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# Post-growth Organisations as Resonant and Reciprocal Social Systems: A Matter of Gratification?

## Abstract

This article examines how, in times of increasing flexibilisation of work, an organisational culture based on resonance and reciprocity may soften psycho-social disorders and contribute to a health-supporting working environment. Flexibilisation is a phenomenon that inscribes socially shared notions of capitalist growth by exploiting natural and human resources as a necessary dynamic of societal stabilisation, into the everyday working lives of human beings. As a result, "dramatic changes are observable in flexibilised contexts" (Joseph, 2004, p. 234). The article shows to what extent flexible work relations are contrary to human needs. In this context, Siegrist's theory of gratification crisis constitutes an approach to analysing the relationship of working conditions on the one side and human needs on the other side. Siegrist's approach is augmented by relevant aspects of flexibilisation and applied in a qualitative manner to gain more insights into employees' perceptions of work. Based on these results, I will reveal an image of an organisation which mostly reflects terms of resonance and reciprocity as determining principles of organisational structuring.

## Narratives and Practices of Growth and Their Implications for Organisational Work Relations

Modern and capitalist societies are based on a specific notion of growth, which is reflected in institutional, structural and behavioural ways and norms. As capitalist societies and systems in general try to perpetuate their existence through time and space, the notion of growth supports a narrative of dynamic progress which intends to ensure the stability of societal structures, institutions, organisations and subjective well-being by exploiting natural and human resources. Put differently, capitalist societies are unable to reproduce growth on existing structures; instead, they are forced to develop new modes of exploitation to find new exploitable land that has to be integrated into capitalist structures, while side-effects (environmental effects like global warming, along with the spheres of human and natural reproduction) are externalised (Dörre, 2010). In their analysis of capitalist structures, sociologists Alex Demirovic and Andrea Maihofer (2013) point out that previously more or less isolated fringes of critical states of capitalist externalisation are entangled within a mul-

tidimensional crisis-setting, since the ongoing crisis in financial markets, political systems and democratic legitimation deepens social inequality. In their view, this multidimensional crisis takes place in different spheres of societal life and affects both the economic, political and social stability of nations, as well as the certainty of moral and ethical norms; of the assured knowledge concerning the question 'what does it mean to lead a good life?' In this context, Demirovic and Maihofer reflect on Ulrich Beck's diagnosis of a modern society as a formation that is not able to deal with the effects of growth-driven progress, which seems to be overstimulated over time (Beck, 2003, 2008).

Due to this process of incorporation, exploitation and externalisation, the dynamics of capitalist growth are inherently dysfunctional and crisis-prone; the maintenance and existence of capitalist growth constitute a motion of dynamic stabilisation which expands into formally non-capitalist environments by internalising the external, by cultivating the environment, such as resources, and adopting those resources as a grant for capitalist accumulation (Dörre, Lessenich & Rosa, 2017).

Capitalist organisations and the way in which capitalist work relations are arranged play a significant role in the process of dynamic stabilisation. Organisations can be understood as social systems that are deeply involved in the translation of the narrative of growth into practices of growth, since they constitute a context for work arrangement and formulate expectations regarding employees' commitment and engagement at work. These expectations include the rising demands on employees' flexibility. In this context, the organisational impact on work arrangement for employees may illustrate to what extent the everyday work of both employees and employers operates close to the market and how the logic of growth, understood as the compulsion of profitable actions and structures within organisations, may be relativised in its effects on the health of employers and employees.

Regarding organisations' power to create work relations, they are a central actor in the process of addressing human beings as human resources, since they cultivate human resources as a source of organisational existence and sustainment through time and space. In this context, organisations moderate between the logic of growth and progress on the one side, and the subjective dimension of (good) work on the other. This moderation concerns employment contracts, concessions to workforce participation, as well as the gratification therefor, both material and non-material, and being recognised and appreciated by management and colleagues. In other words, the way organisations are able to soften the logic of markets and competition affects the quality of work and work relations within organisations.

Against this background, this article aims to explore to what extent capitalist organisations may soften the effects of capitalist growth by relativising the impact of markets and competition. This question leads to the main thesis, that capitalist organisations may soften intensified working demands on their employees by basing organisational life on different aspects of gratification.

In this sense, the article argues that the capitalist narrative of growth and its downstream practices contribute to subjective crises experienced by employees on a social-psychological level. How the notion of endless growth may lead to exhausting work, giving rise to psycho-social disorders like stress, burnout, and inner resignation, will also be discussed. The debates on the flexibilisation and subjectivation of work in capitalist organisations constitute the backdrop of this article. In particular, the focus will be on those pathological aspects which affect mental health. Even though flexibilisation and subjectivation present potentially positive effects of work arrangement on a practical level, such as an increased compatibility of family and career and reduced pressure to harmonise private and public life, those aspects are not of interest here. Instead, a line of argumentation will be advanced which is based on Siegrist's postulated nexus between adequately established aspects of gratification and mental and physical health. Siegrist's concept of gratification seems to be a fruitful attempt to capture the relationship between individual and organisation in the context of flexibilised and subjectivised work arrangements. Since Siegrist differentiates gratification as material and non-material, this separation structures the relationship between individual and organisation by focusing on expectations and experiences. Nonetheless, Siegrist's concept of gratification has its blind spots. By applying this concept in a qualitative, explorative study, it is possible to see how individuals implicitly formulate expectations concerning their relationship with organisations, such as participation, creativity, security and solidarity. Here, empirical results from qualitative interviews conducted with employees who work in the sustainable banking sector in Germany will be presented. One key finding shows how the appreciation and recognition of different dimensions of gratification contribute to a relativisation of growth-driven and growth-demanding capitalist, dynamic stabilisation. Furthermore, to what extent material and non-material needs correspond with aspects of solidarity, social welfare and social recognition will be discussed. I will also explore how this supports the idea of an organisation that acts like a resonant social system, towards the goal of endless capitalist growth. In sum, this article contributes to the debate on post-growth organisations, exploring the manner in which organisations may soften capitalist demands of growth by focusing on regulating institutions of gratification.

