

Positioning Political, Social, and Fantasmatic Logics of Neoliberal Ideology and Counteracting Humanist Ideals in an Extended Multi-Level Framework

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Positioning Political, Social, and Fantasmatic Logics of Neoliberal Ideology and Counteracting Humanist Ideals in an Extended Multi-Level Framework

- Conceptual contribution of **multi-level framework of complex and dynamic ideological forces** shaping contemporary societies. Theoretical building blocks are **interdisciplinary critiques of neoliberalism, (psycho-)analytic social psychology, and radical humanist ethics**.
 - Elaborating and extending an **existing model of political, social, and fantasmatic logics of neoliberal ideology** (Bal & Dóci, 2018), interactions among societal, organizational, and psychological structures and processes are subjected to dialectical analysis.
 - Proposed model positions dimensions of **neoliberal economistic ideology versus humanist ethical ideals** as antipodes on **three levels (macro, meso, micro)** and with respect to **three domains of relatedness (identity, interactions, institutions / self, others, authority)**.
 - **Societal (macro) level**, neoliberal **political logics** of individualism, competition, and instrumentality contrasted with humanist ideals of individuation, solidarity, emancipation.
 - **Organizational (meso) level**, **social logics** of neoliberal workplace as self-reliance, competition, rationalization; humanistic management advocates self-actualization, community, transformation.
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- **Individual (micro) level**, psychoanalytic theory suggests **fantasmatic neoliberal logics** of success, superiority, submission as antipodes to **humanist values** of personal evolution, equality, empowerment.
- **Social character theory** elaborates how neoliberal ideologies influence modes of **relatedness towards self, others, authorities**, resembling **ego-oriented, market-driven, authoritarian** societal tendencies.
- **Conversely, humanist ideals** are positioned as countervailing ethical, re-civilizing forces.
- Linking **psychoanalytic theories and theorizing on ideologies**, the model offers a dynamic framework for examining and **critiquing corrosive effects of neoliberal political economy**.
- As well as for envisioning and mobilizing **potentials for radical humanist transformation** on the levels of **society, organizations, and individuals**.

Bal, P. M., & Dóci, E. (2018). Neoliberal ideology in work and organizational psychology. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(5), 536-548.

Hornung, S. & Höge, T. (2022). Exploring mind and soul of social character: Dialectic psychodynamics of economism and humanism in society, organizations, and individuals. *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Spirituality and Psychology 2022* (pp. 16-35). Belgrade, Serbia: Tomorrow People Organization

Background: Conceptions of Ideology

► Initially, inherently critical concept (social critique as critique of ideology), later in psychology often value-neutral conceptions, where “ideology” refers to any belief system or configuration of ideas and attitudes, bound together by some overarching conceptual framework or narrative

► Neutral Conceptions

Integrated sets of mental models, beliefs, values providing a frame of reference to social groups for interpreting and evaluating their environments

→ **descriptive / prescriptive / orienting**

Shared framework of mental models that groups of individuals possess that provide an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how it should be structured (Denzau & North, 1994/2000).

Set of beliefs about the proper order of society and how it can be achieved (Erikson & Tedin, 2003)

Relatively coherent sets of beliefs that explain the world in cause-and-effect relations (Beyer, 1981)

► Critical Conceptions

Interest-guided nature; power of social elites to spread and uphold ideologies that obscure, justify, and perpetuate social inequalities and domination

→ **controlling / manipulation / deceiving**

A form of systematically distorted communication (Habermas, 1989)

Ideology is meaning in the service of power (Thompson, 1990)

The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class (Marx, 1848)

The taken-for-granted 'common sense' provides the strongest ideological effect (McKenna, 2004)

Review: Conceptualizations of Ideology in Management Studies



Ideology as Domination

How ideology is used by elites to maintain and consolidate an existing social order.
Ideology as distortion/manipulation

Ideology as Normative Logic

How ideology is used as a set of prescriptions and serves as road map

Ideology as Integration

How ideology serves to bring individuals and groups together in societies, organizations and occupations

Ideology as Interpretation

How ideology serves everyday perception of the world around us

Ideology as Legitimation

How ideology is used to legitimate authority and a specific social order.

