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Capitalist Realism or Post-Growth? Evidence from the Mental Growth Infrastructures of Post-Capitalist Organizations

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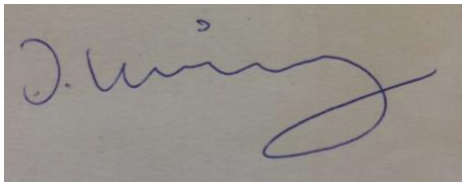

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The capitalist system is increasingly criticized for being ecologically and socially destructive and thus critics start assessing the feasibility of a post-capitalist era. In the current debate on the feasibility of overcoming the capitalist system and transitioning to a post-capitalist alternative, Post-Growth scholars (who believe in such a possibility) are opposed by Capitalist Realists (who do not). Both sides, however, usually centre their arguments around the economic and socio-political facets of capitalism. This debate is not fully integrating scholars that view capitalism as a mind-set, or inherent set of beliefs, involving material as well as mental infrastructures. By investigating post-capitalist organizations (i.e., organizations that have already overcome economic aspects of capitalism), this thesis tests whether claims for Capitalist Realism hold true on the mental level. Adopting the framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures by Welzer led to the specific investigation of organizations´ perceptions of the acceleration of time, the need to progress and the work non-stop mentality. Semi-structured interviews and field notes were gathered from six post-capitalist organizations and analyzed via a mixed analytical approach of both inductive and deductive coding. Results indicated that organizations do not exactly follow the patterns of Mental Growth Infrastructure as established in the literature. In fact, either organizations exhibit Mental Growth Infrastructures but slightly modify the purpose of adopting them, or critique and re-conceptualize them. This resulted in an Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures, which adds Mental Green Growth Infrastructures and Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures. It is also discussed what such framework could imply for organizations within and outside the capitalist economy.

Keywords: Post-Capitalist Organization, Post-Growth, Mental Infrastructures, Time, Progress, Work

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction 1
1.1 Problem Definition 2
1.2 Research Questions and Aims 3
1.3 Thesis Outline 5
2. Literature Review 7
2.1 Capitalist Realism vs. Post-Growth 7
2.2 The Missing Perspective in the Post-Capitalist Debate 10
2.3 Post-Capitalist Organizations 13
3. Theoretical Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures 16
3.1 Selection of Variables 16
3.2 Mental Infrastructures of Growth: Acceleration of Time, The Need to Progress, Work Non-Stop 18
3.2.1 Acceleration of Time 18
3.2.2 The Need to Progress 22
3.2.3 Work Non-Stop 25
4. Methods 28
4.1 Research Design 28
4.2 Data Collection 28
4.2.1 The Case Haus der Materialisierung 30
4.3 Materials 32
4.3.1 Interview Guide 32
4.4 Analytical Approach 33
5. Analysis and Findings 35
5.1 Post-Capitalism 35
5.2 Mental Infrastructures: Time, Progress and Work 39
5.2.1 Time 39
5.2.2 Progress 50
5.2.3 Work 57
5.3 Additional Mental Infrastructures 63
6. Discussion 69
6.1 Reflecting on the Research Questions 69
6.2 Theoretical Implications 76
6.2.1 A New Theoretical Framework of Mental Infrastructures 77
6.2.2 Post-Capitalist Organizations 85

6.3 Practical Implications 86
6.4 Limitations and Future Research 88
7. Conclusion 91
8. References 94
9. Appendix 109

List of Figures

Figure 1: Leverage Points for Sustainability Transformations

Figure 2: Photograph of Haus der Materialisierung, Berlin.

List of Tables

Table 1: Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures

List of Abbreviations

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HDM – Haus der Materialisierung

HDS – Haus der Statistik

MGGI – Mental Green Growth Infrastructures

MGI – Mental Growth Infrastructures

MPGI – Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures

SA – Social Acceleration

1. Introduction

The climate crisis is driven by the endless pursuit of economic growth (Acheampong, 2018; van den Bergh, 2009; Destek et al., 2020). Among many scholars, economic growth is presented as the root cause of the many social and ecological problems humanity is facing (Kallis et al., 2020; Sandberg et al., 2019), as it is also highly intertwined with our exploitative capitalist economic system (Alexander, 2020b; Exner, 2014; Liodakis, 2018): growth drives capitalism, and vice versa. Thus, the voices demanding more radical subversive policies that contest the very roots of our economic system, i.e. economic growth and capitalism, are becoming louder. Even popular ecologists, such as Sir David Attenborough, have called for capitalism to be terminated to stay within planetary boundaries (Blum, 2020).

These demands are underpinned by scientific evidence that growth-driven techno-fixes like decoupling emissions from economic growth might not help humanity to stay within 1.5 degrees global warming (Haberl et al., 2020), whereas post-growth scenarios could (Keyßer & Lenzen, 2021; Steinberger et al., 2010) while also ensuring a decent living standard for all (Millward-Hopkins et al., 2020). Similarly, other capitalist solutions to the climate crisis, such as developing more efficient production systems, are increasingly criticized for showing re-bound effects that hamper emission reductions by up to 50% (Brockway et al., 2021; Gossart, 2014; Schröder et al., 2019). Capitalist structures also conflict with principles of environmental justice by extracting material and human labor in the less affluent countries to meet consumption levels in the over-developed world (Dorninger et al., 2021; Singh, 2019). On the other hand, Post-Growth[1], broadly defined as a social system beyond the pursuit of economic growth, places de-colonization centre-stage in its agenda (Hickel, 2020b, 2021). Maintaining a

[1] The utilization of the term Post-Growth within this thesis always includes Degrowth since Degrowth is one facet inside Post-Growth (Reichel, 2016).

habitable planet for all human-beings could thus be argued to be a management task of building a society beyond capitalism and the growth ideology (Jackson, 2021; Klein, 2015).

To investigate whether such a transition toward post-capitalism could take place is the intrinsic motivation for this thesis. Instead of asking "Why Post-Capitalism?", this thesis addresses the question of "Is Post-Capitalism possible?" and specifically looks at the mental feasibility of such an undertaking. It is assumed that a very crucial factor toward post-capitalism is a mentality beyond growth (Horlings, 2015; Ives et al., 2020). Capitalism, in the context of this thesis, will be addressed as a cultural rather than economic system (Cole & Ferrarese, 2018a). In other words, this means to approach the transition toward post-capitalism as a mental exercise of unlearning and replacing cultural values, mind-sets, belief-systems and inner tools that are inherent in the growth-driven capitalist economy (Woiwode et al., 2021).

1.1 Problem Definition

The tricky question that emerges out of such a call for post-capitalism is whether capitalism can easily be overcome, as well as what exactly needs to be overcome. Many calls from leftist activism do not specifically articulate what aspects of capitalism they concretely oppose, which makes it strategically hard to subvert it, especially when a large segment of society is part of, and benefits from, it (Klein, 2015). A demand for "System Change" might not be enough for the resilient system of capitalism to be transformed. What might be needed are more concrete ideas and fresh perspectives, that show whether post-capitalism can be practiced (Brossmann & Islar, 2020) or, perhaps more importantly, brought to mind. This is specifically challenging in a growth-centered society that colonized how we imagine new worlds (Latouche, 2010).

Therefore, I identify two research problems that this thesis will address. One is that many scholars doubt the *feasibility of post-capitalism* i.e., whether the capitalist system could be overcome in the first place. In light of the growing evidence of the incompatibility of capitalism with social and ecological limits (see Chapter 1) the debate is often stuck in within

a pessimistic take – i.e., a) capitalism is damaging and b) capitalism cannot be overcome) – and novel perspectives on the feasibility of post-capitalism are necessary. Secondly, intertwined with the first problem, I assert that *the mental dimension of a "growth-mind-set" has not yet been adequately addressed* in the debate around capitalism, although some scholars have claimed that the capitalist crisis is essentially a crisis of mental growth infrastructures and values (Horlings, 2015; Welzer, 2011). Such a mental dimension can thus be the novel perspective that could make scholars re-evaluate the claims that capitalism is ubiquitous and invincible, and thus also pave the way for post-capitalist scholarship and policies.

A special focus is placed on so-called post-capitalist organizations. Up to now, most of the literature dealing with mental infrastructures of capitalism has framed the issues at the individual or overall societal level, although organizations are also important drivers (Zolfaghari et al., 2016) and transformers (Pansera & Fressoli, 2020) of capitalist values. Furthermore, post-capitalist organizations should be of interest in this debate because they have overcome the economic aspects of capitalism, such as the accumulation of profits (see Chapter 2.1.3). Hence, if they have already overcome those aspects, testing variables of the growth mind-set in those organizations can be of high relevance for the overall conundrum whether capitalism is an all-encompassing system that no one could escape from.

1.2 Research Questions and Aims

The overall aim of this thesis is to to investigate whether post-capitalist organizations exhibit mental growth infrastructures, and, to the extent that they do not, in what ways they perhaps diverge from such mental infrastructures. I will first introduce one overarching research question, before more specifically addressing three variables that belong to such a growth mind-set. The larger research question is:

Overarching RQ: To what extent do post-capitalist organizations exhibit mental infrastructures of a growth ideology?

The variables for the research questions all derive from the theoretical framework, which will be introduced below. This also includes which variables of the framework I deliberately exclude for my overall research question and specific interest in post-capitalist organizations. One such variable of interest is the perception of time. Time itself can be seen as the progression of existence, which is, however, perceived differently in particular circumstances (Smith, 1902). Time has a highly subjective dimension, which makes it an important factor of how we view ourselves in the world around us. As the theoretical framework will explicate in more detail, time can also be argued to be a mental component of the growth ideology that is hard to circumvent due to its universal presence. Furthermore, sociological research suggests that our society is increasingly becoming faster, with more events happening in a particular unit of time. This is known as *Social Acceleration* and argued to be a phenomenon of the capital system (Rosa, 2015). For post-capitalist organizations, this would translate into how the pace of one´s organization is being perceived. This would include organizational processes and other operations, but also how importantly time efficiency is being valued for such organizations. Therefore, my first subsidiary research question would be the following:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of time and processual pace within post-capitalist organizations?

A second variable derived from the theoretical framework is the need to progress. This would include the organizational drive to endlessly become better, bigger and legion. As an imperative that is assigned to virtually all organizations, the need for progress is hypothesized to be an all-encompassing phenomenon which is hard to disregard for an organization. It is also important to highlight that this research is interested in the perceived need to progress and not whether organizations, in fact, progress. This is why progress can be considered a mental infrastructure. The drive to constantly improve rather than having enough is argued to be a mental component of the growth mind-set (see Chapter 2.2.2), initiating my

second research question:

RQ2: (How) Do postcapitalist organizations see the need to progress?

Thirdly, and lastly, this thesis is interested in post-capitalist organizations´ mental engagement with work. Work leads to more economic turnover, which, in turn, could lead to more consumption and ecological destruction (Kallis et al., 2013a). However, translating work into a mental variable, a specific interest is placed on the capitalist work non-stop mentality, where work is never finished, but just *on pause* as the next task is waiting. To clarify, for this variable it is more relevant with which mentality organizations work than how much organizations actually work (although this could be a proxy for the former). This culminates to my third research question:

RQ3: How much are post-capitalist organizations embedded into a capitalist work mentality?

1.3 Thesis Outline

After reviewing the relevant literature around the feasibility of post-capitalism and post-capitalist organizations in Chapter 2, a thorough focus is placed on the theoretical framework in Chapter 3. I utilize Welzer´s (2011) framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures, but support it with other scholarship relevant for each of the variables. It will also be explained in much detail how these variables became mental infrastructures and what role capitalism played in such development. The link between the variables and capitalism can be considered the backbone of my research: since this thesis aims to answer whether such mental growth infrastructures can or cannot be overcome, it is crucial to argue how the variables (i.e., acceleration of time, progress, work) are indeed part of a growth ideology. In Chapter 4, the qualitative research approach and data collection are outlined. This precedes the description of a relevant co-operative called *Haus der Materialisierung* which most of the interviewed organizations belong to. The fifth chapter, the analysis, is divided into three parts.

The organizations will be checked for their economic post-capitalist structures, their mental growth infrastructures regarding time, progress and work, and additional mental infrastructures which are emerging from the data. Chapter 6 discusses what the results could mean for a better understanding of post-capitalist organizations and a theory of mental growth infrastructures. Based on the results, I will introduce the *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures*. Finally, it is discussed what organizations and future research could learn from this study.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is composed of three parts. Firstly, a broader debate between *Capitalist Realism* and *Post-Growth* is outlined, two opposing lines of research that discuss the nature of (post-) capitalism. Secondly, literature regarding the mental dimension of the growth ideology is examined. Thirdly, a conceptualization of post-capitalist organizations is developed, while examining how post-capitalist organizations are of relevance for the research aim.

2.1 Capitalist Realism vs. Post-Growth

Capitalism, in the Marxist tradition, is an economic system that constitutes five parts. It presumes a wage-based labor relationship between capitalist and employee; the employee sells their labor to the capitalist; the employee has no ownership over the product she/he creates; the employee receives an exchange value (e.g., money) for their labor; the main motive for such a relationship is to make profit. These were the founding assumptions of capitalism which hold true until the present day (Andreucci & McDonough, 2015).

Post-capitalists skeptics from the left argue that subverting capitalism and the causes of the climate crisis might be politically difficult to achieve (Schwartzman, 2012), or that one simply cannot fully escape the economic system in its vastness and ubiquity (Foster, 2011; Fournier, 2008). Other critical theorists, such as Slavoj Zizek or Mark Fisher, have thus argued for *Capitalist Realism,* a term describing the invincibility of capitalism as the only system possible. As cultural critic Mark Fisher recalls Frederic Jameson´s words: “It is easier to imagine the end of the world, than the end of capitalism.” (Fisher, 2009, p.1). Fisher (2009) also asserts how industries and areas of life that have long been existing outside the capitalist system became increasingly engulfed in principles of profit-making and self-promotion. He specifically addresses the education system and production of art and culture. Such *Capitalist Realism* has also been connected to the wider ecological movement, where corporations that

are responsible for ecological degradation present themselves as solutions to climate change via greenwashing politics (Bowen & Aragon-Correa, 2014; Forbes & Jermier, 2012).

Many scholars within this line of thought have also raised doubts about the feasibility of post-capitalist structures: Capitalism has established itself as an economic system that is meant to be the most flexible and adaptative of all times (Buch-Hansen, 2014). It is a system that has now survived several world wars and a global financial crisis that even illustrated its weaknesses to the global public. Further, the majority of inhabitants in the world do not know any other system than capitalism (Milanovic, 2019). The mere fact it still exists and manages the world, despite large criticism, should teach us the resilience of that system (Fisher, 2009). Capitalism is deeply engrained into the decision-making of policy-makers, the management of organizations and individual choices. Its ubiquity poses the following conundrum that this thesis will address on the level of mentality: how post-capitalist can the most persistent critics of capitalism be, after all?

Some of those critics come from the emerging field of post-growth and degrowth studies, which is located within the larger academic disciplines of political ecology and ecological economics. Post-Growth is defined as a worldview that believes society should be centered around social well-being, justice and ecological restoration. Degrowth, one sub-category of post-growth (Reichel, 2016), is more concretely "a planned reduction of energy and resource use designed to bring the economy back into balance with the living world in a way that reduces inequality and improves human well-being" (Hickel, 2020b). Degrowth scholars clearly define degrowth as a post-capitalist undertaking (Alexander, 2020a; Klitgaard, 2013; Latouche, 2012b). Scholars´ criticisms of economic growth are a critique of the motive of profit making and accumulation of capital. Drivers of economic growth are mainly multi-national corporations, which are simultaneously holders of enormous amounts of capital, thus making degrowth possibly incompatible with capitalism (Bellamy-Foster, 2011). Other research on

degrowth and capitalism claims degrowth is anti-capitalist due to its criticism that commodification harms individuals in the Global South, which the degrowth movement highly disregards due to its strong core of environmental justice (Martinez-Alier, 2009; Andreucci & McDonough, 2015). Proposals from the post-growth community include the establishment of infrastructures outside of market activities (Bliss & Egler, 2020) which might then function as islands largely independent from the capitalist ocean. Alexander (2020a) makes an explicit case against *Capitalist Realism* by pointing to the many paradoxes that the system will not be able to handle in the future, as he asserts. For him, degrowth is the alternative that will break through the cracks of late-capitalism, as a new form of living and relating to each other via the commons and similar policies that can exist in a world beyond capitalism (Alexander, 2020a). Other post-capitalist proposals from post-growth studies include a *Universal Care Income* (Barca, 2020) or co-operatively managed firms (Chiengkul, 2018).

However, even some degrowth scholars have raised concerns about positioning degrowth as post-capitalist. Capitalism critique might be an ideological or theoretical position against the only system possible, as an analysis by Exner (2014) illustrates: "Latouche, for instance, draws heavily on Ivan Illich or Marshall Sahlin for a critique of contemporary society, including the centrality of markets. However, his approach in the end does not go beyond denying the validity of so-called consumerism and productivism (Latouche, 2010, p. 521*).* The problem is not identified as a mode of production based on wage labor and markets.*"* Latouche (2012) emphasizes that capitalism should not be the main target of criticism for degrowth activists; instead, it should be the "productionist" imaginary. Similarly, concerns have been raised that degrowth can only gain popularity by not fully rejecting capitalism, or that degrowth should focus on decentralization instead of seeking out a large revolutionary alternative to capitalism (Andreucci & McDonough, 2015).

To briefly conclude this broader debate, capitalism has gained a hegemonic position that proponents of *Capitalist Realism* believe to be invincible, while also a few post-growth scholars, at least to some degree, raised doubts about the feasibility of fully transforming to a post-capitalist society. On the other hand, many post-growth scholars and activists have not only researched the problems of the capitalist system, but also started to build alternatives to it. Degrowth, specifically, is a wider movement that shows the confidence that the capitalist system can be overcome.

2.2 The Missing Perspective in the Post-Capitalist Debate

Why would a thesis re-vitalize a debate whether capitalism could be overcome? The short answer would be: The debate, so far, did not adequately address all scholarly perspectives of how capitalism could be conceptualized.