## Capitalist Growth and The Subjective Crisis – A Tension-Filled Relationship

This section deals with the downstreaming dynamics of capitalist growth, supporting a subjective crisis. In this context, current capitalist structures on the one hand and social-psychological conditions of human beings on the other will be treated as a relevant field of tension. Against that background, work, specifically working demands and work relations, may be treated as a translating framework which transfers expectations of capitalist growth into individual life-world constitutions. Work, in a sense, represents a mode of moderation between self and the world, which

weakens or supports mutual expectations and demands and therefore may lead to individual emotional movements like frustration, self-defeat or depression, as individual expectations are not reflected within a social context. The link between self and world in the context of capitalist growth will be described using the meaning of expectations for individual's standing in the world. Here, the understanding of self and world follows Hartmut Rosa's (2016) concept of individual shapeability, which reflects the Marxist approach of domestication. Rosa considers the individual shapeability of the world as the main feature of a resonant relation to the world, answering the author's diagnosis of acceleration, understood as one sort of pathology of alienation. In other words, Rosa considers the self as an entity which develops within reflexive processes towards the shapeable, experienceable and tangible outside–the world–with its limitations and possibilities for individual's life plan. More precisely, the self can be seen as the conscious topos from which individuals may develop a resonant relationship towards the world (Rosa, 2016). Echoing Rosa (2016), it can be said the world is basically framed in a socio-philosophical manner and presents the visible, tangible and experienceable sphere that confronts human beings–in short, world and self mutually respond to each other. This aspect is relevant for this article, because calling upon employees' self for the sake of growth may affect the social-psychological conditions of employees. The term social-psychological conditions refers here to the subjective dimension of experienced mis-arrangements of work, such as the rise of frustration, self-defeat, or isolation, due to exhaustive work.

## At The Core of Capitalist Growth – Focusing on Flexibilisation and Subjectivation

Flexibilisation is a buzzword in research on work and organisations, as reflected in the number of publications dealing with this multi-faceted topic, even though "there is now not much that is 'new' about work flexibility" (Coyle, 2005, p. 73). Thus, in the following, the main assumptions concerning flexibilised work will be briefly outlined with regard to changed working requirements. In addition to flexibilisation, subjectivation also constitutes a relevant aspect in dealing with current work arrangements. Moldaschl and Voß (2003) state that subjectivation aggregates strategies, manners, symbols and structures, which delegate or support the delegation of responsibilities, care and welfare at the level of subjects that were previously mostly assembled as collective claims. Regarding work arrangement in the context of subjectivation, employees are addressed as self-reliant and self-obliged subjects (Moldaschl & Voß, 2003).

Badura and colleagues (2016) point out that the increasing spread of flexibilisation of work over two decades led to a forced compression of different conditions of work. Such a compression over time is reflected in rising working requirements, which employees must meet, like acting under gradually growing time pressure,

combined with the mounting compression of work and project-based deadlines, which eventually leads to less work autonomy (Coyle, 2005). Flexibilisation in this context takes place in the dimension of time, as employees must act under increasing time pressure in order to respect deadlines, i.e., organisations as a whole speed up their velocity of action, thus moving closer to the motions of the markets by flexibilising their structures, hierarchies and their associated work relations. This means that the flexibilisation of work is accompanied by a reduction in formalised structures and courses of action, which, furthermore, strengthens non-formal, group-based negotiation processes. Thus, harking back to social-psychologist Haubl, changes in working time conditions enforced by flexibilisation also contribute to enhancing the complexity of content which must be managed and, therefore, progressively address individual competencies of decision making. In this sense, enhanced content complexity may overwhelm the individual ability to detect, prioritise and solve problems (Haubl, 2013a).

Hence, organisations incorporate motions of the markets and anticipate their variations and business fluctuations by delegating such market uncertainties and insecurities to their workforces. In this context, Dörre, Holst and Nachtwey (2010) explain how companies contribute to the shifting character of subcontracted and temporary work. As companies extend the number of temporary workers in their production units, those workers are increasingly treated as a structural bumper, used for relativising the markets' uncertainties and insecurities. This takes place by lowering wage costs, bypassing "statutory dismissal protection and binding collective agreements in order to establish a 'security net' for their short-term profits or rate of return" (Dörre et al., 2010, p. 110). One effect of this can be seen in the changed working requirements and forced fragmentation of workforces, as employees' interests begin to differ significantly against the background of different initial monetary and non-monetary positions. Further, an organisation seems to be a less shapeable topos for temporary workers, although work is highly subjectivised for them. Whether such workers are employed or not is a question that is delegated to their self-responsibility.

Consequently, companies anticipate capitalist dynamics and thus adopt the motion of markets and their underlying logic of growth by activating it as the fundamental ratio of organisational structuring. Organisations, which are understood as emergent social systems that require the streamlined and coordinated actions of their employees, seem to become lean structured and, consequently, withdrawing agents in times of intensified flexibilisation and subjectivation, because their structures increasingly consist of delegating processes tailored to make employees discharge their duties.