Ideology as Object of Critique

Identifying and exposing ideology via a critique that aims to emancipate people

Ideology as Fantasy Structuring Social Reality

How the power of ideology revolves around a fantasy that is all the more powerful when people are cynical towards it

Background: System-Justifying Ideologies in Political Psychology

- **System Justification Theory** – people are motivated to justify and defend existing social, economic, and political arrangements as fair and legitimate
- **Examples:** Work Ethic, Meritocratic / Fair Market Ideology, Economic System Justification, Belief in a Just World, Power Distance, Social Dominance Orientation, Opposition to Equality, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Political Conservatism
- **Palliative Function:** Reduced negative affect, low support for social change and redistribution of resources, especially among those disadvantaged by the system
- **Ideology** as dominant (hegemonic) system of ideas, practices, and discourses serving powerful political-economic elites—constructed and disseminated “top-down” in society and adopted “bottom-up” based on psychological needs / vulnerabilities
- **Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs:** Internalizations of market-based political-economic ideas, practices, and discourses, justifying social and economic inequality

Jost, J. T., & Hunyady, O. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of system-justifying ideologies. *Current Directions in Psychol Sci*, 14(5), 260-265.

Jost, J. T. (2019). A quarter century of system justification theory: Questions, answers, criticisms, and societal applications. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 58, 263-314.

Vargas-Salfate, S., Paez, D., Liu, J. H., Pratto, F., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2018). A Comparison of Social Dominance Theory and System Justification: The Role of Social Status in 19 Nations. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44(7), 1060-1076.

Hennes, E. P., Nam, H. H., Stern, C., & Jost, J. T. (2012). Not all ideologies are created equal: Epistemic, existential, and relational needs predict system-justifying attitudes. *Social Cognition*, 30(6), 669-688.

Dialectics of Ideology: Society–Individuals / Top-down–Bottom-up

Jost, Federico & Napier (2009). Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions, and Elective Affinities. *Annual Review of Psychol*, 60(1), 307-337

Top Down: Elite Construction and Dissemination of the Discursive Superstructure

Top-down Processes

Acquisition of political attitudes by exposure to ideological bundles, socially constructed by political elites

Relational Motives

Desire to affiliate and establish relationships; need for personal or social identification, solidarity with others, and shared reality

System Justification

Motivation to defend, bolster, and justify the status quo; tendency to view current social arrangements as fair, legitimate, and desirable

Elective Affinity

Force of mutual attraction involving the structure and contents of belief systems and the motives of their adherents

Self-Selection—Socialization

Existential Motives

Drive to manage threatening circumstances; personal search for security, self-esteem, and meaning in life

Epistemic Motives

Drive to reduce uncertainty, complexity, or ambiguity; cognitive preference for certainty, structure, order, and/or closure

Bottom-up Processes

Underlying psychological needs and motives influencing receptiveness to specific ideological positions

Bottom Up: Psychological / Psychodynamic Origins of the Motivational Substructure

Background: Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs

- **Political-Economic Theory:** Elitist, anti-collectivist Mont Pèlerin Society postwar Europe; neoliberal experiment in fascist Chile (1973-1990) supported by Chicago School of Economics; Consensus of Washington, Thatcherism / Reaganism (1980s)
- **Hegemonic Status:** Largely unquestioned ideology of global financial capitalism, logics penetrating all areas of life; however, increasing criticism (e.g., financial crisis)
- **Market Fundamentalism:** Expansion / deregulation of markets, entrepreneurial / corporate “freedoms”; international finance / trade, low taxes for capital, privatization of state enterprises, demolition of welfare systems, labor and environmental laws ...
- **Neoliberal Governmentality:** Normative model of “homo oeconomicus”, rational utility-maximizers investing in own “human capital”; mode of internalized control.
- **Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs:** Adherence to political-economic logics of individualism, competition, and instrumentality (Bal & Dóci, 2018; Hornung et al., 2025)

Neoliberalism as the Systematic Counterattack on the Democratic Welfare State by Vested Economic Interests

Neoliberalism wages an incessant attack on democracy, public goods, and non-commodified values. Under neoliberalism everything either is for sale or is plundered for profit (Giroux, 2005)