The term post-capitalism was initially coined by Drucker (1994) in his *The Postcapitalist Society* which focuses on the ownership of capital within the United States. Drucker (1994) asserts that the US has entered a postcapitalist era as capital is not merely in the hands of a few capitalists but families, enterprises and other organizations. Mason (2015) similarly defines post-capitalism as a system that has undergone a digital revolution and thus embodies new organizations (e.g. Wikipedia) and forms of working (shared labor).

Within this debate about post-capitalism, it can be observed that most arguments are merely centered around the economic aspects of capitalism like profit, resource use and social exploitation (Kovel, 2007; Lawn, 2011). Similarly, Wright (2013) asserts that building emancipatory alternatives to capitalism is a question of power structures and post-capitalism can only be achieved by changing institutions, while Srnicek and Williams (2016) envision a post-capitalist world by exploring economic structures free from wage labor, thus formally rejecting the capitalist-employee relationship integrated in capitalism. Post-growth scholars enter this debate in a similar fashion, mainly referring to post-capitalism as an economic

undertaking against the growth hegemony: a large focus in the post-growth literature is to criticize private ownership and commodification and how to replace those by novel forms of economic re-structuring (Healy & Gibson-Graham, 2019; Kallis et al., 2020). A peer-reviewed literature review by Weiss & Cattaneo (2017) found that a large section of academic degrowth articles addresses the economic aspects of degrowth, while none address a psychological dimension of degrowth[2].

While the research mentioned in the previous paragraph is highly acknowledged by the author of this thesis, and a crucial step toward moving beyond the growth-driven capitalist economy, this thesis assumes that reviewing capitalism merely based on these economic aspects is not reflecting the whole picture of capitalism. It neglects scholarship that asserts that capitalism is more than a system of inequal wage labor and profit making, but instead a "way of life" (Cole & Ferrarese, 2018b; Welzer, 2011). The capitalist system has led to a particular belief paradigm of what is right and wrong; or, as Harald Welzer puts it: "Institutional infrastructures regulate growth; the material ones manifest it; and mental infrastructures translate it into lifeworlds [sic.], equipping the inhabitants of growth societies with the associated biographies and notions of self (Welzer, 2011, p.12)." Such mental infrastructures have not been placed into focus within the post-capitalist discourse. However, they might be highly relevant because certain values and intentions are driving forces of capitalist exploitation and cruelty (Purdey, 2012). This has also been picked up by systems thinking literature which asserts that systemic problems will not be tackled by merely adopting material, physiological or technological solutions (Ives et al., 2020; Woiwode et al., 2021). Instead, system change requires modifications in intent and mind-sets (Fischer & Riechers, 2019) touching upon the deeper leverage points (Abson et al., 2017) (see Figure 1). Abson et

[2] However, a recent master thesis was published on the link between psychology and degrowth (Gutierrez, 2020). Further, it is hypothesized that more such articles were published recently due to the mental health constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, see for example Aillon & Cardito, (2020) for a Special Issue on Health and Degrowth.

al. (2017) furthermore argue that research on mind-sets is hardly conducted despite its transformative potential. However, system thinking scholarship does not explicitly link such mind-set changes to capitalism and economic growth, which has been criticized for not addressing the elephant in the room that truly needs to change (Feola, 2020).

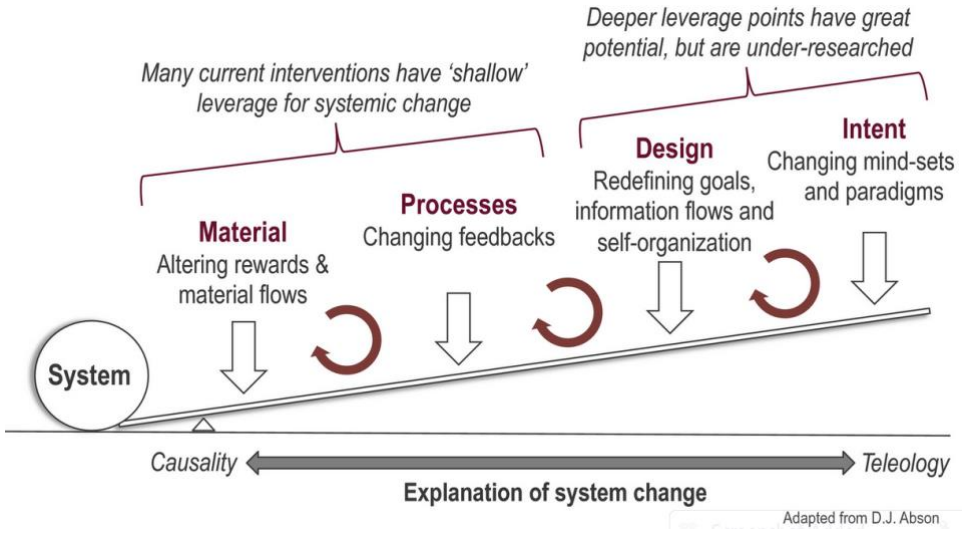

Figure 1. *Illustration of Leverage Points for System Changes*. Source: Fischer & Riechers (2019), adapted from Abson et al. (2017).

The first (and possibly most significant) account for capitalism´s mental facet is Max Weber´s *Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) which argues that capitalism should not be understood as an economic system, but a spiritual movement that makes individuals believe their productivity, success and competitive advantage is what makes their worth. Weber (1930) thus opened the debate whether capitalism has worsened our moral standards, and, more importantly, made a first case that capitalism is linked to deeper human decision-making and its connected intentions. Additionally, such a capitalist value system simultaneously creates the legitimacy for policy-makers to conduct the most devastating policies, such as loosening up property speculation or setting up nuclear warfare (Linstromberg, 1965). However, the time that passed between the mid-20th century and now

has also changed certain facets of capitalism and economic growth[3], which became more complex and intertwined with the understanding of ourselves (Robbins, 2013).

Therefore, a special focus of this thesis is placed on the mental aspects of a growth ideology: the acceleration of time, the constant need to progress, and the non-stop work mentality. These three facets of capitalism are particularly important for the position that degrowth scholars hold on capitalism, as degrowth is understood as a movement that advocates a slower lifestyle counter to acceleration, work addiction and relentless progress (Hickel, 2020b; Kallis et al., 2013; Scarrow, 2018).

Contemplating on such conceptualizations of capitalism and growth, this thesis assumes that economic growth itself might not be the root cause for all ecological and social problems. The literature suggests that capitalism might also be a set of beliefs and ways of thinking which guides what we value and do in our lives. If this mental facet of capitalism can be understood better, post-growth scholars and activists might gain novel strategies to design organizations and societies beyond economic growth and capitalism, while simultaneously addressing deeper, under-researched leverage points for social-ecological transformations.

2.3 Post-Capitalist Organizations

This thesis assumes a distinction between anti- and post-capitalist, similar to how Schmid (2019) asserts that anti-capitalism is a single counter-hegemonic position, whereas post-capitalism includes pluralist efforts to plant seeds in the cracks of the current capitalist system. Such a distinction is of relevance for this thesis, as I will deliberately investigate post-capitalist organizations, which do not restrict themselves to ideology only, but instead aim to establish pluralistic alternatives (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

[3] Economic Growth in its current form of *Gross Domestic Product* (GDP) is a fairly recent invention that was developed by Kuznets and implemented after the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944 (Gould, 2009).

However, there is no clear consensus on how to define the post-capitalist organization. The reason for this might be that post-capitalism and other critical scholarship has only entered organization and management studies fairly recently (Cheney, 2014; Cheney et al., 2014a; Johnson et al., 2017; Liesen et al., 2014). Therefore, this thesis aims to align a definition of a post-capitalist organization to broader post-capitalist scholarship (Mason, 2015; Srnicek & Williams, 2016). This is to broadly define post-capitalist organizations as organizations that *neither prioritize profit, nor commodify their products, nor engage in hierarchical employer-employee relationships*[4]. More concretely, this allows for various organizational models to count as post-capitalist (Gibson-Graham, 2008), such as workers´ co-operatives (Cheney et al., 2014b), community projects, and commoning organizations (Chatterton, 2016; Gibson-Graham et al., 2016).

On the meso-level, organizations are an important entity for the capitalist economy. If aliens would arrive on earth, they would detect that organizations – not markets or transactions – are the "dominant feature of the landscape", as Simon (1995) wittily describes. Compilations of humans make up organizations – which literally is one definition for 'organization' (Selznick, 1948) – and the ecosystem of organizations add up to the capitalist economy, which makes organizations a highly relevant stakeholder in challenging the capitalist system (Rätzer et al., 2018). More specifically, organizations could also play a crucial role for a transition beyond the growth paradigm (Pansera & Fressoli, 2020), especially if they were not driving competition and unsustainable innovations anymore (Liesen et al., 2014; Pansera & Owen, 2018). However, despite growing evidence that organizations are of such importance for any sustainability transition beyond capitalism, not

[4] The mental dimension is deliberately not integrated in such a definition, because it is precisely the aim of this paper to explore whether organizations that are economically post-capitalist have also overcome the growth mind-set.

much scholarship examines in what ways alternative organizations might and might not have overcome the growth ideology (Rätzer et al., 2018).

Theorizations about the mental aspects of capitalism have generally only addressed consumers and their decision making (and even those to a very limited extent, see Chapter 2.1.2). However, not only consumers integrate the mental facet of capitalism. Organizations are also significant drivers of cultural values and mind-sets (Zolfaghari et al., 2016). This thesis therefore assumes that organizations can be significant multipliers of capitalist values. At the same time, there is also a chance that organizations could drive a value change toward post-growth. Therefore, a specific examination of mental growth infrastructures is conducted on the organizational level (and thus on post-capitalist organizations). It is not intended to investigate an organization´s social and environmental impact, or how flat their labor hierarchies are, which one might understand as post-capitalist. This study is interested in the deeper mental infrastructures of an organization and how such organizations do or do not exhibit this growth mind-set. The next chapter will introduce in more detail what variables are part of these mental infrastructures and examines which of the variables are relevant for the context of post-capitalist organizations.

3. Theoretical Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures

3.1 Selection of Variables

What are the mental infrastructures that sociologist Harald Welzer values as an equally important ingredient in the capitalist cake as consumer products or financial markets? I will use Welzer´s *Mental Infrastructures* as a framework to explore to what extent post-capitalist organizations might be trapped or perhaps transform growth ideologies.

Welzer´s (2011) essay outlines a variety of mass phenomenon that contribute to his framework of mental infrastructures. It is divided into six mental aspects that make up a growth ideology: Energy; mobility; the identification with material goods; the acceleration of time; the need to progress; and the work non-stop mentality. It is important to note that some of these components might not intuitively sound like psychological or mental entities. This is acknowledged in this thesis and therefore, additional literature is consulted that supports Welzer´s (2011) claims and justifies which variables are utilized for the research aim of this thesis. Furthermore, Welzer (2011) makes explicit that he calls these components mental infrastructures, because each of the variables changes the way we as humans view ourselves in this world.

Furthermore, he accounts for phenomena that have entered the minds of the society as a whole. Thus, his framework is applicable to humans, communities, organizations, or even nations. Yet, this thesis is selecting specific elements of his framework which are of relevance for the organizational context. This paragraph will elaborate which variables would not be applicable for this thesis and why.

By using *Energy*, Welzer (2011) argues, humans became energetic themselves. According to the framework, the discovery of fossil fuels made individuals realize the notion of a *vita activa*: the idea that creation, expansion and production are possible, and desirable. Energy made us unsated conquerors and restless scientists of the world. While acknowledging

the relevance of energy for our growth mentality, this thesis will not specifically research the notion of energy in post-capitalist organizations. The reason is that energy is only subject to companies who manufacture, whereas this thesis rather covers a range of post-capitalist organizations, of which some do not produce products. Furthermore, I agree that energy has shaped our understanding of what humanity can and should achieve, but I personally do not see it as a mental component. The expansive use of energy is, in my opinion, not mental itself, but influenced by our need to progress. I will pick this up below. However, if interviewees stress energy use as a driver for what they do and how, responses will be analyzed with regards to energy as a mental component.

Secondly, mobility is considered a crucial aspect of today´s consumer and growth mentality. According to Welzer (2011) we need to be mobile and in motion constantly. Welzer (2011) links mobility to the invention of energy and Social Acceleration of time, which I will address below. For mobility, I argue that it is a mental component that is highly sociological rather than organizational. This means that the extent to which one is/has to be mobile is very place-dependent and primarily influenced by one´s personal geographical context. Physical infrastructure such as the size of a city, provision of affordable public transport or bicycle lanes are indicators for a mobile lifestyle in the 21st century, but not of relevance here. Furthermore, the presence of COVID-19 is radically shifting our idea of mobility, and I assert studying mobility in these times would lead to biased results.

The identification of consumer goods is certainly a psycho-analytical hook that accelerates consumption and planned obsolescence. For Welzer (2011), this is a pivotal aspect of modernity, and a success factor for the car and other luxury industries, which make their products bigger and more personally tailored to specific consumer desires each season. However, this implies that the identification with material goods is a mental infrastructure

limited to consumers. However, this is a study on post-capitalist organizations, which, therefore, does not integrate this mental component.

This brings us to the relevant components of mental growth infrastructures. The acceleration of time, the need for progress and the non-stop work mentality. The section below will describe each of the components in more detail, and enriches them with literature outside of Welzer (2011).

3.2 Mental Infrastructures of Growth: Acceleration of Time, The Need to Progress, Work Non-Stop

3.2.1 Acceleration of Time

Time, as a metaphysical construct, gives humans orientation in their daily lives. From meeting a friend, over measuring your running pace, to the start of a TV program. Time is a ubiquitous element in our lives, and it is easy to forget that it is socially constructed by humans. With the use of time we can make sense, and contrast different occurrences in the natural world (Elias, 1988). Henceforth, time is a helpful tool to ground and guide us in everyday life (in theory).

However, a recent development of this tool into the economic sphere has changed the nature of time and how we relate to it. This is important for my argument that the acceleration of time can be considered a mental infrastructure of a growth ideology. Welzer (2011; 2020, p.164) explicates how humans started to make more rational use of time in the 19th century. The expansion of the European train system, a co-product of more material being processed in early capitalist society, led to a different feeling towards time, as processes within organizations needed to be calibrated to the minute. This furthermore led to the emergence of a strict eight-hour working day, including a 30-minute lunch break. A ringing bell in the factory, rather than exhaustion of a laborer, determined when to go home from work. For Welzer (2011),

this indicates that time efficiency has its roots in early capitalist society. He outlines that pre-capitalist societies planned their work according to natural conditions, while the industrial worker and capitalist were quantifying time like a precious commodity; a commodity that is tradable, utilizable and accumulable, and thus became a mental condition for pursuing economic growth. Before "time", natural conditions and human demand for products were limiting the production and industrial output of factories. With the emergence of time, the efficient and continuous production created increased demand (Welzer, 2011). This cycle, within neoclassical economics known as Say´s law, is one of the grounding aspects of economic growth (Baumol, 1999) and laid the foundation for contemporary consumer cultures.

The organizations of the 21st century certainly do not live in similar conditions as the industrial age. Time has changed, or, as Welzer (2011) and Glezos (2014) put it, accelerated. Both scholars ground the argument for Rosa (2015) who observes that modernity has accelerated the pace of all aspects of life. This, according to Rosa (2015), is not only affecting subjects of capitalist production, but virtually all individuals and their various facets of life. Glezos (2014) picks up this aspect, too: "And what is more, this seems to hold across the globe. (...), now even those with the most effective access to futuristic technologies seem to have not much greater purchase on events (which is not to say that their experience of it is at all the same). This is true in seemingly every facet of our lives: personal, political, economic, and cultural." (Glezos, 2014, p. 149). This thesis assumes a similar ontological angle as Rosa (2015, p.9): "The rhythm, speed, duration and sequence of our activities and practices are almost never determined by us as individuals but rather almost always prescribed by the temporal patterns and synchronization requirements of society." In other words: No matter what activity one is pursuing, the speed of society that surrounds oneself will be reflected onto the busyness and pace of that activity. My thesis will test this argument on post-capitalist organizations who, in theory, could reject the Social Acceleration of time as part of the capitalist way of life, but might

not be able to escape it due to the influence of a larger social system in which they are embedded in (Von Jorck & Gebauer, 2015).

While Rosa (2015) provides a rather philosophical account, evidence for Social Acceleration is wide-ranging, and thus applicable to post-capitalist organizations. To name a few, the internet, velocity of public transport, and tele-communications have all either accelerated our lives or become faster themselves. For instance, the average global broadband internet speed became roughly 50,000 times faster between 1990 and 2017, with an annual increase of 50% (i.e., download/upload speed) (Akamai, 2017). Similarly, we send more messages than ever before, make more phone calls than ever before (Akamai 2017), but also organize protests faster than ever before (Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). In fact, the velocity of how fast information can spread on social media seems to be an essential factor for the success of protests (Boulianne et al., 2020), which are often organized by post-capitalist minded individuals. The "technological acceleration" described here might look irrelevant for the research question. However, it is relevant, as technological acceleration, according to Rosa (2005a), engages in a mutually reinforcing relationship with the target variable (i.e. Social Acceleration): The drive to live busier lives can also explain our need to speed up technological processes. In alignment with Social Acceleration theory, speed therefore seems to play a vital role for both economic entities and other types of organizations (e.g., post-capitalist organizations).

The theory of Social Acceleration has also been criticized, and some researchers have gathered evidence that life is not speeding up (Lamote de Grignon Pérez et al., 2019a; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2018). I acknowledge these findings, but would point out that studies critical towards a theory of Social Acceleration have typically measured a sped up life using quantitative data, such as "time spent asleep" or "the number of events happening per day" (Lamote de Grignon Pérez et al., 2019b). Robinson and Godbey (1999) and Garhammer (1999)

measure their concept of Social Acceleration by time-density (actions per day, and time spent on these actions).

Hsu (2014) enriches this debate by utilizing hours of sleep as an indicator for Social Acceleration. His argument of sleep perceived as lost time in our fast-pace culture could be applicable to post-capitalist organizations for three reasons. First, sleep is a universal phenomenon and every single human being on earth needs sleep. This makes a good indicator for my research question whether Social Acceleration is a universal phenomenon that even affects post-capitalist organizations. Secondly, it addresses Social Acceleration on the individual level. Since organizations consists of humans who steer and manage it, this could be a suitable metric. Thirdly, post-capitalist organizations might need to prove and justify their existence and counter-hegemonic motivation, which could make them subject to restlessness. The night might be seen as lost time in which capitalism reinforces itself in societal structures[5], while post-capitalist work is put to a stop. However, a feeling that life is rushed is a subjective perception, rather than a set-in-stone translation into "hours spent in bed" (Sullivan & Gershuny, 2018). This aligns with Robinson and Godbey´s (1999) findings that actual time devoted to an activity is significantly different to perceived time.