Lessenich (2009) suggests that, following flexibilisation, the self of employees, their inherent motivation and their passion are increasingly exploited as ever-flowing resources guaranteeing the stability of flexibilised structures. Here, Moldaschl's diag-

nosis of subjectivation and Lessenich's description of the self as a resource overlap; the self of employees is addressed as a constant instance of regulating working demands by both self-exploitation and self-responsibility. In this context, Eichhorst and colleagues (2016) emphasise that this calling upon the self in terms of subjectivation and flexibilisation as an ever-flowing resource is not without its issues for employees. Indeed, the authors argue that the risk of suffering psycho-social diseases like depression rises significantly, as psychological stress and less work autonomy become increasingly visible in working life due to the intensified calling upon of the self as a capitalist resource (Eichhorst et al., 2016). Thus, changes in working life resulting from flexibilisation and subjectivation may support the subjective feeling of being powerless and impotent, while conditions of working life make it ever more difficult for individual ability to shape the world.

In line with this diagnosis, it can be summarised that on the one side flexibilisation and subjectivation increasingly reflect and support capitalist demands for growth, progressively affecting employees' everyday working lives. On the other hand, absenteeism at work caused by illness or disease is seen to decrease slowly, whereas psycho-social disorders occur at an increasing rate on the individual health level (Eichhorst et al., 2016). The researchers suggest that psycho-social disorders are becoming increasingly visible among many occupational groups, and are a phenomenon not limited to any specific sector. Not only highly educated workers in the service sector, but also vocationally trained employees of production units confront psycho-social disorders such as chronic insomnia and frustration, weariness and tiredness, exhaustion and faintness, as well as tension and fractiousness (Eichhorst et al., 2016). In order to get through the amount of work and pressure they must deal with, employees tend to ignore sickness and disease.

Either way, the flexibilisation and subjectivation of work do not carry sole responsibility for illnesses resulting from psycho-social disorders. Nonetheless, the development of work in the context of those processes may support animosity between the individual self and the world by calling upon psycho-social resources as a subjective resource for coping with working life demands. Haubl (2013a) refers to Engel's concept of bio-psycho-social health to reflect on the mutual relationship of the individual setting of inner resilience and disposition on the one side, and socialised practices of coping with outer demands on the other side (Pauls, 2013). Using Engel's concept of the bio-psycho-social health-model, Haubl opens up the perspective for a mutually responsive relationship between the constitution of the inner self, equipped with resilient resources, and demands of the modern work place in times of flexibilisation and subjectivation. In working life, nowadays, psycho-social disorders are mostly engendered by far-reaching changes in organisations, although they do not constitute the single reason for such illnesses. Assessing this aspect, psychosocial disorders refer to significant imbalances between employees' inner self and the structures related to working life demands and the changes due to both flexibilisation and subjectivation.

## Expectations and Gratification in The Context of Flexibilised and Subjectivised Work

For analysing an employee's self in regard to a working environment whose structures and boundaries are increasingly treated as flexible and negotiable items, it seems helpful to focus on the expression *individual expectations*. In line with Berger and Luckmann (1966), expectations reflect one's socialised knowledge about prospective proceedings, events and actions. Expectations offer stability for social entities, since they constitute a mode of anticipating future uncertainty; expectations condition an individual's knowledge of the world by integrating past actions and experienced events into an individual line of coherence. As expectations are formulated towards future events, they prolong the course of action into unknown time and space.

Expectations also play a key role in working life, as Siegrist postulates. According to Siegrist (2012), employees formulate expectations on what they deserve in return for their invested resources like time, knowledge, etc., in other words, employees cherish a notion of how their work shall be rewarded by the employer. This concept of reward includes employees' expectations concerning how work should be organised. Next to wages, which present the material dimension of gratification, non-material dimensions of gratification, like employment security and mid-term and long-term perspectives, as also further education, self-improvement and advancement opportunities, contribute to employees' expectations regarding their employment and are reflected in their notion of return on investment. Aspects of non-material and material dimensions of gratification can be amalgamated in terms of appreciation and recognition.

Thus, effort and reward must be perceived in a mostly balanced relationship and employees' notions of reward must be satisfied adequately. Otherwise, if employees' expectations regarding their inherent effort-reward balance are increasingly neglected and their notion of reward is insufficiently satisfied, employees might be at aggravated risk of suffering psycho-social illnesses in a multi or single-symptomatic way (Siegrist, 2012; Siegrist et al., 2014). Siegrist uses the term 'gratification crisis' to encompass the distinct aspects of material and non-material gratification. Larisch and colleagues (2003) point out, employees who are confronted with a gratification crisis are six times more likely to develop depression. In other words, the more employees' expectations concerning material and non-material dimensions of gratification are insufficiently fulfilled, the greater the chances they might suffer frustration and disappointment which, in the long term, can structure their perception of the world. Possible implications include self-defeat, resentment and embitterment or sabotage, which can be understood as individual mechanisms of coping and self-care (Haubl & Voß, 2009).

Regarding flexibilised work, social scientists point out that the non-material dimensions of gratification, in particular, are increasingly disrespected. For instance,

Voswinkel and Wagner analyse to what extent commonly shared axes of appreciation and recognition are successively weakened by changed working requirements due to flexibilisation and subjectivation. Given that appreciation and recognition in modern societies are deeply connected with access to gainful employment, guaranteeing and stabilising individualistic ways of social participation, the underlying structures begin to drift as soon as work relations are arranged more fluidly. As a result, compressed working time leads to a lack of time for valuing and appreciating one's work and, consequently, one's self (Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013). Additionally, basic assumptions related to appreciation and recognition, such as validity, veracity and trueness, are weakened values of speech and action, since obedience and subservience are stimulated impulses of dealing with compressed work arrangements (Habermas, 1981). Thus, one central diagnosis of research dealing with appreciation and recognition in times of enhanced flexibilisation and social acceleration to stabilise economic growth is about the less perceivable recognition and confirmation of oneself (Honneth, 2013; Welskopp, 2013; Wimbauer, 2004). Consequently, individuals need to accelerate their efforts to establish close ties for experiencing appreciation and recognition, to make the world answer and let one's expectations fall onto reflexive ground (Rosa, 2013, 2016). Thus, absent experiences of sufficient gratification, and thereby recognition and appreciation both in work and in private life, may be situated within a mutually intensifying relation.

