent vergeten te antwoorden?
- Ontzettend bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit interview. Dan stop ik nu de opname.

13.2.3 Municipality worker

Intro:

Allereerst bedankt dat u wilt deelnemen in dit interview voor mijn master scriptie. Met mijn Woldwijk kunnen bijdragen aan de duurzame transitie van de ruimere maatschappij. Het interview zal tussen een half uur en een uur duren. Ik zou het interview graag willen opnemen. Dit is uitsluitend voor doeleinden relevant voor de scriptie. Gaat u hier mee akkoord?

Intro Vragen:

- Wie bent u? (Voorstellen)
- Wat is uw rol mbt Woldwijk

Blik op Woldwijk:

- Hoe staat u tegenover een initiatief als Woldwijk?
- Vindt u het belangrijk dat er een initiatief zoals Woldwijk in Groningen (Universiteit, rurale omgeving, veel ruimte voor experimentatie) is?
- Hoe vindt u dat de samenwerking tussen Woldwijk en de Gemeente verloopt?
- Vindt u dat er dingen beter kunnen?
- Hoe ziet u dit in de toekomst verdergaan?

Verwachtingen:

- Uitleg contract > Wat zijn de verwachtingen van de gemeente voor Woldwijk?
- Wanneer ziet de gemeente Woldwijk als een "geslaagd project"?
- Wat kan Woldwijk van de Gemeente verwachten?

Vragen uit de literatuur:

- Uit de literatuur komt naar voren dat de succesvolle ecovillages (wanneer niet compleet zelfstandig) altijd hulp vanuit gemeentes en wetgeving nodig hebben. Is de gemeente Groningen bereid om bijvoorbeeld uitzonderingen te maken op het gebied van zoning en constructie om zo experimenten zoals Woldwijk de ruimte te geven te komen tot innovaties op het gebied van duurzaamheid?
- Is dit al gedaan in het verleden? Zoja, hoe?
- Heeft de gemeente al geleerd van ontwikkelingen in Woldwijk, en ziet deze mogelijkheden om dit te gaan toepassen in de ruimere samenleving?
- Ziet de gemeente de potentie hiervoor in?

Afsluiting:

- Dit waren mijn vragen. Is er nog iets wat u zelf wilt toevoegen of bent vergeten te antwoorden?
- Ontzettend bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit interview. Dan stop ik nu de opname.

A.3. Fieldwork Logbook

Wednesday 07-06-2023

12:00 Middy:

-Got received by one of the residents. Had an extensive talk with this resident about her spiritual beliefs and motivations to live in an ecovillage. Resident joined Woldwijk with the organisation Mas Con Menos. This is a group of people who settled at Woldwijk after some years of living in Spain. They moved to Woldwijk because here they were granted the space and permission to built according to their sustainability ideals. Building methods that include loam and hay. Woldwijk gives her the opportunity to live autonomously according to the way she thinks is right. Resident believes more people should realize this and she is happy to pass her knowledge to other people. States she see's the way of live in ecovillages as a model for society.

15:00

- Participated in cutting wood for the oven with multiple residents. One of the residents explained how she first had a live in mainstream society until the mid 2010's. Resident explained how she sold her house and lives financially independent at the ecovillage now. Spends most of her days doing chores for the community now. Talked about the live at Woldwijk, and how she does not stop learning new skills at Woldwijk. The social structure enables this as there are so many different people with different personalities and skillsets.

18:00

-Communal dinner with members of Staatjevrij and Landjegoed.

-Had a conversation with a resident of Staatjevrij in which she told about the pizza nights she organized at Woldwijk. By inviting children to make pizza at Woldwijk from locally grown vegetables, the resident claims children are taught about sustainability in fun and interactive ways.

19:00

- All community members return to their dwellings for the night

Thursday 08-07-2023

Morning:

Everyone wakes up on separately to start with individual tasks and chores. One residents brings the children of Staatjevrij to school, while another starts working in the garden.

11:00 First communal coffee break.

11:30: Interview with Karel

13:00: Preparations for dinner and the party on saturday starts. Joined the residents in collecting potatoes from the garden, cleaning them and cutting them into fries. During this activity I had multiple conversations with several residents. All expressed they felt a lack of trust from the municipality. Residents claim that they are living proof of what happens when people are given the space and freedom to create a sustainable community like Woldwijk. All claim they perceive Woldwijk as a model with elements that can be integrated more in mainstream society. Examples of these are the culture of sharing, communities growing their own vegetables, and living a simple life.

16:00: Interview with Tim

18:00: Communal Dinner.

19:00 Interview with Arjan

20:30: End of Day

Friday 09-07-2023

07:00: Start of the day, joined residents to a workshop of Mas Con Menos in de Eemstuin, Uithuizermeeden.

08:00: Communal breakfast with all participants of the Workshop.

09:00: The day starts of forming a circle. A talking stick goes round among all group members. When holding the stick, participants are invited to speak their mind about anything they want. Frustrations, achievements, enjoyments and random thoughts are spoken by the participants. One recurring topic is how empowering they feel by the participatory process of the workshop. Despite hardships and frustrations, participants remark how the structure of the workshop helped them overcome their struggles, and noticed significant personal growth among themselves and other participants. Pride of what have been achieved resonates through the group.

10:30-12:30: Workshop starts, everyone is divided in smaller taskgroup all focused on a specific part of the construction process. I got assigned to building the roof. In the meantime held conversations with multiple members of Mas Con Menos. They explained the model through which the workshops work. The construction is financed by entry fees paid by participants. Through a participatory process, the main goal is to spread knowledge on ecofriendly building techniques. To show people that they are able to achieve things, bring forth change if they work together.

12:30-13:00: Communal lunchtime. During conversations with participants they expressed how they indeed felt empowered by the process. The workshop functioned as an eye-opener, showing them that they can achieve change by themselves. In this case, most of the participants had some affiliation to de Eemstuin already. They expressed a increased sense of place due to the workshop. Constructing the building together increased their connection to de Eemstuin, and in turn increased the urge to become more involved in keeping the place running.

13:00-17:00: Construction of the building continued, at the end of the day the roof was finished. In the meantime, I had more conversations with participants. One of the participants told me he was planning to leave the country with his family. The workshop inspired him to teach other communities about ecofriendly building methods, and empower them by showing them they are capable of many things as long as they live together.

17:00: Back to Woldwijk. During the ride back a resident told me about how he got invited for Woldwijk. His skills as electrician helped him find his place in the community. Expressed how he loves the life at Woldwijk. The harmony between nature and humans that exist there. Talked about how people in the wider region are finally starting to find and recognize people living in Woldwijk as he got approached for engineering jobs in neighbouring villages.

18:00: Residents of Woldwijk were invited to have dinner in a local Restaurant in Ten Boer. This one of the first time they got invited, and they were visibly excited. It proved to them they finally got some recognition from out the neighbouring community.

19:00: End of the Day

Saturday 10-07-2023

08:00: Start of day.

09:00-11:30: Interviews with Dennis and Gijs

12:00: End of Ethnographic Fieldwork.