There has thus been a debate on how Social Acceleration (SA) might be conceptualized and indicated as empirical evidence. I would like to complement the more quantitative approch by Hsu (2014) with an attempt to add a more subjective measure for SA like perception and experience of time in everyday life. According to Rosa (2005, pp. 216), even perceived time might not be the ideal measure, as perception of time is always influenced by how fast everything around you accelerates. The rising issue regarding SA is rather that individuals feel forced to adapt to the accelerated pace of life around them (Rosa,

[5] For an early account of the slepless capitalist machine, I recommend William Safire´s essay "We Never Sleep", published in the *New York Times* in 1999. URL: https://www.nytimes.com/1999/05/31/opinion/essay-we-never-sleep.html

2005a). What Rosa calls *Beschleunigungszwang* (literally *Acceleration Force*) is the stressful notion that people would overtake you if you do not adapt to the fast pace of the world. This is highly applicable to post-capitalist organizations as they exist as small boats surrounded by the capitalist ocean. If they do not adapt to the intensity of the ocean, they will drown. Rosa (2015) therefore calls for examining a *Vokabular des Müssens* (literally Vocabulary of Force), which consists of passive wordings, justifications of time use, and connotations that one must accelerate. For this thesis, it was decided to not follow a single metric but instead ask open-ended subjective questions of time perception and organizational pace while having an open ear for the themes of sleep and the *Vokabular des Müssens*.

3.2.2 The Need to Progress

Progress is a human-centered term that can have a simple definition: if you have a goal in space and you walk one meter towards your goal, you are making progress. Similarly, time progresses with every second that is passing by (although time might not have a precise goal to progress towards). These simple conceptualizations of progress indicate progress conditions a notion of the future being significantly different than the present, and us performing as agents for change that have the capacity to approach our goals and change the status quo. Progress creates dynamics, rather than statics. However, progress can be understood as more than a simple progression in time and space. Instead, progress should be understood as a deep concept that strongly influences human decision-making: it is temporary, needs a reference, but maintains our drive to create and pursue goals. In fact, it might not only maintain this drive, but be this drive (Wagner, 2016).

To the best of our knowledge, human have always made some form of progress. We have evolved from Neanderthals to highly intelligent creatures that are able to think in complex, abstract and imaginative ways. The Darwinian process itself can be understood as a synonym for progress, which might not make it subject to capitalist societies only (Wagner,

2016). Similarly, other scholars argue that progress is an invention of the Enlightenment period, which gave way for human reason rather than spiritual determinism (Koselleck, 1988). What has changed during the Capitalist Age is that progress became an imperative itself and society started to raise expectations of more and better progress. Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) assert that the Enlightenment might have been the first period in which humans questioned and re-created the world as they wanted to, and that the alliance of this mind-set with capitalism created the modern addiction to progress. Welzer (2011) links the notion of progress to "Economic Man", a character that diligently records his own development by the precise means of accounting, testing and analyzing, in order to establish metrics from which you could improve. "Economic Man" is driven by meticulous needs to self-improve, and Welzer (2011) argues, in line with Max Weber, that the first account of such an economic operator can be traced back to the emergence of capitalism: competitive markets and Taylorism created the need to outperform potential competitors. In turn, the excessive fetishization of an ever-progressing company accelerated after World War II, along with the political prioritization of economic growth (Vogl, 2009; Welzer, 2011). Economic capitalism did not invent the need to progress, but it has strongly impinged its idea of progress into the modern mind-set. Therefore, it does not seem implausible that mid-20th century thinkers called progress a religious undertaking (Löwith, 1960).

This "religious undertaking" has reached most parts of modern society. According to Tuan (2003), Taoism is the only school of thought that does not evaluate progress as inherently good. However, it is crucial to understand that progress as described above should not be solely equated with material or economic progress. The fact that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) became the prioritized progress indicator is a fallacy itself (Mastini et al., 2021; Sacks et al., 2012), and does not mean that progress is an economic undertaking only. Wagner (2016) acknowledges this and describes different forms of progress: in the economic realm, economic

growth became the flagship project of global political economies; scientific progress calls for a betterment in the world of science and experimentation; social progress is a political agenda that aims for improved living conditions of citizens. The power and influence of our drive to progress therefore shows multiple facets, reflecting how multiple and diverse actors in our society desire progress. As human progress, generally speaking, is assumed to have made our lives better over the last 200 years (Pinker, 2018), progress critics are scarce, too. This is one more reason to ask whether progress realism applies to post-capitalist actors.

This investigation focuses on whether progress is a ubiquitous component, even for post-capitalist organizations. Wagner´s (2016) examination of different type of progress serves as first evidence for this, as even social and environmental organizations are serving the idea of progress. There might be further indications that post-capitalist thinkers also embrace the value of progress. For example, Karl Marx wrote on progress as something utopian, yet desirable (Lucaks, 1972). If you ask an activist, why they are attending a protest, they likely respond they want to change the world (Herbert, 2021). While this is a very broad statement itself, it advocates the idea that one can change the world for the better, thus inducing human progress. Hannah Arendt argues the core idea of human progress is to see the world as an object rather than life itself. Her initial hypothesis was rooted in the idea of space travel: humans started to see earth as an object that we can distance ourselves from. I perceive the activist (and thus often post-capitalist enthusiasts) to be such a space traveler. He/she is motivated to change the world as if they are the agents of transformation. This makes a statement like “I want to change the world” a deliberated intervention into the course of nature, while perceiving the world as a malleable place that one is able to modify as one wishes. It is acknowledged that the goal of most activists´ is to maintain humanity and the planet. They are interested in doing good. However, if we follow Arendt´s line of thinking, the root thinking behind activists´ action resembles the idea of human progress, and their personal agency to achieve this.

Furthermore, Welzer´s (2011) "Economic Man" might not just be economic. The current flood of quantification measures within the NGO landscape and other not-for profit organizations might be another case for progress dependency in post-capitalist agendas. Social organizations that are not only subject to making profit are currently emerging and transforming (Dacin et al., 2011) and it becomes increasingly important to measure one´s performance for doing good in the world[6]: such a measure can facilitate funding, increase employee identity with the organization and could describe in which direction the organization is developing (Grimes, 2010; Rawhouser et al., 2019). Only a few scholars have questioned the principle of quantification for progress, and if so, only as a matter of too impulsive decision-making, i.e. that measures should be implemented carefully in relation to resources available in the organization (Wu et al., 2010). Such criticism does not ever contest the very idea of progress. The notion of becoming more precise and empirical has also led to the prevalence of social impact assessments, even though research is still debating whether impact can be measured, after all (Rawhouser et al., 2019). In a different book, Welzer (2013) describes how, with the example of Greenpeace, environmental NGOs are more and more evaluated by their success and progress towards environmental protection – which has led to riskier actions carried out by Greenpeace members. Whether you call it progress or impact: the need for social organizations to illustrate their "success" seems to be evident.

3.2.3 Work Non-Stop

Welzer (2011) also emphasized that the growth ideology has shaped a new understanding of our idea of work. This manifests in workers never stopping thinking about their work, according to Welzer (2011).

[6] There is a philosophical discussion around the idea of Effective Altruism, the practice of doing the most good with the least effort.

In today´s normative 38-hour-week humans spend a third of their lifetime on work. Concretely, by assuming a 40-year work life starting with the age of 25, full-time employees spend 40 (years) *48 (average working weeks per year in a European country[7]) *38 (hours per week) = 72960 hours on work. Obviously, this metric should not be generalized, and many individuals might work much less, while others might work significantly more. However, while working hours have continuously decreased until recently (Messenger, 2004), more individuals work, which overall increases the total working hours spent by humans (Schor, 2008). This is relevant as working hours have thus not only increased for a handful of Wall Street employees, but for a wide range of individuals. Welzer (2011) expands this sociological phenomenon by indirectly questioning working hours as the metric that determines how much individuals work. He asserts that work is rarely finished once the employee leaves the workplace. Instead, Welzer (2011) observes how many individuals think already about the next day of work, perhaps the next task ahead, without having finished their current step. Each working step is merely functioning as a precursor to an endless chain of expansive activities, according to him.

This, supposedly, has consequences for how work and the organization are perceived by workers: rather than existing in the moment, individuals think of their work as an opus[8], not a burden. It only exists for a future in which the next task is already ahead, as Welzer (2011) describes. This phenomenon is underpinned by recent policy-making, such as Zero-Hour contracts in the United Kingdom, where individuals receive the "benefit" of being able to work from wherever and whenever they wish to. A similar phenomenon exists in the form of the post-Fordist *Gig Economy* across the globe (Kuhn, 2016). The term is derived from the music industry and their gig-like economic structures: musicians must think from gig to gig, which

[7] For instance, in Germany full-time employees have a right to minimum 20 vacation days per annum
[8] By opus, it is assumed, Welzer (2011) refers to an act that one is incessantly committed to and which is viewed as highly important by its creator.

necessitates them thinking about the gig ahead before finishing the current performance. Similarly, recent models like trust-based working hours have been introduced. Trust-based working hours do not regulate working hours but rather check an employee´s output, no matter how many hours they spend on it. While this can lead to more innovative ideas inside an organization (Godart et al., 2017), the freedom to work whenever you want is often linked to the realization that work never ends (Plessner, 2005).

I am applying this notion of a never-finished job to post-capitalist organizations for two reasons. One is the evidence for burn-out and fatigue in many activists who often engage in unpaid engagement next to their paid jobs (Gorski, 2015). Oftentimes, they do not get a break but rather need to use any free minute for fatiguing advocacy, lobbying and (most importantly) organizing (Gorski, 2019; Gorski & Chen, 2015). Just as activists aim to crack open the anomalies of the current capitalist system, post-capitalist organizations aim to create counter-hegemonic spaces that are similarly challenging to establish. Secondly, their pioneering work brings about new economic structures and models, which are challenging, exciting, and innovative in many ways. Being a pioneer for the common good might therefore create a higher goal that occupies most of an individual´s thinking.

Contrary to the non-stop working mentality, post-growth scholars have engaged with policies centering on reduced working hours or universal basic services. These ideas come from the inner motivation to not place work at the core of an individual´s life, which is argued to lead to social well-being and less consumption (Kallis et al., 2013b).

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

The primary question asked in this paper is to what extent (if, at all) post-capitalist organizations are able to overcome mental infrastructures of growth. Components that are of relevance for the theory are Social Acceleration, the need to progress and the flexible non-stop working biography. As outlined above, the theoretical framework by Welzer (2011) is a subjective essay and societal phenomenon, which have been supported by macro-economic data. Translating this notion into the organizational level requires more in-depth data. This thesis therefore approaches the research questions empirically, with an exploratory, qualitative research design.

The exploratory research design is justified by the subjectivity inherent within the factors in question. Social Acceleration and the flexible non-stop working personality are highly subjective ways of perceiving the world, and understanding them requires the interviewee to express themselves however they want (Rosa, 2013). The need to progress, and its contestations too, are not based on rigorous theoretical foundations which urges the research design to be exploratory. Welzer´s theoretical framework appears in essay form and does not render any scientific data, which requires this thesis to build theory bottom-up.

4.2 Data Collection

A qualitative approach to gathering data was pursued. Interviews were semi-structured, with an interview guide that explores a set of questions (see Chapter 4.3). Eight participants from five organizations were interviewed, out of which four organizations are based in Berlin and one in Budapest. The organizations in Berlin all belong to a larger co-operative called *Haus der Materialisierung* (HdM*)* (see Chapter 4.2.1). Two interviewees were female and six were male, ranging from 25 to approximately 50 years of age. All organizations

have less than ten team members and offer more than one activity, often merging a service (e.g. preserving material resources) with activism and awareness raising. While it was targeted to interview a long-term involved individual responsible for strategic questions inside each organization, one person doing a voluntary service (*Bundesfreiwilligendienst*) was interviewed in addition to the founder of the organization, who has also set up the *Haus der Materialisierung*. Two interviews were conducted with the two founders of the respective organizations.

Being aware that parts of the organizational landscape within the city of Berlin are becoming more post-capitalist, orientated towards social needs rather than economic accumulation, triggers the choice of looking for organizations in the city of Berlin[9]. The researcher's local knowledge and network within the city led *Haus der Materialisierung* (literally House of Materialization), which is a popular destination among Berlin-residents which are interested in witnessing and practicing alternative economics. The specific selection of organizations was then based on their web descriptions and contrasted to features of a post-capitalist organization. The organization in Budapest was found in a similar fashion but stood out as it calls itself degrowth advocate, which makes it a relevant case for this study. Furthermore, the organization in Budapest helped to diversify the sample and limited the influence of confounding variables like place and culture. The sample for this study can thus be referred to as convenient sample. Participants were contacted via e-mail with an invitation to participate in a study about organizational processes and values, giving insights into the field of interest without disclosing too much information about the research question and aim. The interviews were partially conducted face-to-face and partially via video call as the current COVID-19 pandemic did not always allow me to meet interviewees in person. Face-to-face interviews were arranged inside the organizations to allow the interviewee to feel comfortable.

[9] For example, the Council Kreuzberg-Friedichshain set out a vision of sustainable prosperity and well-being economy here: https://www.berlin.de/lokalbau-fk/strategie/leitbild/

The length of the interview was targeted to 60 minutes, which most interviews extended up to 90 minutes. Whenever eased COVID restrictions made it possible for the post-capitalist organizations to run their normal operations, the researcher integrated elements of an observational qualitative method, especially with regards to the first variable (i.e. Social Acceleration) which is process orientated. Additionally, a monthly plenum discussion among a large fragment of the candidates (who all belong to one co-operative, see section below) was joined via the online video platform Zoom. This complemented the data collection and helped me to immerse myself better into the organizational habitus. Fieldnotes were taken during this plenum. Data was collected and interpreted by the researcher whose aim it is to act as objective as possible. The Berlin-based organizations were interviewed and transcribed in German. Back-to-Back translation is used for the analysis and interpretation of the data. While the researcher visited some of the organizations, no personal affiliations are prevalent that could significantly affect how data is collected and interpreted. Similarly, an ethical agreement was signed with the Ethical Committee of the Central European University prior to any interview, signaling that participants would be treated anonymously and confidentially in alignment with the university´s ethical guidelines. This means the interviewees will be presented with numbers, instead of providing their full names and descriptions (see Chapter 5).

4.2.1 The Case Haus der Materialisierung

The *Haus der Materialisierung* (HdM) is a space hosting a dozen of organizations, initiatives and social entrepreneurs centered around the notion of ecological sustainability and sufficient resource use. It is part of the larger *Haus der Statistik* (HdS), which is a community-centered co-operation located in the former GDR department of statistical operations. The whole structure emerged in 2015 out of an art installation criticizing the recent

gentrification and loss of artistic space in Berlin[10]. The aim of HdM is creating an alternative economic infrastructure using material in experimental ways, thus welcoming Repair-Cafes, Open Workshops, Maker Spaces and Sharing Platforms (Haus der Statistik, 2021). Quoting from the website HdM makes it possible for citizens to become part of a "future-orientated and ecologically just future" (Haus der Materialisierung, 2021). Another important feature is that organizations inside HdM are engaging in commoning space, machines and objects. This supported the decision to conduct interviews in this space, as commoning, i.e. making an entity freely accessible for the public good, is an essential part of the post-capitalist, as well as degrowth agenda (Chatterton, 2016; Gibson-Graham, 2008; Kostakis et al., 2018).

Five out of the six interviewees are part of HdM, which means they already align with the above-mentioned principles. Thus, the organizations need to be, at least to a certain degree, post-capitalist, by not centering their core operations toward profit-making but supporting the local community and their needs. Secondly, the organizations are all called pioneering initiatives rather than established companies. They have small teams as well as flat hierarchies which illustrate that the classic capitalist employer-employee hierarchy might not be existent inside HdM. However, to make sure the interviewees are technically post-capitalist, questions related to profit and labor relations were integrated at the start of the interview.

[10] An artist collective called Allianz bedrohter Berliner Atelierhäuser (AbBA) placed a huge poster on the frontwall of the building claiming: "Here we will build spaces for Berlin: culture, art and social affairs". This has initiated an urban dialogue on the space involving city council, city senate and various civic organizations (Haus der Statistik, 2021).

Figure 2. S27. 2020. Inside Haus der Materialisierung. Retrieved from: https://www.s27.de/2020/09/01/festakt-haus-der-materialisierung-16-9-16-uhr/

4.3 Materials

4.3.1 Interview Guide

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using the attached interview guide (see Appendix A). The interview was recorded with a recording device. Field notes were taken to record observations and contextual interpretations of the organization´s operations. They were digitalized as comments after initial transcription of the interviews via the software Bluemix, which, frankly, did a poor job and required the researcher to do a second round of manual transcribing.

The interview guide firstly covered a section on the organization´s operations and goals. These included to what extent money is involved and what employer-employee relations are at hand. Secondly, the interview guide addresses the three variables following the theoretical framework. The organization was asked to describe time-management and how they interpret time; then, to what extent they are motivated to progress and how they define progress; and finally, whether informal working hours exist and how often they think and do work outside

formal working hours (see Appendix A for the entire interview guide). Since interviews were semi-structured, special attention was given to emerging themes and recurring comments. Each interview unfolded in unique directions outside the interview guide, to which the researcher has given adequate time to discuss.

4.4 Analytical Approach

After transcription, the data was inserted into the qualitative data software *MAXQDA Version 2020*, where a mixed analytical approach was pursued, meaning that a deductive codebook was created beforehand and emerging themes were inducted from the data. The deductive codebook was guided by the research questions and theoretical framework, and functions as a starting point for analysis, with the expectation that a variety of opinions and statements would address these. The codebook was thus, in this case, a set of categories to which codes were added based on the data. Specifically, the deducted code categories were *Money, Labor Relations, Time, Progress* and *Work*. In the process of coding, codes were then created based on interview statements. To exemplify this, within the pre-created category of progress, a first statement on progress could address the importance of improving the organization´s social impact. A code was created for such a statement (i.e. Social Impact) and if other statements relate to this code, they were added to it.