Against that background, material and non-material dimensions of gratification constitute one specific instrument to weaken working demands for employees, resulting from flexibilisation. Material and non-material dimensions of gratification encompass employees' expectations concerning how work should be organised, regarding both wages and non-material aspects of gratification, and express the individual need to be appreciated and recognized.

In this backdrop, the following section will focus on the extent to which a capitalist organisation, positioned within the sustainable banking sector, contributes to weakening intensified working demands on its employees. Here, results from qualitative interviews carried out with banking employees will be presented. Subsequently, the results are discussed.

## The Case, Construction of Interview Guidelines and Methodological Approach

Interviews were conducted during a period of growth for the bank. Key financials can establish this. In 2015, the bank recorded an increase in customer deposits by seven percent and in customer credits by nine percent compared to towards 2014 (Annual Banking Report, 2015). Further, more customers decided to become members of the bank and to hold shares in it; as a result, this growing membership of seven percent over 2014 strengthened the financial basis of the bank, which in turn supported the competitive standing of the bank in the global banking scenario. In-

creased memberships lead to broad capital resources which, in turn, ensure expansion of lending.

Compared with key figures of other banking and financial institutions, these growth rates seem quite high, which might suggest the idea of a rapid growth that exceeds organisational structures. Instead, a growth of the organisational inside reflects the growth of the organisation outside. This means that organisational units deploy more employees who are permanently appointed. This period of growth, both on the organisational inside and outside, indicates a healthy growth when translating financial growth into stabilised structures of human and monetary resources. To anticipate one conclusion, the material and non-material gratification that soften the psychological effects of subjectivised and flexibilised work relations are settled within a growing and expanding organisation.

The interviews were conducted employing a semi-structured format, based on recent research on flexibilisation and gratification. Thus, the construction of the interview guidelines follows, but does not exclusively echo Siegrist's expression *gratification crisis*. Whereas Siegrist's model of gratification crisis constitutes a quantitative model, it was applied in a qualitative and inductive manner to generate more insights into employees' perception of work, gratification, appreciation and recognition.

Relevant dimensions like wages, opportunities for advancement and employment security were operationalised and were set as constitutive research categories. In addition, aspects of flexibilisation played a key role in terms of guideline-construction, such as increasing accessibility through mobile phones, e-mail, etc., and general working conditions, such as individual control over time and working contracts. Aspects of subjectivation were not operationalised in the first place. Moreover, empirical findings that concern calling upon the self as a resource were worked out inductively.

Furthermore, the interviews were conducted to generate a narrative of the employees for gaining insights into their perceptions about everyday work. Hence, the interview guidelines were applied as a theoretical framework for empirical reconstructive and qualitative inquiry, whereby interviewees narrated the story on their own (Duque, 2010). For this, the guidelines presented a conversation technique due to its momentum-giving structure. The aim was to provide an impetus to the interviewees, which they could use to start their narration about their work at the bank, offering insights as to their motivation, their inherent value system, their perceptions of everyday work and their relationships with colleagues and principals.

The interview guideline consisted of four main categories that gave structure to the inquiry process.

- Main Category 1: Biographical narration
  Interviewees were asked to provide information about their subjective and individual backgrounds. Dimensions of the primary and secondary processes of socialisation were especially important; it was assumed that primary and secondary socialisation constitutes the background that made visible their subjective motivation, inherent value systems, and thereby individual formulation of certain expectations regarding their claims towards their work.

- Main Categories 2 and 3: Material and non-material gratification
  As mentioned above, this part was oriented mainly on Siegrist's concept of a gratification crisis. Whilst material gratification refers to wages, non-material gratification refers to "soft" aspects like employment security, opportunities for advancement and further education; both material and non-material gratification made employees' needs for appreciation and recognition visible, because their perception of those gratification dimensions presented the main point of reference.

- Main Category 4: Flexibilisation, focusing on employees' selves
  This main category focuses on changing working requirements that come along with flexible work relations and working conditions. The self of interviewees and its involvement in everyday work present the main points of reference in this context.

All questions were set against the background of epistemological interest, i.e., if employees perceive their environment as a shapeable topos or rather as a topos of alienation, where a feeling of powerlessness dominates their standing in the world. Due to the theoretical framework and the broad narrative periods, the analysis of data followed Mayring's qualitative content analysis. In line with Mayring (2000), qualitative content analysis "consists in a bundle of techniques for systematic text analysis", where both deductive and inductive perspectives of analysis can be respected. Qualitative content analysis links the idea of an inductive openness towards empirical material with a communication model that supports the development of structured narrations. Against this background, empirical material was structured in the first step by applying the main categories which were derived from the theoretical background. In a second step, the main categories were differentiated into sub-categories, whereby the construction process of categories took place within a deductive and inductive dynamic. The process of constructing categories and sub-categories for content analysis was subject to content compression, content reduction and paraphrasing, testing and rearranging (Mayring, 2000). While focusing on the inductive analysis, an in-depth analysis was conducted. Empirical findings on flexibilisation and subjectivation are based on inductively won sub-categories.

Seven employees were interviewed, with interviews lasting between 1.5 to 2 hours. The human resources department selected the interviewees based on a description of the research project and the sample. Keeping in view the research question men-

tioned earlier, the aim was to have a mixed sample of interviewees that reflects different units of the bank, such as management units and operational units with and without business and customer contact, thereby gaining access to different positions of experiencing material and non-material gratification. The sample was also supposed to be selected in accordance with gender and age sensitivity. Whilst the first aspect could be respected, gender and age sensitivity could only be complied with partially. Table 1 shows the sample of the study.