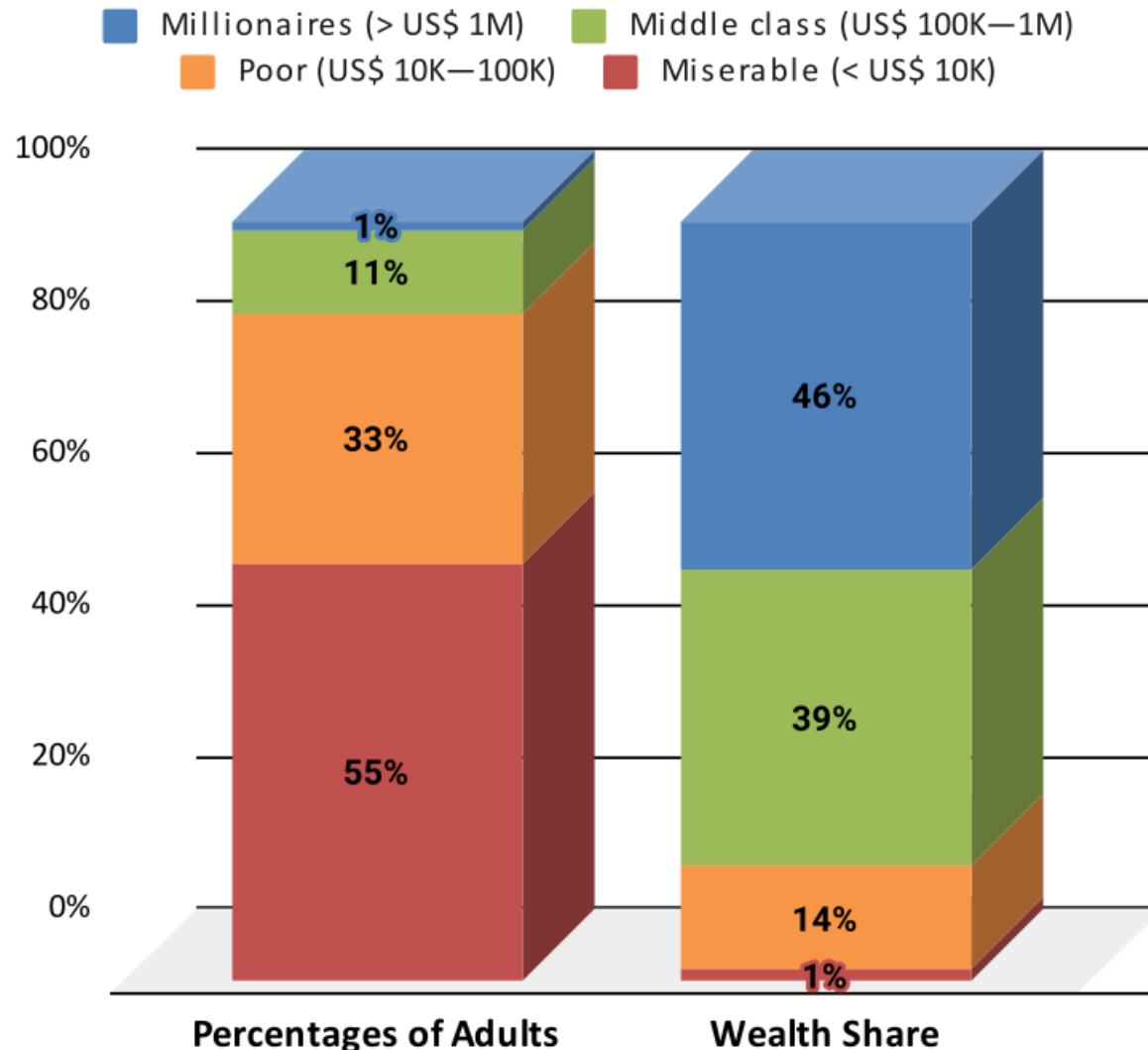
The whole point of neoliberalism is that the market mechanism should be allowed to direct the fate of human beings. The economy should dictate its rules to society, not the other way around (George, 1999)

Neoliberalism refers to the policies and processes whereby a handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit (McChesney, 1999)

Neoliberal capitalism is profoundly flawed when it comes to sustaining life-enhancing social, political, and economic institutions, reducing human beings to rational and financial self-interest (LaMothe, 2016)

Background: Neoliberalism as Socio-Economic Inequality

Global Wealth Distribution 2020 (Property)



Global inequality is extreme and has become more severe in recent years during the Covid-Crisis

The richest 1.1% of the adult population owns 45.8% of the total global wealth and are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity

The 10 richest men own more than the combined wealth of the bottom half of 3.1 billion people!

(Oxfam Reports, Credit Suisse Wealth Report).

The Ideology Debate in Work & Organizational Psychology

Neoliberal ideology in work and organizational psychology

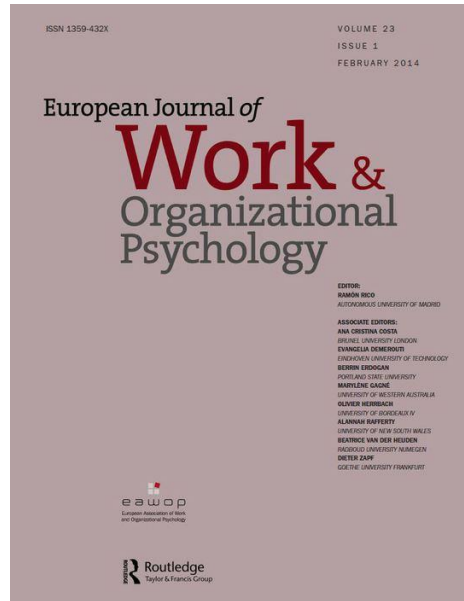
P. Matthijs Bal^{a,b} and Edina Dóci^c

European J of Work & Organizational Psychology, 27(5), Oct. 2018



E A W O P

European Association of Work
and Organizational Psychology



-Neoliberal Ideology in Work and Organizational Psychology

P. Matthijs Bal & Edina Dóci. p. 536-548

-Our Neoliberal Fantasies? A Preliminary Test of Research Trends in Leading Journals