Money and *Labor Relations* belong to the wider category *Post-Capitalism*. This category was generated to check on the post-capitalist features according to the literature outlined in the theory section of this dissertation. Memos were assigned to each of the categories. Memos are definitions that help the researcher and reader understand a code. Memos can integrate definitions, examples and origins of the code (Mihas, 2019) (for the preliminary codebook including memos, see Appendix B). The contextual unit of each code, i.e. the chunk of text making a code, was at least the size of a phrase, but usually a sentence-like structure or paragraph. The reason for such a mixed-method approach is that the theoretical framework by

Welzer (2011) frames mental growth infrastructures as omnipresent. This research kept the openness to challenging evidence for this framework, placing importance on inductive reasoning. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that this analysis, unlike quantitative approaches, is not aimed to make clear distinctions between the organizations. The open-ended, inductive approach rather sought out themes that organizations valued as important. The next chapter will examine what participants have reported and present the various codes that emerged from the data.

5. Analysis and Findings

The main objective of the analysis is to test whether a) there is empirical support of *Mental Growth Infrastructures* in a post-capitalist context, thus providing insights for my research question whether capitalism can be overcome mentally; and b) inductive coding might allow novel infrastructures to emerge which could expand and/or challenge the framework. I have therefore structured my analysis into three parts. Firstly, it will be clarified how post-capitalist the interviewees are and how they evaluate money and labor relations in the organizational context and agenda. While the organizations for this study were, a priori, chosen precisely because they challenge the motive of profit and hierarchical labor relations (the two components of post-capitalism, see Chapter 2.3), deeper insights and slight limitations of such a conceptualization need to precede the part of the analysis addressing the grand research question of "How embedded are post-capitalist organizations in mental growth infrastructures?". It helps to know how post-capitalist these organizations are with regards to profit and labor relations, before making any claim on their mental infrastructures. The second part then provides an inductive analysis of the theoretical framework. This means emerging (sub)codes will be presented and put into perspective with the theoretical framework. Thirdly, due to the inductive emphasis of this study, novel components of a mental infrastructure will be examined and potentially added to the framework. As participants were treated anonymously, they will be presented with numerical numbers. Interviewees 1 and 2 belong to Organization 1, while Interviewee 2 is also responsible for strategic coordination within HdM; Interviewees 3 and 4 belong to Organization 2; Interviewee 5 is member of Organization 3; Interviewees 6 and 7 manage Organization 4; and Interviewee 8 is a member of Organization 5.

5.1 Post-Capitalism

5.1.1 Money

Generally, the participating organizations are not pursuing the accumulation of profit as a main motive. While money is somehow involved in all of the organizations´ operations, it is not the reason why these organizations are doing their work. For instance, Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) claims that their philosophy is to modify "the larger system of consumerism which is a long process" and profit is a short-sighted motive for such an endeavor. Instead, it is seen as a "symbolic value" (Interviewee 1, Organization 1) to cover one´s basic expenses. "Basic costs are something that no organization can dodge; and part of those basic costs are monetary." (Interviewee 2, Organization 1) Similarly, two organizations claimed that any profit will directly be re-directed into tools that can help to smooth organizational operations or to prepare community events. Within this agnosticism towards profit lies the fact, that most organizational members claim to have a fulfilling, post-materialist lifestyle themselves: "I mainly need to pay rent and have food in the refrigerator. So, that´s it" (Interviewee 3, Organization 2). "I have lived a lifestyle without extra financial stability by choice (…) All I ever wanted to do was work with people and a community I care about, doing something that I can like and identify with. Not having this extra financial security was a strategic choice." (Interviewee 5, Organization 3).

While some organizations, therefore, only pursue money to cover one´s basic expenses, another emerging theme was non-monetized work and the development of an organization that operates independently from money. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) explicates that this is one of the core strengths of their organization: "One of our strengths is not being reliant on a certain amount of stable income to make the thing go forward (…) We do it voluntarily and have other jobs that help us acquire a livelihood. (…) This is very important because it means we are not an organization that can only exist from year to year when it has a budget." Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) stresses the innovative character of the *Haus der*

Materialisierung which helps their organization to be partially money-independent, because "we can pay our rent here in the form of labor and contributions to the house".

The only evidence that might show that profit plays a larger role is when the organizations envision how they can sustain themselves in the long run. For instance, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) said that they eventually aim to found an enterprise rather than maintain a project space. He additionally said that this might be difficult as their organizational model is not targeted toward making much profit. Similarly, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) uses vocabulary like "cashcows", i.e. products that are making most money, to emphasize costs can be covered faster with these products. She also emphasized that efficient economic thinking and "an understanding of micro-economic processes" can facilitate sustainability of the organization.

Lastly, a recurring theme was the topic of funding. The majority of the organizations receive funding for their work, especially the ones in HDM. Funding comes from public institutions like the state or city council, or from non-governmental actors like foundations. Several organizations have received funding for several years from multiple funders. In the case of organization 2, they are people-funded by its members, too. While all organization gave the impression that they are glad to receive funding, doubts arose about the reporting and requirements for funding, which I will pay more attention to in the Progress section. As Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) mentioned, funding is not only helpful for financial security, but a nice symbol for the organization to know that the public trusts and believes in what their organization is doing, further emphasizing that money does only play a subordinate role for the interviewees.

5.1.2 Labor

All of the organizations work in rather small core teams, although many of them have a large net of helping hands and volunteers that occasionally help them at events or other operations. However, the core organizational team usually consists of three to six people. When having an interview with more than one member of the organization, as was the case with Organization 2 and 4, it was very clear that team members have a respectful, relaxed, friendship-like relationship to each other. Most of the organizations stressed the fact that they operate with flat hierarchies (Interviewee 5, Organization 3: "It is important to note that our collective consists of a variety of individuals who have their own individual voice. We operate as a self-organized collective (…) Decisions are made together, so I can´t talk for everyone" ; Interviewee 3, Organization 2: "The idea is that members can shape the organization (…) Our organization is a commons." ; Interviewee 6, Organization 4: "If I compare ourselves to other work places it is different. Instead of having a boss who says what I have to do, I can define my own tasks and solutions."). Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) functions as a slight outsider, as she emphasized that she has the last word in decision-making processes, although she also needs the ideas and input from others. While there is some form of wage being paid to the team members, there is a variety of other wage models integrated in the organizations. As mentioned above, some pay for their rent with labor, while Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) explained that post-capitalist organizations tend to hire individuals on a voluntary basis, Similarly, Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) integrates freelance workers a lot, who are informally part of the organization but formally not bound to it.

Furthermore, all of the organizations think the 9 to 5 wage-labor model is outdated and have started experimenting with alternatives to this. Interviewee 7 (Organization 4), for instance, described how he got fired in the film industry because he was not made for the formal 9-5 labor market and was "for a long time disappointed by the work landscape". This emphasizes another crucial point that Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) made. Interviewee 8 hires

helpers who are not employable in other businesses. She calls it “hiring humans from the secondary labor market”, by which she means socially disadvantaged individuals who could not get a job in more traditional enterprises. Her organization gives these individuals a chance to stabilize their lives by finding meaningful activities.

All in all, it can be confirmed that all organizations are technically post-capitalist in the sense that they neither aim to accumulate profits, nor establish hierarchical wage-labor relations in which an employer “owns” the worker. Instead, money tends to play a subordinate role. Similarly, the organizations show flat working hierarchies, providing autonomy to their members, who partially shape and own the organization as a commons. While some form of wage labor cannot completely be eliminated, innovative forms of hiring individuals are experimented with.

5.2 Mental Infrastructures: Time, Progress and Work

5.2.1 Time

Contrary to what Welzer (2011) and Rosa (2013) claim, the organizations show very diverging evidence in terms of how acceleratedly they operate. The organizations have somewhat elements of acceleration as well as its opposite, deceleration, the slowing down of life events. The following section will explicate how these two codes manifest in interviewees´ statements.

5.2.1.1 Acceleration

What and How of Acceleration. A drive for a fast pace of organizational processes can be found in rather implicit statements made by the organizations and their underlying assumptions, rather than in the form of clear arguments in favor of acceleration. This manifests in an implicit approval of time efficiency and quick operations, for instance, when “within a few minutes we can write to one of our partners ´We need a ladder´ and this will happen.” (Interviewee 5, Organization 3). A recurring phrase for Interviewee 5 is that his organization is

"efficient" in "getting things done", not just including the organizational operations but also "social time" and "planning time". It seems like time efficiency is an important part in their fast-pace environment.

Based on the field notes, similar evidence was found. For instance, the interview with Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) felt very rushed and accelerated, and previous coordination for finding a suitable day for the interview was rather tricky due to a busy schedule. However, also during the interview I was reminded that I "have 6 minutes left so that you (Me, Julian) should ask the remaining questions that are of interest for you." At the end of the interview, I was told it is okay we have "exceeded the interview time, because I was also 2 minutes late.", placing high importance on precise timings similar to how Welzer (2011) describes obsessive timings of trains in early capitalist society. Every second counts, and losing one means replacing it somewhere else; or alternatively, prolonging the interview.

Conversely, Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) calls some of their operations "sluggish". After questioning what this term would mean, he replies "it takes a lot of time until we reach our goals and establish some form of structure (…) Other companies are managing this better. If we would not need to rethink everything, we would be much faster". Such negative vocabulary toward deceleration is not seldom: "The pace we are capable of right now is restricted through our human capacity" (Interviewee 5, Organization 3). "Restricted" does imply the potential is not exhausted yet; the mind is willing to push further but other factors are keeping this drive unfulfilled. Furthermore, Interviewee 5 was afraid that people might criticize his organization for "having a slow trajectory and impact", although he identifies the slowness as a conscious choice (see Deceleration section).

Apart from more implicit approvals of acceleration, there are other themes that are of relevance. One is the recurring topic of *stress*. Sometimes, the members of the organizations are feeling stressed and exhausted, mostly in relation to deadlines, requirements

for external partners or because post-capitalist work demands so much time and energy: “When commons infrastructures are being developed there is first a lot of chaos, many things are happening and it is not too relaxing” is how Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) perceives stressful periods, while also having “some inner time pressure to get going”. Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) believes “stress and overload take place when grant givers expect to participate in networking and write reports”, connecting acceleration with the funding policies of the German bureaucracy.

Thirdly, *hybrid forms of acceleration* emerge from the interviews. While Rosa (2015) would argue acceleration is also a subjective drive to become more efficient and faster, and intentional, a new form of fast pace can be derived from my data. A lot of the organizations operate really fast without aiming to do so, or they are even explicitly opposed to it. Interviewee 7 (Organization 4) makes clear that “we do not stress ourselves, but naturally become faster and faster.”, getting used to processes which, by nature, take less time after practicing and repeating them. This is complemented by Interviewee 6 (Organization 4), who liked to tell the story of a completely demolished bike from a customer that no other company would have accepted or fixed. However, this customer could leave their place after 30 minutes because he is naturally super quick in fixing things, while staying relaxed: “It was probably the fastest bike operation that one has ever seen in Germany.” Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) shares similar experiences. He says that March until June and October are the busiest times for his organization. They get high yields and have much labor that has to be done. It is not their intention to work fast during these periods, but instead they adhere to the cycle of nature. Aligning their work with that cycle, or as Interviewee 5 calls it “ebb and flow of the season” urges occasional periods of “crazy pace of working activity”. It does sound very much like a flow experience that some of the organizations are going through. They immerse themselves so much into the work they are doing, leading to high-pace operations, while not having the intention to accelerate, after all.

Roots of Acceleration. In order to deepen an understanding of Social Acceleration among the organizations, potential root causes for high-pace processes were identified. As touched upon above, a clear root cause seems to be *external entities that demand faster operations*. Who or what these entities are and how they are pressuring the organizations varies widely. If one of the organizations engages in partnerships with other enterprises that are more economically driven and thus more capitalistic, then those create time pressure for the organizations that I have interviewed: "Sometimes there are large events taking place after which we can collect and re-use the material. At some point they realize that everything there will be trash in a few days. Then they call us and expect us to collect all their material within a day or two." Similarly, some of the organizations got rushed by "customers who do not have time" (Interviewee 8, Organization 5), and expect their product to be fixed immediately. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) also thinks that external personal changes, like becoming a parent, do influence time management in the organization. He completely acknowledges that families have much more priority compared to the organization, but also stresses that other members then need to put more work and time into the organization. Lastly, another external factor is an event or appointment for the organization. If a certain, important date is approaching (e.g. a workshop at a festival), then members need to get things done on time as time cannot be created for these occasions. "For external appointments, we just need to hurry. There is no way around it. Perhaps, we even clean…" (Interviewee 6, Organization 4). What becomes quite clear from examining the statements is that contact with the capitalist economy is linked to an accelerated pace of operating, whether through business partners, customers or external events.

Additionally, it should be highlighted that the *natural cycles of time* interact with the organizations´ respective pace of operating. This has been the case for Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) when the seasons require him to have a "crazy work pace". Similarly, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) makes it clear that material biologically degrades over time,

especially when it has been used for high-end constructions or other environments. Such natural degradation of material requires her organization to not stall and store material in her organization for too long (although it was not asked what "long" actually means). This contrasts with statements from other organizations, who virtually deny the existence of time (see *Deceleration* section below). I would personally distinguish external factors like business partnerships to the inevitable degradation of material or cycle of nature, which are certainly no capitalist factors. However, they are still important to mention as they indicate that Social Acceleration is not fully socially constructed.

While the aforementioned factors are all external, also some internal factors play a role for an accelerated pace of operating. These are mainly the *lack of resources and funding*. According to Interviewee 2 (Organization 1), the fact that "members are not paid sufficiently requires good, efficient time management" because "members therefore have other projects and activities they are pursuing" which she attributes to limited funding available for her organization: "Members have to do other things that bring them an additional income". This aligns with the experiences of Organization 2 whose interviewee had a rather busy life, too, because his organizational activities are designed to exist independently from funding. Limited funding also means that no experts can be hired for specific tasks. Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) has experienced a situation in which she had to do many different activities (for which she did not have any training) because she could not afford to pay any skilled workers. The situation then perpetuated into a vicious acceleration cycle of stress, pressure and fatigue.

Implications. Lastly, moving from the sources for Social Acceleration to the implications of it, brings me to a quote that could be relevant for the subsequent discussions of this paper: "When we started six years ago we were not on the city´s radar. Our track work of activities has given us a reputation which is recognized in the city in which we are operating. We are recognized as giving valuable input to the city in which we are having an impact."

(Interviewee 5, Organization 3). I pick this quote as I see a very crucial implication of an accelerated pace of life here, similar to arguments compiled by Rosa (2015). Due to an accelerated pace of life in society generally, organizations that adopt to this fast-pace reality (or possibly accelerate even further) are being recognized by larger institutions. Organization 2 is receiving respect by the city because it can survive in an accelerated world. There might be similar implications for organization 1, which seems to rush through time more than the other organizations based on the evidence of this study. This organization is also the only one that has managed to create several locations for its organization, thus having increased its impact. Mentioning impact, Interviewee 5 indicates this might be the underlying motivation behind adapting to the accelerated world. Motivated to have an impact on the local environment, his organization is working fast and hard, and is being respected by the city for this.

5.2.1.2 Deceleration

The evidence for deceleration is, at least, as prevalent as the evidence for acceleration. It manifests in various forms. The codes emerged in the same structure as above, starting with the evidence for a decelerated pace of operating, followed by the root causes and its implications.

What and How of Deceleration. Firstly, it is very clear that some members have integrated *deceleration as a core component of their organizational model.* They do not just aim to slow down their operations, but instead build and center their operations around the notion of deceleration. Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) even calls it “their philosophy”. Such a notion of deceleration is thus found in many activities of the organizations. For instance, Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) emphasizes that she is one of the only persons in Berlin that would accept a completely demolished, “out-worn coat and put the diligence and time into a piece that would be ignored and seen as trash by others”. She also positions her organization very clearly on the other spectrum of fast fashion, the sector she is working in: “We are

completely against it, rather the opposite. We are even preserving pieces that are dirty and ripped, because the people that come here are also looking for these (…) Otherwise it takes up to 30 hours to make a piece usable again, make it look good." Embracing deceleration as a method to distinguish oneself from more traditional organizations is a recurring topic. Also Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) emphasizes this. For him, "pacing is precisely the opposite of what we try to achieve. I connect acceleration always with the old economic patterns". He not only makes a clear distinction between traditionally capitalist organizations and his one, but even states that his organization re-imagines the principles of the economy because they decelerate. "We fix things that have been in use for over 60 years and will be used for another 60 years (…) I don't care how fast and efficient it is. We want to get away from such values.", is what his colleague Interviewee 7 (Organization 4) adds to underpin Interviewee 6´s point. In contrast to how some organizations exhibit acceleration very implicitly, deceleration is explicitly framed as an organizational value. Therefore, many of the organizations, as a majority of them gives material a second life, think the consumerist lifestyle of changing one´s products (whether furniture, fashion or vehicles) very frequently is what they are working against. In order to do so, they oppose the fast-pace culture and instead adopt a decelerated way of operating.

Secondly, slightly nuanced to the first point, is the organizations´ *conscious choice of decelerating.* Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) states that they have "consciously addressed the aspect of time and pace" and aimed to create a time structure that works for all members of the organization, stressing a deliberate, democratic decision-making process behind how much time members could spend working. This is manifested in how the meetings are organized in their organization. Interviewee 4 aims to find a time balance in the frequency of meetings, in order to not demand too much time from all members of the organization. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3), while implicitly worried about being too slow (see section

above), also emphasizes that their trajectory is, again, a "conscious choice" in order to "create a lasting transition" while "not compromising our values". From a more metaphysical perspective, Interviewee 3 makes it explicit that "time is only ideology and part of our consciousness" by which he means that he aims to take conscious control over time rather than time controlling him. This can be underpinned by my personal impression that the conscious choice of decelerating requires a decelerated pace itself. In order to make the conscious decision that too much pacing and rushing are not helpful for the organization, one has to be in a mind-set that takes the time to reflect and contemplate about the organizational processes. Evidently, the organizations that act the most decelerated are also the ones that regularly take time to reflect about their decisions (which are Organizations 2 and 4).

What Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) mentioned about taking control over time could go a step further, almost indicating a *denial of time scarcity,* or *time apatheism*[11]: "Scarcity of time does not exist. There is infinite time, unlike there are limits to, for instance, sand. It is just a matter of organizing ourselves (…) Where are processes taking place in our organization? They take place in our heads." This denial of time scarcity helps his organization to decelerate (i.e. slow down) their operations as they please, emphasizing that deceleration is a question of autonomy: "This means (…) we do not have time pressure and we do not have to spur ourselves. We do our tasks as we are capable of doing them." Apatheism implies that the role and significance of time is not really cared about. While Interviewee 3 is apathic towards time and believes its creation is socially constructed, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) repeatedly states that time and pace cannot be applied to his organization and thus do not matter: "We want to do a good job. This is our foremost priority. For this, time does not play a role, at all." When addressing Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) with the question whether pace and time efficiency

[11] I derive the term *Time Apatheism* from religious theory. To be apathetically agnostic means that no knowledge can be collected that proves the existence of god, and even if it could be proven, these agnostics would not care about it. This is precisely how some participants do not care about time in my study.

play a role for her organization, her mono-syllabic, calm answer neatly sums up the theme of *time aptheism*: “Thank God it doesn´t”.

Roots of Deceleration. A few root causes for deceleration crystallized from the interviewees´ responses. Predominantly, they come from the inner desire for deceleration rather than any external influence. One is the *explicit opposition of the capitalist system*, creating a need to act radically differently than capitalist organizations which are characterized by efficiency. Organization 4 is often comparing their pace to other organizations, which they label as “fake” (Interviewee 6, Organization 4). In other organizations, it is often acknowledged and respected if “you are on the ropes” (Interviewee 7, Organization 4). According to Interviewee 7, it is completely ignored that rushing causes “stomach aches, bad moods and being impolite toward the customers”. It is the system behind such a perpetuating cycle that he thinks is the “real problem”. While working in film sets, he also got scolded for not sweating and not rushing through the day, which triggered his decision to navigate himself toward decelerated ways of working. Furthermore Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) described a situation at his old employer where one person did all the work because “this was the fastest way of doing things”. However, all others became dissatisfied because they would not learn anything new - and when the person left, “everything had to halt as nobody was able to do the tasks that he did.” Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) therefore had unfortunate firsthand experiences with ´time efficiency´ by witnessing a rebound-effect which affected the whole organization. These influenced him “to not do anything like that anymore.” Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) diligently slows down her work pace, because the fast fashion industry is destroying the planet (see in the previous paragraph). All the evidence for, and experiences with, a broken system prompt the organizations to behave conversely to this system.

A second emerging root cause for deceleration seems to be *pioneering and experimentation with new economic structures.* On the website of HdM, the organizations are

labelled as pioneers which contribute to the establishment of alternatives to the capitalist system (Haus der Materialisierung, 2021). According to the interviewees, experimentation leads to deceleration in two different ways. One is that processes are, in fact, taking longer to be completed because the organizations enter new territories and structures. Therefore, everything takes longer than in other organizations "who are embedded in established systems where the rules are clear (…) Their processes are faster" (Interviewee 1, Organization 1); "For us, structures are being re-created every day (…) goals require much more time to be reached and thus everything seems slower. It also depends on the resources that are available. It´s pioneers´ work here" (Interviewee 1, Organization 1). Interviewee 1, while wishing to accelerate more (see section above), makes the clear case that his organization has to re-think and re-arrange so many capitalist assumptions, which requires much more time. In this he sees the origin of a slow trajectory. Other organizations agree with this: "Sometimes structures need to be created. It takes time until you have a structure of working together" (Interviewee 3, Organization 2). The second way how experimentation links to deceleration is that time is *perceived* as slow. The fact that new experiences are gathered and experiments conducted every day leads to what many organizations call a steady "learning process" (Interviewee 4, Organization 2; Interviewee 1, Organization 1; Interviewee 6, Organization 4: Interviewee 3, Organization 2). Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) explicates how important it is to see everything as a learning, including how to "communicate in and outside the team (with his Organization and HDM, I suppose), or how to do stuff. Everything has to be learned.", and precisely this is the reason to "stay patient", according to him. Interviewee 6 agrees with Interviewee 4, believing that learning also means to process: "You have to experiment to get new input which then needs to be processed". It is the actual time invested, the perception of time due to a learning process, or a combination of both that links experimentation with deceleration.

Implications of Deceleration. There is one implication that participants witness if they adopt a decelerated pace in their organization. They claim to *do their work better and be happier*. Since especially Organization 2 and 4 report elements of deceleration, it is worth examining how they are affected by such pace. For Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) it is clear that "the way we are doing it here creates value", while members of Organization 2 did not stop emphasizing how free and happy they feel due to the slow pace: "We do not want to be fast. Here we have good vibes. If you do not like it, you can go and don't have to come back." "I once had a burn-out because I had to work too fast. Here, I rather focus on doing a good job. And I am doing a good job. I create better products instead of more products (…) Before I had so many things to do; now, I only focus on the organization and I am thriving here" (Interviewee 6, Organization 4).

There is a slight concern of not being perceived as "professional" (Interviewee 6, Organization 4) but this was rejected by Interviewee 7: "I also know that the people who come here completely appreciate our way of working. On google we have 5 stars and only positive references like 'These guys are relaxed while doing brilliant work'". A quick follow-up check on Google confirmed this. It is also emphasized that deceleration creates some form of justice for customers, because "we can take the time for everyone, also the ones without money", (Interviewee 6, Organization 4), thus making the services of their organization more accessible. Therefore, it seems that deceleration has overall positive benefits for the community they operate in as well as for the organizational members´ well-being.

Overall, there are ambivalent findings regarding the variable of time. Not many elements of the Acceleration of Time that match the description by Welzer (2011) were found. Some organizations showed tendencies of acceleration, but in a rather implicit fashion; speed was not their overall goal, but resulted out of natural learning processes or cycles of time. More

conversely, other organizations were very critical toward acceleration and deliberately slowed down their operations, which had overall benefits for their creativity and happiness.

5.2.2 Progress

Similar to the analytical section on time, the organizations´ ideas on progress are similarly mixed. The evidence splits their concept of progress in two parts: firstly, re-conceptualizing *progress as impact progress (doing more good better)*, and, secondly, *being very skeptical to the notion of progress.* Various themes emerge inside these two positions, which I will examine below.

5.2.2.1 Impact Progress: Doing more good better

All of the organizations are conducting work that somehow intends to make the world a better place. Interviews have often reported a dissatisfaction with the money-driven way of doing business as they witnessed at former employers. They have also complained that many other organizations are having negative impacts on the world. The organizations I interviewed recurringly report that their organizational aim is their need to have an *impact* on the world. Interviewee 5 (Organization, 4): "It is important for me to have influence beyond the academic community (…) The question is how to navigate the challenges of wanting a big impact but doing this independent from a financial budget." While emphasizing that having an impact can be achieved without money, he furthermore adds that impact is about improving livelihood and dialogue: "We want to see the positive results in our community (…) Other people might want to have an impact in a different area but for me it is working towards creating actual dialogue between university, policy makers and citizen groups."

Although many of the organizations emphasize that having an impact is nothing that could be precisely measured, the use of *metrics to illustrate impact* is still prevalent. ""On our website we show the number of members and the number of objects we saved. Then we can sometimes make a graph out of it showing the tendency of our impact. Also, with regards

to how much CO2 you have saved; for instance, sharing a drill saves 15g CO2. We visualize it so that people realize that their behavior matters for carbon emissions.", (Interviewee 3, Organization 2). While for Interviewee 3 metrics can be important to show that individual actions have an impact, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) utilizes metrics only "for external communication". For both Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 2, metrics do not function as an inner desire to meticulously improve themselves, but rather serving purpose for external stakeholders. Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) showed me their excel data on their activities and materials in the organization, which are necessary to have an overview of things but nothing more, according to her. Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) reluctantly recalled "that we sometimes make use of these tools (…). We have a digital inventory with which we could compare locations, the types of people that come here, and which material is going in and out." However, the organizations had a need to clarify that metrics do not represent the full impact (which yet reinforces the need for impact). Interviewee 5 (Organization, 4): "We pay attention to less measurable impacts (…) An impact priority for me is to create a network or host site for farmers to learn"). What is particularly interesting about impact is that it is very entangled with *planning*: "Due to my background in the university I just like to plan, set goals and later check back on whether we have achieved our goals." (Interviewee 5, Organization 4). Also Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) and Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) like to plan to have a clear idea of what the organization was able to achieve in a certain period, because it is also leading to "less stress".

A second theme is the idea of *enhancement inside the organization*, irrespective of whether metrics are utilized to measure it. There is evidence that organizations are driven by enhancement: "Naturally, it is important to become better. I am looking forward to meet our developer to place some more features onto our website like how we can organize more groups." (Interviewee 4, Organization 2). Furthermore, Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) said:

"We have a certain type of- I know the term sounds stupid- optimization. We try to get better in having an overview what material gets in and out, how much money is transferred etc. In larger intervals we then look at what could be improved". He thus hints toward a need for improvement by reporting a desire to optimize. Interviewee 5 (Organization 4) has similar hints and utilizes terms like efficiency: "I want to improve the efficiency of what we are doing at the scale we are at in order to provide a good standard of living for our members and our customers." Both Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 5 thus declare a motivation to self-improve, but also direct the focus of improvement toward their members, customers and community.

Next to enhancement, also the question of *scale* receives empirical relevance. Generally, the organizations value it as positive if their work is acknowledged by more people in different locations: "If the city asks us for 70 more operators into the city I would say yes, because the visibility and symbolic commitment to that type of investment is something I would agree with. (…) We are in the climate crisis. We need wide scale activity of rescuing blind participants in an exploitative system." (Interviewee 5, Organization 4). It is important for Interviewee 6 (Organization 3), that their desired type of growth is different than the old type of growth: "What I understand as growth is not an economy of finance. But if the number of cyclists grows, it´s good. Preferably in each city." Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) agrees with such an approach and adds that scale also aligns with a certain level of quality: "Some form of growth is absolutely necessary. We need more material and more space in order to become a functional alternative to other stores. Otherwise, users will come to us and will realize we cannot give them what they wanted." Similarly, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) wants to "do more to make more people happy" and moreover adds that the good part of their growth is that "alternatives to the current system exist now (…) You can now come to HDM if you look for alternatives to capitalist consumption." Since Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) mentioned many times that "free space is a problem for the scene" she envisions "to have a space at least double

the size of the current one" for her organization. The wording for this type of growth differs, as Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) utilizes the term "diversification" to describe that "it would make sense to think about a third location" for Organization 1. However, also Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) prefers if a diverse range of people start "doing something similar to us" meaning that "success is not if our organization has 15 different centers, but it could be 15 independent centers".

This connects to the next theme within this category. The organizations have a common need to *apply their organizational model to other sectors*. For them, it does not mean that they themselves widen their range of activities, but rather wish that novel (or existing) organizations " adopt a similar mind-set" (Interviewee 5, Organization 3), or "idea" as these "do not need to re-apply the same products" (Interviewee 6, Organization 4). Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) explicitly identified related sectors where her organizational model would make sense: "It would be nice if our principles expand to other things like technical devices, lighting hardware or furniture."

Lastly, I enquired whether some form of influence is shaping how progress and impact are seen, and it can be crystallized that there is a *link between grant givers and their demand for progress.* Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) clarifies how funding from the city or foundation has strict guidelines of what is being expected from the funded organization: "We have to offer grant givers something in return for funding - like how much you develop the city and how big your impact is." Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) adds that it is "completely justified that grant givers want to see these things in return, as our organization receives public money, which is supposed to somehow impact the public as well." She sees a problem in what types of progress grant givers want to see. It is very result orientated rather than incentivizing experimentation, according to her: "I cannot report the failures of the project, only the impacts, although one could learn so much from what went wrong, too. It does not focus on processes

either." Just as Interviewee 8 thinks "grant givers want to receive these exact numbers, only numbers", Interviewee 6 advocates that "grant givers could be more open-minded to other things than the sheer numbers. The real impact cannot be seen on a piece of paper." Since all of the organizations in HDM receive funding, this might partially explain their views on progress and impact, although the next section focuses on what I call *Progress Skepticism*; or the contestation of progress as inherently good.

5.2.2.2 Progress Skepticism

It is crucial to acknowledge that *Progress Skepticism* cannot be exclusively distinguished from the desire to have an impact, or the increase in scale of one´s operations. Most of the organizations show elements of both parts: aiming to increase their impact, while simultaneously considering the limitations of progress. However, wary criticism toward progress was such a theme among most organizations and thus worth examining in more depth.

Scale. Many organizations are skeptical about growing infinitely, and often do not think that growth should be targeted infinitely, because it can negatively affect the quality of the organization´s processes: "To up the scale at the farm is a very delicate question for us. It´s more complex (…). If we increase the number of boxes we sell, we become more mechanized. I don't want to become more mechanized" (Interviewee 5, Organization 3). This skepticism toward "more mechanized" is, according to Interviewee 5 (Organization 3), interlinked to personal contact that his organization is based upon: "We are doing everything in person. Therefore, it is restricted by the scale of the human scale, which we want." By limiting growth, his organization can thus maintain a more human-centered way of working (which is relevant to ensure agro-ecological practices).

Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) believes if you exceed a certain organizational size, you "could only have got there by hoaxing somebody" which is why he advocates a "colorful, local sharing economy" and even questions the purpose of my study: "What is the

goal of your thesis? Do you want to apply our concept to larger organizations? I do not think this will work, as their approach is wrong. We did not start this so that larger companies will annex what we do and scale it up." With a bit of irony, Interviewee 2 (Organization 2) questions scale by stating that in the ideal world, their organization "should shrink and then not exist at all" as this would imply a world in which resources are not wasted anymore. In a thought experiment (off the record) Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) imagined a scenario where his organization would multiply itself and be initiated in different cities. He would only find this sensible if the organization is adapted to and managed by the local community. Thus, if his organization would grow, he is mostly concerned by how it is governed, opposing a central office and favoring a commons structure: everybody should own the merits of his organization.

Next to questioning the nature of growth, the organizations show some advocacy of *sufficiency*. Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) tries to reduce the number of things she is buying as it is "not necessary to always get and build new things", similar to how Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) addresses "things like post-materialism and post-growth. It is a learning process to a sufficient way of living.". Also, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) explicitly perceives her organization as "a space where less resource use and sufficiency can be experienced."

More explicitly, Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) has implemented concrete sufficiency policies for his organization: "We set the maximum amount of how much can be ordered. If too much is ordered, then the website is closed for the rest of the week." Thus, he sets absolute limits for customers and production. Similarly, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) motivates customers to become more sufficient: ""I also told a customer once that he does not need such high-end equipment. Everybody has to unlearn this." However, this can sometimes rebound: "I don't think he was satisfied with that advice." Such advocacy for sufficiency goes hand in hand with criticism toward efficiency: "Efficiency is the wrong driver. More to make more people happy? I am not so sure if we want this and whether we are able to achieve it like

that, after all. If we keep producing, we will have more stuff." (Interviewee 6, Organization 4). For Interviewee 6, efficiency does not only seem undesirable, but he questions whether constant efficiency (which is a form of progress) can be achieved, after all. He moreover explicates that not every organization can progress in the future: "If we rock, other stores will automatically crash (…) This is a new type of growth… counter-growth and counter-progress". The idea of counter-growth indicates a last theme that is connected to the category of *Progress Skepticism*, namely *Advocacy of Systems and Value Change.*

Advocacy of Systems and Value Change. A different facet of Progress Skepticism is also the advocacy that bigger, structural changes are required, which have to completely re-define what we see as progress. According to the interviewees, this entails changes of what is inherently being viewed as good or bad (i.e., values). The majority of organizations aim to address these big questions via their activities ("We are addressing things like consumerism and how we relate to material. This is a long process that we are working towards", Interviewee 1, Organization 1; "We want to create alternatives for progress and consumption. This is a very long awareness-raising process.", Interviewee 6, Organization 4). They thus link systems change to a form of deceleration, valuing the long process and systemic changes as adequate goals. Also Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) believes that progress and optimization need to be overcome by "re-defining what meaning is and humanity (…) It is also human to make mistakes, be sick, be unproductive." These are inherent values of the capitalist system, that Interviewee 3 addresses and aims to transform, while contesting that progress is the right strategy to achieve them. He furthermore adds: "We, like everyone doing similar work, want a more emancipatory, autonomous and anti-fascist system - going towards well-being, sustainability and reason.", implying that the current notion of progress would not support such a system. It is interesting that he also contrasts progress to reason, as if progress would not be reasonable (this was a unique position among the interviewees). For Interviewee 6

(Organization 4), values like “transparency and sincerity” are essential for their idea of societal “counter-progress”. For him, there is also hope that such a structural change could be achieved: “The system is slowly changing because alternatives are now being created. Ten years ago, you heard about the scandals in H&M and nobody knew what to do. Now, you can start going to HDM if you are dissatisfied with the system.”

To conclude the results regarding progress, there are mixed elements of organizations that pursue efficiency and impact, while others are questioning the idea of progress itself and looking for systemic changes that could make progress redundant. The meticulous need to self-improve, as described by Welzer (2011), finds very limited support. When organizations aimed to enhance themselves, then they directed their betterment toward increasing their impact.

5.2.3 Work

This section is dedicated to the part of the theoretical framework that explicates how viewing work as an opus became a mental growth infrastructure, perpetuating a non-stop working mentality and establishing work as an identity. The data showed that differing perspectives arose on the purpose of work (process orientated vs. result orientated) and their view on leisure, which will be presented as sub-chapters. Additional, less ambivalent themes will be addressed within these sub-chapters, too. These are especially the experience of passion and the connection between different types of jobs.

5.2.3.1 Process vs. Output Orientated

Working Process Orientated. Some organizations have a view on work as a process, irrespective of whether it creates a certain output or not, or what that output may look like. They think their organizational processes are a source for experiencing and experimenting. For instance, Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) claims: “Our work is all about processes and what we recognize and learn throughout this process.” This is shared by his workmate Interviewee 4

(Organization 2), who thinks that thinking in processes can lead to a convivial atmosphere of co-creating: "The biggest challenge and focus for us is the process of structure, and the structure of process. Sometimes a structure needs to get established first… in a process. A structure of working together." While Interviewee 3 and Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) have a particular idea of why focusing on processes can help, Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) advocates that thinking in processes is also a strategy for prevention: "A lot of our work is prophylactic. We just see what happens throughout the process of fixing something." Organization 4 is also thinking in processes, and is particularly concerned about too much planning: "Within the process of working, you have to see how things unfold. You should not plan but learn via doing (…) This is important for our organization as nothing like this (i.e. their organization) was ever tried before", according to Interviewee 6.