**Table 1: Sample of the qualitative study**

| ID | Organisational position | Age | Sex |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Operational unit with contact to customers | 30 | Male |
| 2 | Operational unit with contact to customers | 31 | Male |
| 3 | Management unit without contact to customers | 45 | Male |
| 4 | Operational unit without contact to customers | 28 | Male |
| 5 | Management unit without contact to customers | 51 | Female |
| 6 | Operational unit with contact to customers | 35 | Female |
| 7 | Operational unit with contact to customers | 54 | Female |

Regarding the recruitment of the interviewees, it is important to clarify that this aspect may constrain empirical findings, because the question of whether or not the process of selection constitutes a positive selection cannot be reconstructed. In other words, the human resources department selected the interviewees, and consequently regulated communication between the organisation and the researchers; the department appeared as an organisational gatekeeper, protecting organisational integrity, which might be compromised by outsiders. Thus, the empirical findings must be treated and interpreted within a limited, yet explorative frame.

The following remarks concerning organisation and business management, organisational structure and organisational achievements, as well as valuing and normative statements, are based on interview findings. Here, the remarks and explanations refer to those statements which served as centred examples while applying qualitative content analysis and, therefore, constitute core narrative passages of empirical material. While this supports a line of argumentation which is full of contrast, on the other hand, focusing on the centred examples in favour of the empirical discussion may lead to redundancies at the level of represented interviewees. Thus, not all interviewee's remarks appear in the following paragraphs.

## Biographical Narration, Systems of Inherent Value and Material and Non-Material Gratification

At the beginning of the biographical narration, Interviewees reflect on their inherently developed system of values and norms that guide their actions. In this context, interviewees reflected on their primary and secondary socialisation during their ini-

tial days at the bank. It is obvious that this system of values and norms plays a significant role for the individual development. This narration of their development is significant for their decision to work for this bank.

Tommy, 30 years old, states at the beginning of his narration that he was raised at an organic farm and grew up in an environment that gave him an understanding of being patient with natural life in regard of the growing of animals, plants and vegetables at the farm. Both humans and non-humans taught him the meaning of patience in a context of achieving the goals set and of appreciating life as an ultimate value. Values learned within this primary socialisation were strengthened by his first job, when he worked for a Christian bank while going to university. He considers these lessons learned as the most driving motives that encouraged him to start working at a bank in the sustainable sector that is committed to social, ecological and economic sustainability. In regard to his work, he claims to base his daily business, i.e. client-consulting, on his socialised values, like trust, honesty and appreciation of his counterparts. In his everyday work, his normative demands can be fulfilled sufficiently due to the intersection of individual and organisational value systems.

Tommy's narrative periods give an idea of a line of coherence that reflects his narration of identity as a biographical sequence in which every story is built upon the logic of the preceding story. Within this narration, his expectations concerning both his life and life in general seemed to fall onto responding ground. This dynamic of a retrospectively constructed line of coherence, with its expectations and value systems, is also found in the narration of interviewee B, Mike, who is 31 years old. Like Tommy, he grew up in an agricultural environment where he developed a sense of nature, learning that every subject has its time. Mike's development seems quite similar to Tommy's.

In contrast, interviewee C, Bernhard, who is 45 years old, explains how he was working for a bank in the investment sector before he started his work at a sustainable bank. His idea of leading a good life included lots of work and high wages. As his working time expanded into the weekend, family time began to shrink, and his marriage finally broke down. He learned to rearrange his mindset and his values. His expectations were not reflected within his experiences; instead, his life experienced a total collapse due to his inherent value system. He started working for the bank in the sustainable sector when he reconfigured his idea of leading a good life and his expectations concerning future work. In this context, the collapse of the whole individual, triggered by the breakdown of individual ideas and imaginings by losing grip on the world, marks a watershed; he had to develop a new narrative for himself. In this process, he did develop a narrative, which can be read as a negative image of his former self.

> "I wanna spend time with my wife at home, not at work, not at all at work on the weekend. And… it's not about the money. If I wanna earn a lump of gold, I just have to go right down the street into

those big skyscrapers there with the big letters […] Money is just an aspect of hygiene, it has to fit – not more" (Bernhard).

In short, these storylines illustrate that an individual value system was found within the interviewees' biographical narration, and this seems to be significant for the understanding of their motivation to start their work at the bank in the sustainable sector. Working for this bank seems to be a matter of conviction and belief. On the one hand, this conviction is streamlined within an inherent line of coherence in Mike and Tommy's case; on the other hand, for Bernhard this conviction and belief result from an existentially experienced moment of collapse, so that the individual's standing in the world had to be redefined.

In the context of describing processes of socialisation, the interviewees also referred to the value system of the employer and how it was experienced. Fundamental guiding principles organise the bank's value system. These anchoring principles enshrine social, economic and ecological sustainability as the organisational core, as interviewee D. Julia, who is 52 years old, says:

> "Well, the guiding principles say, this bank is the one and only universal bank of the world in the sustainable banking sector" (Julia).

The guiding principles organise the whole bank, its financial products, as well as recruiting processes. Financial products focus on funding kindergartens, retirement homes, and small and medium-sized enterprises in the context of implementing sustainable business models or basing energy consumption on renewable energies. Therefore, institutions, organisations or private households are granted financial credit if there is synergy between the customer and the bank's principles.

Further, those principles also organise the recruiting processes, as Bernhard points out:

> "Well, it was… it was the first institution I started working for, which put me to the acid test. Not exclusively regarding my skills and competences, but rather focusing on my human competences. […] Well, indeed, I was considered as human not as a working force, so which attitude and values do I bring along? What is my attitude concerning different things in life?" (Bernhard).

As the bank recruits its employees by focusing more on inherent values and moral attitudes, it stabilises its existence and, associated therewith, the existence of its principles. The organisational orientation towards employees' inherent values and morality enables the matching of employer and employee. Thus, the bank appears as an integral and coordinated organisation that works as a norm-oriented financial institution within a market that blew its financial, moral and normative foundations, which caused the extended financial crisis (Ball, 2009; Groeneveld, 2011). Furthermore, this orientation toward the inherent value systems of employees and their meaning for recruiting processes differentiates likely candidates and admits organisational membership; thus, the relationship between organisation and environment is structured and organised by normative conviction and hard skills, while professional competence plays only a minor part.

Against such a background, the guiding principles on which the organisation's everyday work is based, as well as the normative and moral socialisation of individuals, constitute a mutual relationship which rests upon a reciprocal resonance of values and motives.

This already hints at an organisational embeddedness of material and non-material gratification dimensions and their concern for working life.

Concerning the material dimension of gratification–the wages that the bank offers–it has to be anticipated that the wages consist of three components. First, there is a basic salary that is expanded by two further components which reflect current social and occupational situations. The social component depends on the family situation: do you have to care for a family member? Does your family live where you work, or do you have to commute between home and work? Are you single, do you live in a partnership or are you responsible for other people? The occupational situation corresponds with the load of responsibility employees have to meet in their everyday work.

These three components reflect the organisational order of wages. In turn, material gratification becomes a matter of transparency and counteracts impulses of envy or a grudge. Silvia, 35 years old, points to the nexus between material gratification and emotional reaction when she states:

> "Pay-gap, that's what I think about this. I get the same money as my male colleagues and that's exactly what I call fairness. No hidden bonus payments, no monetary privileges, or social preferences. I really like my job at this bank, because you know what you get – in every sense" (Silvia).

Next, employees have established a social fund within the organisation. Independent of functional position within the organisation, every employee can contribute and pay a certain amount of their monthly wages. If a colleague suffers from a serious disease like cancer or depression, or their social life experiences a profound collapse accompanied by a monetary loss, they can borrow money from this social fund.

This order of wages and monetary support constitutes a certain financial stability beyond material gratification, which is appreciated by every interviewee. Employees preferred this stability of material gratification, which does not exclusively reflect their performance and financial output at work, to the possibility of earning higher wages if they were to work for another banking institution.

Further, every employee who was interviewed cherished opportunities of personal advancement offered by the organisation. Such opportunities encompass dancing courses, courses to stabilise mental and physical health, such as meditation, yoga, massages or jogging, and also trips abroad, professional development courses for professional competencies and time to spend on engaging with civil society.

Although employees do not know about every opportunity for self-expression and self-unfolding, they categorised these offerings as luxuries.

"Well, at least it's very luxurious; far-reaching. Maybe here and there it could be too much; you don't have an overview of everything. Err, you know, you, you have a very strong feeling of being very well supplied, yes" (Mike).

Nevertheless, it seems these opportunities of self-expression and self-unfolding are not decisive factors for individual motivation, as Bernhard points out again:

"For me, my motivation is based on the projects I work for and I can experience. Err, especially that corral, or that institution for disabled people I was working for. This is when I say to myself 'You are doing something very good, useful and meaningful'" (Bernhard).

Here, it becomes apparent that intrinsic motivation depends on the content and meaning of work. Employees associate their work, and the contents of their work, with meaningfulness and usefulness, as their inherent value system is continuously echoed within their work. They find meaningfulness and usefulness within their work, as they define their actions as having a positive impact on society and societal development. In this context, material gratification exclusively serves as the base of existential reproduction; the question of wealth is, moreover, coupled with the image of a societal environment that is shapeable. As employees experience their values being reflected both within their work and the organisation for which they work, the meaning of material gratification is transcended.

This could also be found within Tommy's statements:

"Yeah, well, like I said, it's a personal motivation to say, you wanna change something and create and work on real values. Something non-fictional, and this strengthens my motivation. Obviously, it's also about money and err, colleagues, that's what's really important, but it's not exclusively about money" (Tommy).

Next to work content, organisational circumstances of everyday work seem to matter. Here, every interviewee emphasises that working time, based on trust, and communicative leadership constitute two fundamental elements of a healthy office climate and working atmosphere. Whilst working time, which is based on trust, provides space for reasonable absenteeism in times of illness or private obligations, communicative leadership and an ever-open principal's office contribute to clearly structured, reliable and comprehensible communication, which shortens the path between hierarchies. Thus, interviewees said that this communicative environment supports the idea of a taboo-free space in which employees can talk about work overload or burdensome private situations. As a result, this is mostly experienced as a psychological relief; Peter, 28, talks about the time when he suffered a serious sickness:

"You know, in the end it was no big deal, I recovered finally. But, I never felt guilty, ashamed or like I have failed towards my colleagues and the amount of work I've left for them. My supervisor said like, okay, you are ill, you need to take time off work, we can manage this here altogether. You can return any time you want – guaranteed. No inconvenient situations or questions" (Peter).

This taboo-free space and the possibility to talk about work overload is even guaranteed by a gratification dimension; work overload does not equate to higher wages,

instead, it is treated as the result of excessive work. Furthermore, there are no material or non-material incentives for balancing work overload. In such a scenario, psycho-social disorders resulting from exhaustive work can be expressed adequately, confidently, and are not perceived as signs of individual weakness.