Output Orientated Work. On the other hand, some organizations place value on creating output via their work. This does not necessarily mean they neglect processes; instead, focusing on output or process is a question of prioritizing, as well as how work is being defined. For instance, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) views everything she does in and outside her organization as work, given it creates an output: "All we do is work. I define it like this because we use energy to create output. That´s what work is." She thus links this more output-orientated view on work with terminology from physics. It is clear she does not think the output is work, but that work is the mechanism that must produce an output; otherwise, in her view, this would not be conceptualized as work. Furthermore, she supports this view later in the interview: "I would also say work is something that creates a result, which manifests itself in the world, and possibly has an exchange value, too." Here, she speaks about work output as something that has to manifest itself in the world, and which is thus visible or touchable. This is clearly different to the process-orientated perspective, which values work as something open-ended and often invisible, like learning. Process-orientated organizations focus on what happens in between

input and output, and they keep boundaries of the process open (see Interviewee 4´s comment on the structure of process). According to Interviewee 2 (Organization 1), work always has such a boundary, which is its output. Next to conceptualizing work as a parameter in an equation that creates a particular output, the output-orientated view is also influenced by the "outputability" of their work. Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) says that his organization puts a lot of work into writing grant proposals "because funding can create, in rebound, a certain output for us, like increasing our outreach". His statement underpins that what matters in this perspective is the end result, although he is one of the interviewees that also mentioned the importance of learning at other occasions.

5.2.3.2 Leisure vs. Work Non-Stop

There is both evidence for very hard, non-stop working organizations as well as organizations that value leisure as an essential part of their philosophy. The leisure advocates make clear that they are still autonomous human beings that cannot be controlled by the market economy. Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) claims: "We respond and read emails when we want to… depending on the day, between 7am and 7pm. We are no robots that are awake all the time and just wait to respond to messages." Connected to the theme of deceleration, Interviewee 3 refuses to work non-stop and fulfill the capitalist ideal of being available for work all the time. For Interviewee 5 (Organization 3), "there is a whole life outside of the job". He acknowledges and encourages other members of the team to not work all the time, but rather balance all the things that are important: "There is a whole home life and family life that needs to go on and to which we accommodate for." He thus places *care* in contrast to the work non-stop mentality, fostering family as an important institution outside of work. When it comes to working hours, Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) also thinks work should not be mandatory and non-stop: "If members want to take some time off from the organization, it is completely fine. We leave the

flexibility[12] to come and go from the cooperative." Lastly, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) also benefits from leisure and establishes a direct link between the quality of his work and the amount of leisure time: "If I work and plan too much, I am a blockhead (…) It is very important for me to have leisure when I need. It influences how I work afterwards. If I put the tools away for two days, I return to work and I see things differently. It increases the quality of my work." Regarding this statement, it did not make the impression that he intentionally uses leisure time in order to become better. Instead, I believe such a boost in creativity due to taking more leisure time was a natural process which he could observe by paying close attention to his own practice.

Work Non-Stop. Contrarily to the value of leisure and not working at all, some of the same organizations go through phases in which they *work non-stop*: "I sometimes worked here for 12 hours, and then came home and could not sleep because I was so excited and full of energy." (Interviewee 6, Organization 4). For Interviewee 6, this does not only entail actual work but also contemplation: "Often I stopped working in the workspace, went home, but kept on thinking: what can I still modify?" Asking him whether he only contemplates after leaving the workspace, he responds that "last year there was mainly planning at home" and now this has become "office stuff: bookkeeping etc. (…) And yes, there is constant contemplation about what could be done" (Interviewee 6, Organization 4).

Interviewee 8 (Organization 5), when reporting how often she thinks about her organization outside of being there, responds that it is "frequently" since she is "responsible for funding at the city council" and thus thinks "about the last report and what was forgotten". However, she also "searches for buttons when visiting my mother. The ones that could be helpful at work (…) Or when I am a particular location, I always keep an eye out for material and garments for our organization." Thus, it is less actual labor outside the workspace, but

[12] It should be denoted that Interviewee 5´s term flexibility is not what Welzer (2011) means by flexibility: Interviewee 5 addresses the autonomy between leisure and work; Welzer (2011) focuses on the flexibility between types of profession and working hours (night shifts, weekend work etc.).

collecting ideas and tools that are helpful for her work. Others are more explicit: “From a physics perspective, work is the transformation of energy and time. Apart from when we sleep, we always do that. Only when we sleep, we process our day.” (Interviewee 2, Organization 1). Here, work seems to be viewed as a law, as Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) furthermore explicates that “humans are inclined to work. There is a clear biological reason that the organism is always working, always active.” Her rather absolute vocabulary (“always working, always active”) thus aligns with Welzer´s (2011) “non-stop”. Similar to how she thinks that everybody is working non-stop, Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) assumes constant work is ubiquitous inside HDM: “I permanently engage with the topics of our organization. I think this is the whole idea of being here for everyone. It applies to all of us.”

Lastly, for some interviewees, there is an emerging blend between work and leisure. Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) reports a non-stop working attitude by observing “the blurring line between private time, engagements and formal working hours”. Private projects can be considered work while the distinction between leisure and work becomes obsolete, according to him. He would also put non-stop work into projects that he is committing himself to: “If I decide to become active in a project, then I actually do it, whether private or within the organization.” Interviewee 6 has a similar view on this, claiming that “it is a liberated type of work here. As I am so free, I don’t see this as work but as leisure.”

Multiple, Connected Jobs. Going beyond the leisure-work blend, almost none of the participants focuses on the organizational work alone. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) has many jobs (“I work on the farm and at the university, while managing other projects with our organization (…) like practicing permaculture in an abandoned lot in the city”) which are very challenging and reciprocal: he applies knowledge from one area to the next. Some of these jobs help him “learn but also acquire an income (…) I can give a lecture about practical things I learned on the farm and apply my theoretical understanding in practice.” Generally, the

interviewees connect their multiple jobs in different ways. Interviewee 1 (Organization 1): "I personally think about it at the university and via private interests. I connect my work with other work. There is no clear frame when one project starts and another one ends. It is really free". Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) is connecting his job with personal art by "using some material from here for installations to show things can be re-used beautifully (…) Sometimes I also link the work here with my freelance activities. It is cool when it is amalgamating". For Interviewee 8 (Organization 5), the order of her respective projects matters as well because she started working in her organization "on a volunteer basis, almost like a side project" before shifting to her organization as her main focus of work. Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) acknowledges that him being involved in multiple projects also creates "challenges: when you have to manage multiple projects, it is hard to tell when a process is actually starting", implying that a multitude of activities might also create some confusion. However, none of the other interviewees complained about these inter-linkages; instead, all of them show a great level of enthusiasm that culminated in a new theme: *Passion*.

Passion. While my theoretical framework also looked at burn-out rates among post-capitalists, opposite emotions are experienced by the participants. All of them experience forms of excitement, meaning and happiness, which I gather under the theme of *passion*. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) for instance makes clear that passion can be experienced despite busy working weeks: "It does not feel like a sacrifice when you do work that you are passionate about with people you quite get along with in a community that you care about. It does not feel like a sacrifice when you work to make it move forward so that it thrives." He makes clear that the theme of passion goes beyond the leisure vs. work non-stop dichotomy, or how much the organization is thinking about making progress ("Everything is worthwhile, because I have a fulfilling professional life"). Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) and Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) report that their work creates meaning.

Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) thinks there is a double benefit for both "the common good" and for himself because work is "fun and meaningful". Likewise, Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) thinks their organization "is top notch when it comes to creating meaning." Also, Interviewee 6 (Organization 4) utilizes terminology like "self-actualization", "fun", "thriving" or "vitalizing" to virtually romanticize about his work at multiple occasions. Interviewee 7 (Organization 4) is so passionate about his work that he would "come here every day, even when we go bankrupt". Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) is the only participant that explicitly states she is identifying with her work, which she later refers to as "her baby". From my field notes, I retrieve that the participants´ passion affected me emotionally, too: "Have you ever seen anybody that happy?", is the last note I took from my last visit at HDM.

Concluding this section, elements of a work non-stop mentality, like doing planning after official working hours and having multiple jobs, were found in addition to the themes of passion, which contrasted to a work non-stop mentality. The value of leisure time was another important theme that radically contested the work non-stop mentality.

5.3 Additional Mental Infrastructures

5.3.1 Organizational Relations

The three previous sections were derived from the broader theoretical framework that identifies time, progress, and work as components of a framework of mental infrastructures. The following section will add another variable to the framework, basing its emergence in the interview data. This component gathers around the approach to how organizations perceive themselves within the organizational ecosystem. The interviews render two approaches to this variable: some participants phrase their position with an *Organizational Self* mind-set, while others emphasize the collectivity and cooperation with other organizations. I call this category *Organizational Relations*.

5.3.1.1 Organizational Self as Mind-Set

The *Organizational Self* is a term I use for the conglomeration of statements that place importance on how an organization can be different from others. It manifests in different ways. One theme within such a mind-set is that organizations somehow *strategically position themselves within the organizational ecosystem*, slightly resembling how companies would position themselves in the capitalist market. More specifically, organizations with this mind-set aim to be different to other organizations which do similar work. For instance, Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) aims to fulfill an unmet need for a certain type of clothing: "We are offering artists what they cannot get anywhere else. Stuff they need which exists outside of seasons." She is very much aware that this is what makes her organization unique, and has thus expanded their concept to ripped fashion pieces: "We started building a collection of pieces which are torn apart. We call it "The Rescued" and it is for all the people that intentionally need ripped pieces." Examining Interviewee 5´s (Organization 3) wording, it becomes clear that organizational decisions are very intentional. He frequently calls the organizational actions strategic: "What we have done strategically at the farm is to be open as a training site for people who want to get into organic gardening. It is for all people who do not want to go through the university system (…) There is not a lot of other organizations who offer the range of services we do". Similar to Interviewee 8 (Organization 5), Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) thereby supplies individuals with an unmet need or seeks out new opportunities that do not exist. This question of organizational positioning is picked up by Interviewee 1 (Organization 1) in relation to social media: "Surely we have to distinguish ourselves from others. Sometimes we want to position ourselves via social media. I do not really know but there are also political opinions we touch upon." Thus, Social Media functions as a "tool and only a tool" (Interviewee 1, Organization 1) for branding and marketing purposes for Organization 1, although Interviewee 1 also emphasizes that it is "not a major thing here". Interviewee 2 (Organization 1) said that strategic positioning can counter the need for growth: "If you can clearly distinguish your

organization from competitors, and you are in a good niche, then you do not have to grow." She therefore implies that strategically positioning oneself in the organizational ecosystem can support subsistence rather than growth. Also, naming other organizations "competitors" indicates that there is competition among organizations which is not inherently tied into the concept of economic growth. Instead, such a competition is more related to the distinction question of how one´s organization is different to the others.

Furthermore, the *Organizational Self* is not merely viewing other organizations as competitors. It also values collaboration and working together with other organizations, required it is somewhat of benefit for the organization. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) claims such a benefit can be reciprocal: "My farm has a partnership with our organization which gives and also receives a lot. It offers a lot of time and a lot of knowledge, sometimes a host site for events. On the other hand, it receives a lot too." It becomes apparent that he frequently used the term 'network' to speak about fellow organizations, which might imply that they serve a functional purpose: "If we need to find a new box distribution spot in the city, through our network we could recommend places." Interviewee 7 (Organization 4) likes to receive inspiration from other organizations: "If you need creative input, you can just go to the neighbors and they will tell you something. Others multiply your energy." The benefit of collaboration can also be that it saves some paperwork, because "becoming part of a larger structure may save everyone some bureaucracy", to cite Interviewee 8´s (Organization 5) words. It already becomes quite clear that the benefits of networking can be very diverse, and that all organizations have their own reasons for collaboration. However, they were all motivated to communicate them. Last but not least, there was also support among the organizations regarding grant applications, as the "network tells you when there is some interesting, fitting grant process open for applications", according to Interviewee 1 (Organization 1).

5.3.1.2 Solidarity Mind-Set

Conversely, some organizations (including the ones showing elements of competition and a need for distinction) report the importance of cooperation and working together with other organizations, irrespective of how much utility an organization sees in such cooperation. Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) calls this "multi-faceted approaches" because, according to him, "it is completely necessary that organizations do not think of them as being isolated from others. We need to understand each other better and break up barriers." Interestingly, for him working together and building alliances will also help to make the social-ecological transformation more participatory: "If we are going to relieve and understand each other, we can make a concrete policy for a transition that is inclusive and not just decisions by some people thrown upon the majority." Interviewee 8 (Organization 5) similarly advocates the importance of alliances: "I started a working group called Material Infrastructure. My vision of this is to form an alliance with other initiatives to start a dialogue with politicians about the space scarcity for the free (art) scene." She further explicates why cooperation can lead to co-learning: "I want to offer a common workspace, so that we can also approach each other there and work together. We all read our books at home, so let´s bring this together." Here it is important to see the difference between the *Organizational Self*, and *Solidarity Mind-Set*. Her emphasis on co-learning might render benefits for her organization, but the focus of her statements lies in mutuality and participation, rather than contemplating what purpose such a collaboration would have.

The desire for solidarity is often sourced in *dissatisfaction with a system of competition*, especially how it is practiced in the capitalist market: "We have to outperform each other and ourselves every year. In my old workplace, we have hoaxed ordinary citizens to make profit. Why is there no other way and why is everyone participating (in such a system)? (…) Let´s leave such an elbow society (i.e. dog-eat-dog society) behind and do more things

together. We might have a social security system but we do not feel responsible for each other." (Interviewee 6, Organization 4)

This need for solidarity goes beyond organizational relations, and becomes a symbol for what organizations advocate via their mission. Interviewee 3 (Organization 2) centers his organization around the idea of the commons, which, for him, is a metaphor of how humans relate to each other: "It is so important how you view others. If you treat other objects and resources with respect, then it also means you will treat other persons with respect. Commons also means being respectful to one another." (Interviewee 3, Organization 2). Interviewee 4 (Organization 2) complements Interviewee 3´s words, claiming how commons are crucial for both organizational relations as well as society generally: "Commons means community. It is all about building community: working together, setting up rules together, calibrating our actions together and communicating together." Here, the emphasis on the word 'together' links their statements with the theme of solidarity. For Interviewee 7 (Organization 4), the HDM community he is embedded in could even be a "concept for the whole society".

Bringing this idea of care and respect back to the organizational context, Interviewee 5 (Organization 3) describes how cooperation means solidarity: "If there is a business whose solidarity liveries can be solved by working with us, we link that together. Its work is replaced when the partners of our network are doing well, and we are also happy to facilitate our new relationship which is beneficial to them." Cooperation is thus also about respect and care for each other, rather than using each other, as Interviewee 5 further describes: "We rely on and support each other (…) Our goal is to provide support, even when it is not always related to our core intentions." Within this theme, we can observe that organizations view their network less as personal benefit, but more as community or "support system" (Interviewee 5, Organization 3). Interviewee 5 also emphasizes how a community can create meaning: "I hope what the last year has taught some of us is that people spent more time in one

place and community (…) It took me some years to realize this, as I have also lived in many countries. But I realized everything I was looking for was a connection to a place and group of people here." For Interviewee 6, it is important that HDM is more of a community than network. In fact, he is a bit annoyed by the term network: "We have always been told to build a network. For instance, some initiatives could have received some bikes from the university basement. They always told us to network. Eventually, I couldn't hear that word anymore. It is such an ideal but sometimes unfeasible logistically. Some initiatives are so far from each other, distributed across the whole city (…) Here (in HDM) is an exception: We don't talk about networking, we just do it automatically, because we are a close community."

To conclude the additional component of mental growth infrastructures, *Organizational Relations* express themselves in two-fold in post-capitalist organizations. On the one hand, we have a more utility-based perspective which I call the *Organizational Self,* where organizations aim to differentiate themselves from other organizations and seek benefits in cooperating with their network. Conversely, the *Solidarity Mind-Set* views other organizations virtually like a family which gives and receives unconditional support. This perspective also highlights the values of care and empathy.

All in all, a detailed analysis emerged with various themes and unexpected perspectives. The next chapter will derive an understanding of those results for theory and practice by making more clear whether these results indicate novel insights about the feasibility of post-capitalism.

6. Discussion

The discussion is divided into four parts. Firstly, I will outline to what extent I believe each of the research questions was being answered and how this relates to the grand research question. Some discussions on how these findings meet or differ from existing literature will take place in this section, too. In an additional section, a more detailed elaboration of theory and specifically Welzer´s framework of *Mental Growth Infrastructure* will take place by arguing for two additional types of mental infrastructures, which result in a *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures*. Furthermore, it will be explained how the results could shape the conceptualization of a post-capitalist organization. In a third sub-chapter, practical implications of the results for post-capitalist organizations will be discussed, before concluding with limitations that future research could address.

6.1 Reflecting on the Research Questions

This thesis was initiated by the discursive conflict about the feasibility of overcoming capitalism. In order to grasp a more holistic idea of capitalism beyond profit accumulation and hierarchical labor relations, I consulted what Welzer (2011) calls *Mental Growth Infrastructures*, which is a compilation of cognitive components that characterize and shape the obsessive pursue of economic growth. The adoption of this framework is supported by the intertwined relation between economic growth and capitalism and how growth represents the main ideas of the capitalist system (Liodakis, 2018). Furthermore, Welzer´s (2011) framework was chosen because this thesis assumes that capitalism is more than an economic system; it is rather seen as a belief and value system (Robbins, 2013; Weber, 1930). Three relevant components were chosen to be of main interest: the perception and acceleration of time; the relentless pursuit of progress; the glorification of a non-stop working mentality.

This accumulated in the overarching research question to what extent post-capitalist organizations exhibit Mental Growth Infrastructures of the Acceleration of Time, the

Need to Progress, and the Work Non-Stop Mentality. The research was directed toward organizations that have already overcome the more technical components of capitalism, i.e. the accumulation of profit as organizational motive and hierarchical labor relations with inherent power structures. The results of the on qualitative analysis rendered no simplified, mono-syllabic answer to my grand research question. The research question requires a more nuanced narrative, guided by each of the variables.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of time and processual pace within post-capitalist organizations?