This communicative culture supports identification processes within the organisation, since communicative relationships are based on spatial, temporal and emotional closeness. Due to this communicative culture, employees feel accepted and appreciated in their being, and private issues are embedded within organisational structures and echo in managers' ears. Thus, intergroup relations are strengthened because of close relationships, which consequently support employees' identification with the organisation's goals and principles (Turner, 1982). This may lead to a highly motivated working environment with efficient output, or to an exaggerated work ethic that is triggered by social group effects. Whilst employee and organisation seem to constitute a resonant relationship in the first case, where motivation, identification of the employee, employee effort and expected reward are situated in a balanced relation, the self of employees constitutes an increasingly exploited resource in the latter case, where work overload is neither enforced nor materially rewarded, nor sanctioned or limited by the organisation. Either way, the organisation ensures its existence, for which calling upon the employee's self and stabilising identification processes with organisational goals by supporting communicative culture and group relations are essential elements. In this context, Tommy says:

> "You are very engaged in it. I think this is meant to be and you can realize it on every level in the hierarchy, starting at the easy worker, ending at the chairman. That you say, it's something special to work for the bank and you are probably motivated to work more than the normal amount, like overtime or whatever. Whereas, I wonder if this is the right way, if overtime is the way to go for meeting the requirements. But I know a lot of colleagues personally who strongly identify themselves with the bank and are willing to accept losses or any disadvantages in their private lives or whatever" (Tommy).

Regarding the aspect of strong identification, the human resources manager speaks about the ability of being dedicated to work.

> "Intelligence, knowledge, its combination with fire, passion and the will to get things done - this makes success happen. Without an inner burning, you'll never reach anything. You have to want it. If you wanna have people to support your company, they must feel dedicated to their work, they must burn inside. But, how you gonna get them to burn? The will to burn? They will burn if they have the opportunity to decide upon something. Rather, you have to ask, 'how am I not gonna stop them from burning?' You have to keep an eye on them if they don't fade away or burn out. You have to keep the fire burning, even if people change over time" (Lisa).

As employees burn inside for their organisation, the question of work overload and possibly associated psycho-social disorders is addressed to the employees and played in their personal responsibility. In a sense, the employees of this bank experience a maximised work autonomy and they must justify excessive work themselves. The human resources manager points out:

> "Yeah, for example, responsibility, especially personal responsibility, is of major importance for us. That a human is not a victim, but a maker and creator of life, not a victim, but an independent, reasonable, and self-unfolding being, which optimally gets motivation by itself to move and to take responsibility for its actions. […] This means, for example, in human resources management, that in every interview with employees […] I say: 'Listen, I can show you possible consequences of your action, but you decide what to do. So, you decide about your action and I only hint at consequences. You are responsible for yourself. I am responsible to give you what you need for achieving your goals or whatever to make a decision'" (Lisa).

Hence, the organisational structure of the bank seems to be based on processes of delegation and consulting. Employees have to find their way mostly on their own and have to position themselves within the organisation and, thereby, within the world; simultaneously, the organisation restricts itself to simply showing the consequences. In this context, the bank appears to be a lean organisation, as known from discourses on flexibilised organisations (Olivella et al., 2008).

## Discussion and Conclusion – Organisations as Resonant and Reciprocal Social Systems

This article began by asking to what extent capitalist organisations may weaken the effects of capitalist growth by softening the impacts of markets and competition logic. The aim was to explore how work can be organised in a health-supporting way within a growth-driven system.

Against the background of the interviews carried out with employees who work for a bank in the sustainable banking sector in Germany, a value-based resonance between employees and their organisation can be delineated as a relevant aspect for the organisation of work. The echo of values, for instance, is described as an essential aspect in recruiting processes; further, this echo stabilises the working ethos of individuals and organisations as a whole. With this in mind, Mike points out:

> "Well, indeed it was, well, me as a human being, which attitudes, and values do I bring along? What's my attitude towards several things? […] It was just about my image and the conception of human being and moral concepts that I bring along" (Mike).

This can be read in a way where employees are first addressed in their social personhood by the organisation, which counteracts a capitalist-enforced fragmentation of social persons for an economic promise of surplus value. Thus, employees are called upon in their individual completeness, which involves both private interests and occupational opportunities. Both aspects are reflected within organisational offerings and constitute a multi-level net on which employees can rely.

The value-based resonance between the organisation and its employees is based on moral and normative concepts which influence both the individual socialisation or the significant biographical situations of employees and the development of the organisation. In this sense, working in such an organisation enables a perpetuation of individual systems of relevance and, with this, socialised expectations towards the future. Interviewees describe their overarching expectations towards their work, in-

cluding having a positive influence on their social environment; since this expectation is echoed within their work, they experience their work as a source of reason, usefulness and meaningfulness. In this moment the world answers, as Rosa (2016) puts it; individual and world constitute a relationship based on closeness. This closeness counteracts processes of alienation, grounded in the increasing flexibilisation of work as downstream practices of capitalist growth, as Sarros and colleagues (2002) point out. Hence, working for the bank meets the requirements of modern working society, whereby work sets the platform on which human beings may unfold their selves and fulfil their personalities. With regard to the interviews, the resonance of values seems to constitute the main aspect of individual notions of effort and reward, and therefore may be added to the non-material dimensions of gratification.

This value-based resonance between the organisation and its employees constitutes a mutual relationship of appreciation that reduces the domination of the market's ratio within capitalist organisations. Resonance eases the pressure of action and decision making, which are described as fundamental aspects of flexibilised and subjectivised work (Haubl, 2013b; Rubery, 2015). This is, for example, reflected in the missing material gratification of overtime.

Focusing further on working autonomy as a central aspect of flexibilisation, the organisation reduces individual powerlessness and supports work autonomy without maximising processes of decision making. Here, the world itself appears as a shapeable topos due to the self of employees being addressed by the organisation and its subjectivising processes. Therefore, forms of resignation, self-defeat or frustration, which may be supported by several mechanisms of flexibilisation, could not be observed. Instead, employees are encouraged to test organisational offerings, such as dance courses, massage, or yoga.

The two aspects of resonance of values and supported work autonomy, especially, constitute determining factors of everyday working life, which is based on a reciprocal relationship of being heard and coming-to-speech between employees and organisation, grounded in trust and appreciation.

Regarding communicative culture, the reciprocity of being heard and coming-to-speech presents a guiding principle that leads to a mostly taboo-free space of action, as already mentioned before. Hence, within this taboo-free space employees and supervisors focus on communicative claims such as validity, veracity and trueness towards power and performance, and establish those claims as the grounding organisational principles of reciprocal relations. With regard to these claims, Habermas (1981) understands validity, veracity and trueness as being conditions for an ideal discourse, free from power and repression. Consequently, this taboo-free space may also be treated as a matter of non-material gratification; it is based on the idea of social personhood, which transcends the image of a fragmented workforce.

Regarding the research question formulated at the beginning, it is to state that material and non-material dimensions of gratification undercut the logic of capitalist growth by focusing on the aspects of appreciation and recognition in the context of values, conviction and conscience, besides establishing a reciprocal culture of communication. This requires a congruency consisting mostly of individual and organisational claims in terms of moral and ethical values. This contradicts Voswinkel's and Wagner's (2013) diagnosis of less perceivable appreciation and recognition within flexibilised and subjectivised work. Moreover, being appreciated and recognised is tied to flexibilisation and subjectivation in this context. In other words, this organisation relativises capitalist dynamics and motions of the market by establishing a hyperbolic manner of subjectivation; it is a radical calling upon the self, in turn, that makes the organisation appear as a resonant and reciprocal social system. The calling upon the self presents the one and clear mode of organisational structuring, as the question of workload and the maintenance of health become individualised by the concept of self-responsibility.

In such a scenario, the bank may be treated as a post-growth organisation, to the extent that it negates psycho-social disorders that may occur in terms of flexibilised and subjectivised work relations due to capitalist growth. The core of these negating processes lies in a well-founded, resonant and reciprocal social system based on an almost radical form of organisational calling upon the self, wherein individuality is echoed by the organisation (following one's interest by taking the organisation's offerings), by the work content (offering usefulness and meaningfulness) and by the organisation's sociality (solidarity and a taboo-free work culture), which in sum lead to appreciation and recognition in the context of non-material gratification. These findings suggest that resonance and reciprocity, built upon appreciation and recognition, seem to affect employees' psychological condition. Commonly shared imaginations that are characteristic of a capitalist society, such as the dynamics of growing, becoming and expanding oneself into formally untouched spaces and spheres, are not served or supported as motives for action (Binswanger, 2013). Moreover, these images that are linked with feelings of envy or grudge are organisationally banned by a congruency of values. This supports the idea of a post-growth organisation based upon material and non-material gratification.

For softening this interpretation in respect of the explorative character, the limitations of those statements due to the explorative character of this study must be considered. As outlined before, the selected sample of interviewees and their recruitment process can be suspected of being a positive selection in the context of organisational image and integrity. With regard to limitations, specific research aspects have not been covered in this study: socio-structural aspects or concerns of workforce diversity have not been respected. A subsequent study could ask whether there are cultural or gender-based differences in experienced resonance and reciprocity, and how these differences affect organisational life. Furthermore, this study does not reflect on aspects such as power, micro-power or micro-politics within a sustain-

able bank. The image drawn within this article might differ by taking other perspectives such as power, diversity and social inequality into account. Crozier and Friedberg (1980), as well as Neuberger (2006) discuss how organisations are traversed by power and politics on a micro-level; this assumption could shed more light upon the presented empirical findings and might, for example, counteract the outlined argument of a mostly taboo-free space.

Moreover, the specifics of the case must be considered. During the empirical analysis, no evidence of gratification crisis was found. As mentioned above, these empirical findings somehow reflect organisational growth, and thereby the wealth of organisational resources, because interviews were led within an already existing and stable period of organisational growth. It is no exaggeration to say that these empirical results deeply depend on organisational wealth built upon economic growth on the outside; in other words, results might differ if the organisational environment were not characterised by a period of growth. It can be stated, therefore, that the organisational denial and negation of the gratification crisis take place within, thus stabilising capitalist dynamics. Moreover, the mental and physical health of employees is based on material and non-material dimensions of gratification, which need capitalist growth and exploitation of the organisational outside. Organisations such as this bank and their way of organising work by guaranteeing material and non-material gratification enrich the commonly shared notion of capitalist growth and a legitimate capitalist dynamic as a land-grabbing system.

Therefore, case-specific questions arise: what would happen to that resonant and reciprocal social system if the organisation were to be plunged into an economic crisis? To what extend would an inner-organisational crisis lead to intensification of profitability and, with this, of economic ratio over resonance and reciprocity? Where would the erosion of resonance and reciprocity first take place, and how would this affect the individual experience of work? How could organisational decline be imagined and pictured? As a subsequent thought, organisational decline in the course of economic shrinkage may appear as a decline in morality, ethics and social actions, as pointed out by social-psychologist and organisational scholar Yiannis Gabriel. He explains how an eroding economic basis of an organisation may enforce an organisational status of pollution spreading within the whole organisation, turning employees into wandering corpses and transforming an atmosphere of creation into palpable depression (Gabriel, 2009). Thus, one could assume that the sensitivity of markets will have an impact on the vulnerability of the bank, and consequently on the established reciprocity and resonance.
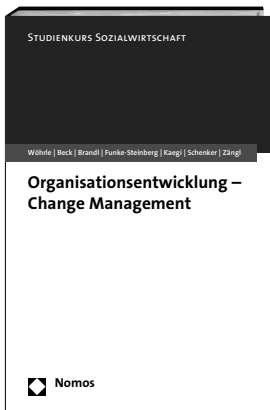
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