I aimed to answer the questions of how time and organizational pace is perceived inside the post-capitalist organizations. In general, there was evidence for an implicit type of the acceleration of time as well as the conscious choice of deceleration, which are both different to Welzer´s claims that society explicitly views faster as better. On the one hand, the interviewed organizations pace through their processes and become faster and more time-efficient without explicitly making it their goal (although, frankly, a few interviewees view being slow as a negative feature). On the other hand, organizations not just value slow pace (i.e., deceleration) but indicate forms of *time apathy* (i.e., not caring about the existence of time). Thus, unlike Welzer (2011) expresses the acceleration of time as ubiquitous imperative, post-capitalist organizations show two other facets of how they perceive time: they either become faster without really wanting to do so, or explicitly decelerate by contesting the relevance of time in the first place. What this could mean for advancing Welzer´s (2011) theory will be addressed in Chapter 6.2.

As evidence is so divergent, it is relevant that the results go beyond illustrating the dichotomy of acceleration and deceleration and illustrate the roots and implications for each. These enquiries were not part of the initial research question of how organizations perceive time but emerged as important themes in the interview data. For instance, they helped paint a

clearer picture of how capitalism influences the pace of organizations, which is relevant for the initial debate outlined in this paper: a strong driver for acceleration is the contact with external capitalist stakeholders, like profit-driven companies, which other research has called "the dark side of alternative economies" (Watson & Ekici, 2020). So, if capitalist stakeholders inhibit post-capitalist organizations from decelerating, then it might suggest that organizations, which aim to decelerate, should not interact with capitalist entities. However, as some organizations re-use the waste from capitalist stakeholders, such contact is pivotal for their existence. Letting the data analysis exceed my initial research questions therefore provided additional results that help shape the future debate on the limits of post-capitalism, but also illustrated that deceleration might be unlikely to be realized without trade-offs, similar to what Rosa (2015) argued.

Then, and this is specifically valid for the variable of time, the analysis is particularly robust as I have consulted what I would call multi-faceted qualitative data. It is not just the explicit statements by participants that helped to answer my research question. I have also given weight to field notes, processual experiences, and the interpretation of wordings. To give an example, evidence for acceleration was not just gathered by Organization X stating it pursues time efficiency, but also by integrating an interviewee´s implicit time pressure during the interview. If Rosa (2015) argues acceleration is a subjective phenomenon, then I assert that my personal experience with the organizations matters as much as what they report. These subjective interpretations have thus complemented the analysis in helpful ways of addressing the research question.

RQ2: How important view postcapitalist organizations the need to progress?

The second research question received ambivalent findings, too. There is little support for Welzer´s (2011) claims that the need for progress means constant self-optimization. More importantly, organizations´ statements on progress, similar to how the ones on time,

cluster around two different perspectives, which both articulate progress beyond Welzer´s (2011) meticulously self-improving "Economic Man". It should be noted that these two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, as some organizations shared both perspectives (which applies to the ambivalent findings for each variable).

One shared perspective is that progress is important if it is re-conceptualized as impact. For some organizations it is pivotal to increase their social and environmental impact on the community: the bigger the impact (scale) the better, which is somewhat like progress is viewed by more traditional capitalist institutions (Wagner, 2016). However, within such a cluster, traditional ideas of progress such as economic growth are not included; thus, organizations slightly modify the purpose of adopting a progress-mindset. This resonates with the claims by Wagner (2016) that other forms of progress exist, such as social progress, which have some commonalities with capitalist ideas of progress but amend the intent of it. There was no evidence for the utilization of metrics to review economic progress as stated in Welzer´s (2011) essay. Some organizations collect data, which only functions as a tool to not lose the overview over operations.

On the other hand, the other additional perspective illustrates *progress apathy*, and organizations with this perspective do not find progress important, at all. For them it is more important to work toward a post-materialist sufficiency-orientated society. A mind-set for such a change, according to several organizations, is a different mind-set to the one that relentlessly pursues progress. Therefore, while the data gives an accurate answer on the degree to which organizations value progress, it also shows which types of progress are pursued, and how important they are for the organizations.

No organization advocates for economic growth as progress, several organizations pursue impact as progress, and others claim progress is unimportant as it does not lead to systemic changes. The roots for such perspectives were examined briefly: While the

motivation for internal enhancement plays a role for a few organizations, many of them report that grant-givers require recipients to illustrate their contributions to societal progress, which is very narrowly defined in such grant agreements, according to the participants. As many organizations depend on funding, they thus reproduce a system that rewards and reinforces a concept of progress that does not lead to systemic changes. Does that mean that only progress agnostic organizations overcome capitalist mental infrastructures? Not necessarily, and such a question would depend on one´s theory of change: are incremental changes in the system more likely to create systemic alternatives than non-participation in the system? I do not want to open this debate in too much detail as the discussion would go beyond the scope of this thesis. What should become clear is that grant-givers often push organizations toward pursuing a certain type of progress, and many organizations have complained about this.

RQ3: How much are post-capitalist organizations embedded into capitalist work mentality?

This research question was posed because Welzer (2011) argues that part of a mental growth infrastructure is to view work as an opus that should never stop. Also, in his framework, work becomes one´s main social identity. The analysis rendered a few themes that match this non-stop mentality. Many organizations engage in overwork, and planning occupies most of the organizational members´ thinking outside of formal working hours. Examining work and leisure, I could also derive that many interviewees have multiple "jobs" that they connect with each other. Thus, elements of a work non-stop mentality were prevalent. However, this is not the whole picture. A few (to some degree diverging) themes arose from the analysis of the interviewees that can be contrasted to the work non-stop mentality and would thus function as additional mentalities next to the more growth-orientated one.

One is that the idea of work as identity is complemented by an emotion that I identify as passion: work is being enjoyed so much that it automatically links to one´s identity.

This feature is shared by all the organizations. While my theoretical framework also looked at burn-out rates among post-capitalists, opposite emotions are thus experienced by the participants. Passion is also experienced despite busy working days, which contrasts the claims by researchers that social engagement is linked to burn-out (Gorski & Chen, 2015). Within the organizational members´ experience of passion, they neither make the impression as if they constantly think about the next task ahead without being in the present, as Welzer (2011) describes the non-stop working mentality.

Another additional theme is the output versus process-orientated work which adds an interesting dimension to the grand RQ of whether capitalism could be overcome. A more process-orientated workstyle encourages experimentation and learning, rather than optimization of established practices. These help to create innovative, unexpected processes within the organizations. Creating a comparison to larger socio-economic systems, such an experimental approach has also been linked to larger sustainability transitions, for example in cities (Fuenfschilling et al., 2019). Furthermore, process-orientated working often went hand-in-hand with valuing leisure because in order to be creative, interviewees had to take breaks and refresh their brains. Thus, process-orientated working reinforced resistance toward a non-stop working lifestyle, which the output-orientated workstyle did not.

Therefore, the short answer to this research question, identical to the answers to the other research questions, is: it depends. Some are embedded into such *Mental Growth Infrastructures* by centering their life around their work and work non-stop via multiple jobs. Others might work a lot but in fact feel very passionate about creating certain output. Yet others see work as a process that requires leisure and experimentation.

Lastly, an interesting aspect was that many non-stop working interviewees did not see their activities as work. This is relevant for the grand RQ of this paper as it can be interpreted in two ways:

Firstly, such a perspective could question the close tie between work and capitalism, with which Welzer (2011) introduces his framework: the participants show that work does not need to be called work, as it resembles, in their view, outdated conceptualizations of their activities. Thus, it could be argued that these organizations, at least in this dimension, have overcome *Mental Growth Infrastructures* as they avoid both capitalist incentives as well as capitalist vocabulary to describe their activities. On the other hand, it could mean the exact opposite. Perhaps capitalist work ethics have colonized leisure in such a way that even leisure has to fulfill a purpose and be pursued non-stop. I provide space for such argumentation as it supports the malleability of *Capitalist Realism* (Fisher, 2009). Oftentimes, it is hard to realize how capitalism has infiltrated societal realms that were thought to be free from it. Leisure could be such a realm, if it is treated like a job that never ends.

It is crucial to debate two interpretations of this phenomenon, as the pure existence of these interpretations have value themselves: Perhaps, overcoming capitalism cannot be an absolute goal, after all. Even if one might think an organization has overcome a crucial mental component of capitalism (e.g. work non-stop), another interpreter could as validly see the malleability of capitalism in it. Therefore, capitalism might be so hard to overcome not because it is technically impossible, but because one can always interpret capitalism in any of one´s actions and intentions.

In conclusion, my three research questions are each answered with very ambivalent perspectives. There is evidence that very few *Mental Growth Infrastructures* like work non-stop were exhibited by the organization; instead, the statements by the interviewees cluster around two different perspectives. Firstly, there is evidence that the mental growth infrastructures are, to some degree, overcome by slightly modifying the intent of adopting *Mental Growth Infrastructures*; then, there are also organizational perspectives that more concretely overcame *Mental Growth Infrastructures* by radically contesting and transforming

them. Furthermore, and this cannot be emphasized enough, the data does not support to segregate the organizations into clearly divided camps, but only supports the division of perspectives. There are diverging themes that emerged, and oftentimes organizations score on multiple of these: some organizations both accelerate and decelerate, or implicitly accelerate while showing tendencies of deceleration. Some organizations might seek out impact and sufficiency, while working non-stop etc. This study investigated and found a segregation of perspectives toward mental infrastructures, not of organizations. What this means for the theory of *Mental Growth Infrastructures* will be discussed in the next section.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

This thesis adopted Welzer´s (2011) framework of mental growth infrastructures, selected a set of its components to be applied to post-capitalist organizations, and tested in a qualitative fashion how these organizations think and act in accordance with the framework.

One first key message is that Welzer´s framework is applicable to the organizational context. Intended as an essay critiquing the consumerist tendencies of society, Welzer (2011) did not make any claims that this framework is applicable to other societal actors like organizations. The results of this thesis indicate that all organizations had a lot to say about those mental infrastructures that were selected for the analysis. While post-capitalist organizations might not agree much with what Welzer (2011) describes as *Mental Growth Infrastructures*, the organizations have provided enough information to fulfil my research aim and answer my research questions. Time, progress, and work are variables that organizations have reflected about very rigorously. In the theory section of the thesis, several other mental infrastructures were excluded from the analysis, so that no statements about their applicability to organizations can be made.

However, my results imply that the framework of mental growth infrastructures has some limitations, too. These limitations have less to do with the selection of components, but more with how Welzer (2011) approaches these mental infrastructures. He claims other-than-growth mental infrastructures have yet to be developed[13]. This thesis renders scientific evidence that other-than-growth mental infrastructures exist, too. Unlike his argument that the whole society follows the pattern of pursuing progress, accelerating in time and non-stop work, this study has found islands of post-growth mentalities as well as perspectives that somewhat stand in the middle ground between growth and post-growth. Welzer (2019) has himself suggested shifting more attention to exceptional organizations that withstand participation in the growth economy. However, there is, as yet, no established framework for beyond-growth mental infrastructures and how organizations escape growth mentally. Based on the data collected for this thesis, such a framework will be suggested in the next section.

6.2.1 A New Theoretical Framework of Mental Infrastructures

As indicated in the previous section, for each mental component, ambivalent evidence was collected. For each variable, the framework of *Mental Growth Infrastructures* did not fully match with what participants have reported. On the one hand, they showed some overlap with mental growth infrastructures, but then re-conceptualized the components. On the other hand, organizations reported very critical perspectives towards the mental components. Therefore, this new framework will consist of three types for mental infrastructures: Growth; Green Growth; and Post-Growth. It will also add *Organizational Relations* which was identified as an additional variable. It should be denoted that this framework is basing its evidence from interviews with organizations. Therefore, unlike Welzer´s (2011) framework, this framework is only aimed to be applicable to organizations.

[13] His conclusion were rather surprising to me, as his latest work *Alles Könnte Anders Sein* is a realistic utopia filled with wonderful examples of indviduals and initiatives breaking out of the vicious cycle of capitalism and growth, painting an optimistic image of a sustainable, just and fulfilling future.

6.2.1.1 Mental Growth Infrastructures

Firstly, the *Mental Growth Infrastructures* (MGI) stay in this new framework. There might have been limited evidence for Welzer´s (2011) claims in post-capitalist organizations, but this framework is intended to be applicable to more traditional organizations, too. For this, *Mental Growth Infrastructures* are an inevitable perspective. I am not aware of any study that applied Welzer´s (2011) work to capitalist organizations. Therefore, the evidence for its applicability to other organizations is limited. However, it is assumed that Welzer´s (2011) statements would fit the perspectives of capitalist organizations. In Chapter 6.4, it will be discussed how future research can substantiate the new framework suggested in this thesis (by, for example, conducting more research with traditional organizations and having larger sample sizes).

As Welzer (2011) outlined such a mind-set entails the endorsement and pursuing of constant acceleration. As proponents of this mind-set explicitly communicate that faster equals better, it is called *Explicit Acceleration* here[14]. With regards to the variable of progress, MGIs aspire to progress economically. Such a mind-set couples progress to economic growth (Welzer, 2011). Similarly, Welzer (2011) explicates how such a mind-set views work as non-stop opus, while proponents of MGI do not value leisure, after all.

Lastly, this study has identified that post-capitalist organizations view other organizations as partners, community, or network. However, Welzer (2011) does not outline how a MGI would apply to the variable of *Organizational Relations*. He briefly describes how international competition drives economic growth as a larger imperative. As it is supported by general economic theory that competition and economic growth are reinforcing each other (Saviotti & Pyka, 2008; Stigler, 1972), the MGI perspective on the variable *Organizational*

[14] I did not find evidence for *Explicit Acceleration* in this study. This type of mental infrastructure is mainly based on Welzer (2011). However, I use the term as it contrasts with what I will call *Implicit Acceleration* in the next type of mental infrastructure, which will then be based on the evidence gathered in this study.

Relations is labelled *Competition Mind-Set*. Such a competition mind-set would compete over market shares, profits, and sales.

6.2.1.2 Mental Green Growth Infrastructures

Regarding the first variable, organizations with MGGIs have not expressed the necessity of acceleration and did value it as inherently good. However, they neither did they aim to decelerate. MGGI is mainly characterized by *Implicit Accelerationism* (see Chapter 5.2.1.1). It does not have a direct intention to accelerate, but it naturally happens because of the interaction with capitalist stakeholders, more efficient organizational processes, or adhering to the seasons of nature. This is a core component of *Implicit Acceleration*: it is not intended to speed up, but a mix of factors shaped an organization´s understanding that it needs to accelerate. Moreover, slowness is seen as something negative, as some participants implicitly indicated. Wordings like "sluggish" endorsed acceleration implicitly.

With regards to progress, MGGIs do not entirely neglect progress, just as they do not neglect acceleration. Instead, they shift the idea of progress from an economic agenda toward *impact*. This manifests in the utilization of metrics to measure such impact. For instance, the number of emissions saved, or participants attending an organization´s workshop, are captured and presented as organizational achievements (see Chapter 5.2). Within MGGIs, a motivation to optimize processes still exists. It is believed that optimization could lead to much higher impacts. Consequently, growing as an organization is valued, as it is assumed that growth could help to create larger changes in the world. The notion of impact progress can also be clearly differentiated from economic progress, as organizations that are positioned in MGGI criticize economic progress as too narrow with regards to capturing societal needs and human flourishing.

While proponents of MGI perceive work as incessant opus and leisure as nuisance, MGGI have, again, slightly modified views on work. Their stance is to seek out work

that is fulfilling and supports a purpose. Such purpose, linked to their idea of progress, is rooted in output, rather than processes. Work is seen as an activity where the output counts, although output does not necessarily need to have an economic exchange value like the growth mind-set would assume. Further, work is highly valued and central to one´s self-identity. The theme of passion was ubiquitous among participants. However, such a feeling of passion toward their work interfered with how much organizations valued leisure. More specifically, perhaps due to the purpose found in work, organizational members with MGGI would keep thinking about work outside formal working hours. This could manifest in discussions with close friends and families, or the desire to do some planning activities late at night. Such a mind-set resonates with what has been referred to as *hustle-culture*: the belief that one´s work is very important for society and that one has to spend every free second on it (Griffit, 2019). Work is liberation, according to such mind-set and thus leisure is either ignored or not valued, after all. I place such thinking about work into this category, as it can be contrasted from the growth way of thinking but does not revolutionize it.

Lastly, I refer to *Organizational Relations* as a last mental dimension for an *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures.* Here, I refer to the *Organizational Self Mind-Set* as the driving thinking pattern within MGGI. The organization is not falling into competitive thinking as much as the MGI organizations, where being better than others is the only priority. Organizations with MGGI yet seek out partnerships and collaborations that mainly benefit themselves. Therefore, having a network is vital for the Green Growth mind-set. The organization aims to benefit from the network and thus views the network as utility rather than community (which is how a Post-Growth mind-set will view it). Furthermore, as the results have rendered, a need for distinction and strategic positioning are crucial for the MGGI, too. One´s organization is continuously placed into perspective with other organizations and the need to distinguish oneself from others is central. I thus see a Green

Growth mind-set in such a thinking pattern. Growth ideas of competition are maintained but have a slightly modified intent as some forms of collaboration are taking place.

6.2.1.3 Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures

Finally, *Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures* (MPGI) are what emerged from some organizations´ criticisms of the growth system itself. Such organizations are highly skeptical about the inherent values of the growth economy, and thus aim to resist any thought and behaviour patterns that resemble MGI´s. However, such organizations do not only distance themselves from the growth ideology, but have developed their own mind-set and features, too. I call these post-growth mental infrastructures not just because they radically re-invent the "growth-thinking"; another reason is the very recent development of the post-growth discourse which is slowly transforming from mere economic critique into a systemic, holistic ideology[15] (Hickel, 2020b; Jackson, 2021; Kallis et al., 2020).

With regards to the acceleration of time, the MPGI explicitly advocate for deceleration. It is desired to not pursue time-efficiency and a fast organizational pace, according to the MPGI. Instead, those organizations value the slowness that is embedded in their everyday routine and organizational goal. Such a slowness is deliberately chosen as it contributes to creativity and resilience. The decelerated pace of operating can manifest in regular meetings for reflection and contemplation, in which more philosophical discussions are initiated rather than any agenda of what everybody has to achieve in a given amount of time. Moreover, the theme of *Time Apatheism* emerged out of the data, which is a perspective that fits MPGI as it implies the opposite of time efficiency: *Time Apatheism* for organizations means that they do not care about time, after all. Proponents of MPGI believe that time is not a scarce resource that must be captured at all costs. Therefore, these organizations are not seeking to become continuously more rapid in their organizational processes. The belief that time is not running

[15] Of which a framework for mental infrastructures has yet to be created.

away from them slows down such organizations. This aligns with previous research on organizations that showed metaphysical reflections about time (Von Jorck & Gebauer, 2015). Furthermore, explicit deceleration welcomes a culture of experimentation, which participants have claimed to be a root cause for deceleration. Trying out the unthinkable and imagining new ways of organizing themselves can be manifestations of such experimentation. Other research has highlighted the importance of experimentation for a transition toward post-capitalism (Chatterton, 2016), which underpins the notion that experimentation is an essential part of MPGIs.

When it comes to the question of progress, the MPGI denies that progress should be pursued by all means, and thus questions the relentless pursue of progress - no matter whether economic or impact progress. According to organizations with MPGI, progress is oftentimes linked to wanting more and bigger, which are the wrong goals. Instead, such a mind-set is characterized by the notion of sufficiency, which could be defined as simply having "enough". These organizations do not have any inner desire for progress but rather want to produce enough to satisfy a small community with their product or service. Post-growth-minded organizations aim to rather take away the unnecessary building blocks of consumerism and enable contentment with less. Within the post-growth visions, such a call for deliberately down-scaling production to reach a level of "having enough" resonates specifically with degrowth calls for reducing material through-put of the economy (Hickel, 2020b; Robra et al., 2020). Frankly, this could be conceptualized as progress toward sufficiency. Yet, I call such a mind-set *progress skeptic* because it questions the very concept of progress and, therefore, advocates for progress into the opposite direction. This resembles other post-growth scholarship that argues for a more sufficient, human-centred lifestyle and contests the myth that more progress is good, and that more is always better (Hickel, 2020a).

The post-growth mentality toward work does not regard work as an activity that should be at the centre of one´s life. While proponents of the post-growth mind-set still show passion toward their work, it does not mean the world to them. More specifically, care work (i.e. non-market services for others like family life) is valued as equally important as paid work. This is precisely how feminist post-growth economics envisions society´s work mentality (Dengler & Strunk, 2018; Weeks, 2018), because a growth driven work non-stop mind-set has already widened the chasm of gender injustices (Illich, 1983; Perkins, 2007). Next to care, organizations clustering around the MPGI have a strong need for autonomy, which a work non-stop mentality would interfere with. Organizational members thus value leisure as a means to fulfil their need for autonomy. This need for autonomy resonates with post-growth as post-growth scholarship similarly argues that individuals should not just reduce their paid working hours for ecological and social reasons (Kallis et al., 2013) but also declare autonomy as a crucial pillar of the degrowth movement (Asara et al., 2013, 2015). Moreover, I will place the cluster of process-orientated work as a component of the MPGIs. Participants with process-orientated work ethics reported that such a perspective helps them to make more democratic and fair decisions, and everyone is learning to respect each other. As the process is diligently observed, participants claimed to be more aware of how others are affected by one´s own actions. Such a mentality resonates with the concept of conviviality, the act of living in harmony with other (non-)human beings (Escobar, 2015; Illich, 1973), which is an inevitable component of a post-growth society (Adloff, 2016). Furthermore, the mentality of process-orientation resonates with the overall definition of degrowth: “Degrowth calls for rich nations to reduce their (material) throughput (…)” (Hickel, 2021). Here, it becomes clear that the overall project of degrowth aims to shift the economy away from producing constant output. This framework translates this call into the mental infrastructures of work, thus connecting the larger quest of degrowth with the more tangible meso-level of organizations. I call for future degrowth

scholarship to explore the process/output nexus further, as virtually no literature could be found on this despite degrowth´s mission to reduce output and/or throughput (to the author´s knowledge only Mair et al. (2020) touch upon this). A process-orientated mentality could turn into a significant alternative to materialist consumerism, at least following the evidence from this thesis.

Lastly, the *Solidarity Mind-Set* is how organizations with MPGIs perceive themselves in relation to other organizations. Such a mind-set prioritizes cooperation over any form of competition or strategic positioning, contrasting it clearly from the MGI or MGGI. Other organizations are perceived as equally important as one´s own, and thus solidarity with other organizations is granted in this mind-set. This connects to the degrowth theme of conviviality, too, but integrates empathy and systems thinking. Empathy is practiced by supporting other organizations in hard times, irrespective of the potential benefits of such a support system. It is argued this aligns with a systems thinking approach as one´s organization is placed into a web of, or ecosystem, of stakeholders (Spruill et al., 2001). The overall support system is perceived as more important than personal/organizational benefits. Such values of mutuality and cooperation have been argued to be elementary building blocks of a solidarity (Daskalaki et al., 2019) and degrowth economics (Jarvis, 2019; Serlavós, 2014) (and for a blend of the two, see Bauhardt (2014)). Daskalaki et al. (2019) argue that solidarity and cooperation can be conceptualized as values, which underpins the placement of solidarity as a mental infrastructure. This framework thus connects to the existing literature and adds the *Solidarity Mind-Set* into the MPGIs. Overall, this leads to the framework below.

Mental Dimension	**Mental Growth Infrastructures (MGI)**	**Mental Green Growth Infrastructures (MGGI)**	**Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures (MPGI)**

Time	Explicit Acceleration	Implicit Acceleration	Explicit Deceleration
Progress	Economic Progress	Impact Progress	Progress Skepticism
Work	Work as Non-Stop Opus	Work as Passion	Work (and Leisure) as Process
Organizational Relations	Competition Mind-Set	Organizational Self Mind-Set	Solidarity Mind-Set

Table 1. *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures.* Self-Created.

6.2.2 Post-Capitalist Organizations

The results of this study call for an additional way of understanding the as yet blurry concept of post-capitalism. Post-Capitalism, according to this research, would not be limited to an economy that has equally distributed its wealth and abandoned labor hierarchies, although such desirable achievements are more than welcome. This is the way post-capitalism is typically understood at present. However, this research has shown that some post-capitalist organizations represent some mental values of *Mental Green Growth Infrastructures*. For example, some post-capitalist organizations aimed for progress (as impact) or implicitly accelerated. Therefore, I seriously pose doubts that the current definition of Post-Capitalist Organizations holds true once mentality is integrated into the concept.

However, what if we define the Post-Capitalist Organization as an organization with a mind-set in alignment with post-growth mental infrastructures[16]? Then, Post-Capitalist Organizations could be defined as *social value drivers of a slower, solidary, leisured and less progress-driven economy which are not designed around the accumulation of profit and hierarchical labor relations.* This is not a textbook definition (and it is not the goal to create

[16] I only mention the *Post-Growth Mental Infrastructures* here, as the *Mental Green Growth Infrastructures* show too much overlap with the *Mental Growth Infrastructures* and might thus have not overcome the capitalist mind-set as much.

one). What such a definition, however, emphasizes is that intentions, values and goal, i.e. mental infrastructures, count as much as the economic agenda toward post-capitalism. This is preliminarily reflected in the data, where mental infrastructures are inter-linked with economic practices. For example, an organization that values leisure might not produce as many goods, which might then reduce consumption rates to sufficient levels.

It is also emphasized that critical organization studies and sustainability transition research can create a better understanding of Post-Capitalist Organizations by integrating transdisciplinary scholarship. This thesis has synthesized research from sociology, psychology and post-growth studies to add a mental dimension into organizational infrastructures, and might thus respond to sustainability transition scholarship that advocates for more transdisciplinary and critical approaches (Feola, 2020). Especially the psychological perspective might also help to understand other post-growth conundrums like the appearance of rebound-effects, which are argued to be culturally and socially driven (Steinberger et al., 2010). The project of post-capitalism should not be restricted to economic and political tasks, but facilitated by the overcoming of mental growth infrastructures in both society (Welzer, 2011) and organizations. This thesis has shown that some organizations are thus already post-capitalist, from both the economic and the mental perspective.

6.3 Practical Implications

What does the *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures* imply for organizations that are deeply interested in the social-ecological transformation? It is hard to derive concrete implications from this study as interviews were not targeted toward the wider implications for organizations. However, a few preliminary hypotheses and directions for future research can be laid out.

Firstly, it is hypothesized that identification with the respective additional mental infrastructure (green growth; post-growth) affects the organizational outcomes. This both includes which outcomes are being pursued and how those goals are being achieved. Organizations with more MGGI seem to be the ones that are considered more "successful" with the standards of our current society (i.e. what society defines as "success"). These organizations seem to be the ones that have increased their impact and receive more acknowledgment by other institutions (see Chapter 5.2). This can have two reasons: firstly, they also aim to be successful, as output and progress are crucial goals in their organizational development. Secondly, their green growth mind-set facilitates how they interact with capitalist organizations. They can interact better with the dominant system by sharing some of its mental infrastructures. On the other hand, organizations with MPGIs might not even desire to achieve what our current society would define as success. Their sufficiency-mentality might reject societal aims like "success" in the first place. Furthermore, their quest for changing the system creates tensions with the system, too. A decelerated pace of operating, for example, might not be welcomed by capitalist partners, for whom time equals money. However, this research has shown that there is yet space for MPGI to exist and flourish, especially if a community of organizations is located in proximity. For organizations with a MPGI, it might thus be recommended to seek out a community and support system.

There is an additional implication which could be relevant for organizations that currently debate whether to adopt a post-growth mind-set. The organizational members made a more balanced, creative and happy impression with their organization. Both green-growth minded as well as post-growth minded organizations are very passionate about their work. Yet, the unpleasant experience of stress was recurringly raised and linked to overwork and growth, which were more common within the MGGI. Similarly, organizations with MPGIs report that leisure oftentimes leads to more creativity. It is thus recommended that organizations in the

creative sector (or with many creative tasks) should consider adopting a post-growth mentality. However, such recommendations do not bear any certainty, and there may be other pitfalls of transforming toward MPGIs (Büchs & Koch, 2019).

Therefore, this thesis does not aim to find a universal recommendation that organizations could start working on tomorrow. That is because there is no clear line between the different types of mental infrastructures, which means it is possible to adopt both MPGI and MGGI. Moreover, there are clear tread-offs between the different types of mental infrastructures. While MGGIs might help you to be successful, MPGIs might fulfil you more. Therefore, it is a question of reflection whether and how to embed post-growth mentalities into one´s organization. The organization needs to reflect on how it views its role in the economy and wider society: what are its goals and intentions, and how would they affect its core operations. Understanding the larger purpose of one´s organization could then shed illuminating light on how the *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures* would help one´s organization.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis is not without drawbacks that limit the wider implications of this study. These have already been mentioned in various parts of the thesis, but will be discussed here with ideas for future research.

The number of interviewees for this study was rather limited. Interviews were long enough to receive enough data for theoretical and practical claims. However, the quantity of interviewees was restricted so that place-based biases could be present. Most of the participants are located in the city of Berlin, which is a rather high-pace environment as a European capital. I was aware of this limitation and thus consulted another organization from a different country. This made the data more robust, but not perfect. Future research can thus diversify the

geographical locations, as, for example, national and urban environments might have an influence on the variables of time and progress (Rosa, 2005b).

Furthermore, the majority of interviewed organizations are members of a larger co-operative. Thus, I could not exclude the option that organizations might have talked to each other during the data collection period of my study which could have influenced the results. Also, in such structures, organizations are already sharing a set of values, or at least could influence each other toward it. This could possibly indicate that more categories of mental infrastructures might exist than the ones I have currently collected. The resulting framework was established bottom-up, emerging from the data. This also means the framework is tentative and could be modified through other data. More research with a variety of organizations is necessary to support, contest and/or expand the *Organizational Framework of Mental Growth Infrastructures* and to make wider claims of how much post-capitalist organizations integrate mental infrastructures. It is also helpful to collect data in more traditional organizations, which could also substantiate Welzer´s (2011) idea about *Mental Growth Infrastructures*.

Another limitation, or, at least a question for future research, is whether organizations can be categorized similarly to how I have now categorized Mental Infrastructures. As argued throughout the paper, post-capitalist organizations can exhibit features of both MGGI and MPGI. These mental categories function as thematic clusters, not as a taxonomy for different types of organizations. Some organizations have certainly leaned toward one type of mental infrastructures more than others, but it is hypothesized that the data does not support a clear distinction of organizations. If future research addresses this, organizations might then learn which mental infrastructures they could adopt more easily, and which not.

7. Conclusion

This thesis has initially re-opened the debate whether capitalism as our current social and economic system can be overcome on the organizational level. However, instead of narrowing to the economic level, values and mind-set were integrated as facets of capitalism, adopting what Welzer (2011) refers to as *Mental Growth Infrastructures*. According to Welzer (2011), some of the variables of this framework are the acceleration of time, the need to progress and the work non-stop mentality. This thesis therefore posed the more overarching research question, to what extent post-capitalist organizations exhibit such *Mental Growth Infrastructures.*

Conducting semi-structured interviews and utilizing thematic coding to analyze the data rendered the following results: Organizations reported diverging opinions on all variables, and Welzer´s (2011) claim for the all-encompassing *Mental Growth Infrastructures* did not fully apply to post-capitalist organizations. Regarding the acceleration of time, some organizations are exhibiting a high-pace culture of efficiency without emphasizing it as their organizational goal. The root for such an *Implicit Acceleration* was often the contact with external more capitalist stakeholders or the natural cycles of time. Other organizations had opposite views and deliberately made the slowness of operations their organizational core value, thus not exhibiting the mental component of acceleration. With regards to progress, a recurring theme for some organizations was to seek out and increase their impact, thus having tendencies toward a need of progress with slight modifications in what higher goal the pursuit of progress serves. Other organizations are more critical toward the concept of progress in the first place. They advocate for sufficiency and systemic changes beyond the need for progress. Regarding the non-stop work mentality, this was a variable where I found a match between Welzer (2011) and the statements by the interviewees: some organizations indicated that they have phases of working non-stop via multiple jobs. On the other hand, many organizations

reported their passion for work, somewhat sharing elements of a work non-stop mentality but connecting it with fulfilment and flourishing. A third perspective regarding work was the resistance of work non-stop by valuing leisure and perceiving their work as a process rather than output. Moreover, the way organizations see themselves in relation to other organizations has been added as a mental variable, as diverging themes of both self-orientated networking and solidarity emerged from the data.

Results were integrated into a *Organizational Framework of Mental Infrastructures* by adding two perspectives into Welzer´s (2011) *Mental Growth Infrastructures,* which were called *Mental Green Growth Infrastructures* and *Mental Post-Growth Infrastructures.* The former adopts elements of Mental Growth Infrastructures and slightly modifies the intent of adopting them (similar to the macro-economic concept of *Green Growth),* and the latter is truly overcoming them by contesting and radically re-thinking the mental components of the growth ideology (similar to the post-growth movement). Lastly, this thesis is concluded with a modified theoretical understanding of the post-capitalist organization, and thus aimed to contribute to the introductory debate on post-capitalism. It is argued that *Mental Infrastructures* should be more integrated into both terms post-capitalism and post-capitalist organizations. By doing so, we might be able to make more concrete claims whether an organization can overcome the exploitative and ecologically unjust capitalist system, which could accumulate to systemic transformations if many organizations participate.

It might have initially sounded like a large, fundamental question that was posed in the beginning of this thesis: Could we overcome capitalism? The answer for such a question cannot be found in this study. However, if we break down the overarching term post-capitalism and clearly conceptualize how alternatives could look like, we get closer to it with each and every effort. This thesis has done so by investigating a mental dimension within the debate around post-capitalism. It gives hope that organizations exist that do not explicitly exhibit a

growth mind-set for their operations. It gives even more hope that organizations exist that radically contest values that are deeply engrained in the practice of our economic system, and vitalize their operations with different values. This research received evidence that capitalism is not as real as some claim it to be. Instead, “system change” has already happened in a few minds. Their rhythms of life, expectations for the future, work mentality and care for others are not just reason enough to contest *Capitalist Realism,* but should encourage to mentally act against it.

8. References

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9. Appendix

Appendix A. Interview Guide.

Interview Guide:

Part I: Introduction and Post-Capitalism

1) What is your organization doing?

2) How is your organization an alternative to more capitalist orientated organizations?

3) What is a post-capitalist organization in your perspective?

Part II: Social Acceleration

4) How are you managing time within your organization´s operations?

5) How would you describe the "pace" of your organization?

6) What influences the pace of your organization? // Why do you have the above mentioned pace level?

7) How often does the organization take time for reflection and contemplation? How valuable is this time?

Part III: Progress

8) Do you think "getting better" is an important part of your organization?

9) Why do you (not) want to get better at what you are doing?

10) To what extent do you measure your improvements? How?

Part IV: Flexible Non-Stop Work

11) What are everyone´s working hours in the organization?

12) How often to do you think about work outside working hours?

APPENDIX B. Preliminary Codebook (Deductive).

Code	Definition	Origin
Money	Placeholder Category that combines codes related to financial flows inside the organization; attitudes toward money and profit; non-commodified services; funding matters	Literature Review (e.g. Gibson-Graham (2008))
Labor-Relations	Placeholder Category with all statements addressing the labor dynamics: clear hierarchy vs. flat hierarchy; staffing policies; working hours; autonomy in the workplace	Literature Review (e.g. Srnicek& Williams (2016); Mason (2015))
Time	Placeholder Category integrating all aspects related to time perception; busyness; time rhythms; thinking about the future;	Theoretical Framework (mainly Welzer (2011) and Rosa (2013))
Progress	Placeholder Category on the concept of progress: motivation to improve organizational processes; the notion of efficiency; scaling up as an idea of progress; social& ecological impact; metrics utilized to quanitify progress	Theoretical Framework (mainly Welzer (2011))
Work	Placeholder Category that addresses statements dealing with perspectives on the idea of work. The category distinguishes itself from Labor-Relations by integrating views on work (e.g. is overwork evaluated as something	Theoretical Framework (mainly Welzer (2011))

	positive?) rather than technicalities (e.g. work models). Other codes could include identification with work, or critique towards work.	