Frederik Anseel, Saar Van Lysebetten, Roeliene Van Es & Julie Rosseel. p. 549-551.

-Commentary on Neoliberal Ideology in Work and Organizational Psychology

Angela J. Carter. p. 552-553

-Captured by Neo-liberalism: What Hope for WOP? Commentary on Bal & Dóci

David Guest & Gudela Grote. p. 554-555

-What are the Mechanisms? The Black Box of Neoliberalism

Cort W. Rudolph & Hannes Zacher. p. 556-557

-Ideology in Work and Organizational Psychology: The Responsibility of the Researcher

Edina Dóci & P. Matthijs Bal. p. 558-560.

“Furthermore, as we suggested in our original analysis, we as researchers need to reflect on how we ourselves are influenced by the very same widespread societal beliefs and ideologies.”

“A plea for workplace dignity as a potential alternative for the dominance of performance as outcome [...] results from the realization that much of our efforts and publications are devoted to a primarily neoliberal agenda.” (Doci & Bal, 2018)


ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of neoliberal ideology in workplace practices and in work and organizational psychology (WOP) research. It analyses how neoliberal ideology manifests in these two domains by using a prominent framework from the field of political theory to understand ideology through three different logics: political, social and fantasmatic logics. We explore the main neoliberal assumptions underlying existing practices in the workplace as well as in WOP research, how individuals are gripped by such practices, and how the status quo is maintained. The paper analyses how individuals in the contemporary workplace are henceforth influenced by neoliberalism, and how this is reflected in the practices and dominant paradigms within WOP. In particular, we focus on three ways neoliberalism affects workplaces and individual experiences of the workplace: through instrumentality, individualism and competition. The paper finishes with practical recommendations for researchers and practitioners alike on how to devote more attention to the, often implicit, role of neoliberal ideology in their work and research. The discussion elaborates on how alternative paradigms in the workplace can be developed which address the downsides of neoliberalism.

Neoliberal Ideology: Contents, Logics, Levels, & Processes

- **Dominant political-economic doctrine of money & markets (market radicalism)**
- **Prioritizing economic interests over human welfare (profit over people)**
- **Promoting individualism, instrumentality, competition (social & moral corrosion)**
- **Permeating political, social, fantasmatic (psychodynamic) logics**
- **Corresponding with levels / domains of society, organizations & individuals**
- **Top-down processes of political / social logic through employment / HR systems**
- **Bottom-up psychological processes influence values, beliefs & aspirations**
- **Ideological hegemony vs. resistance, counter-tendencies of humanistic values**

Table 1. Logics of neoliberal ideology in the workplace and WOP.

Neoliberal ideology		
Society	Workplace	Work and organizational psychology (WOP)
Political logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instrumentality ● Individualism ● Competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instrumentality ● Individualism ● Competition
Social logic  Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business case ● Individualization ● Decline of labour agreements ● Contracts ● Quantitative assessment ● Control and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Instrumentality of employees goals in scientific models, and topics of research ● Growing interest in individualized topics ● Practical recommendations to improve organizational performance ● Use of theory, models and concepts to explain contribution of individual employees to organizational performance
Fantasmatic logic Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom ● Meritocracy & social Darwinism ● Growth & progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harmonious employment relationship ● Social engineering

Source: Bal PM & Dóci E (2018) Neoliberal Ideology in Work and Organizational Psychology. EJWOP 27, 1-13.

Background: Neoliberal Ideology and Planetary Crisis

Three-dimensional political logic of neoliberalism by Bal & Dóci (2018) adopted as basis for psychological survey instrument and research program (Unterrainer, Höge & Hornung, 2019)

Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs Questionnaire (NIBQ): 3 Dimensions, 6–8 items each, capturing internalized political-economic attitudes, psychometric properties tested

(1) Individualism – emphasis on responsibility, self-interest of the individual

(2) Competition – need to dominate and outperform others to be successful

(3) Instrumentality – economic performance as a criterion for human worth

Bal, P. M., & Dóci, E. (2018). Neoliberal ideology in work and organizational psychology. *EJWOP*, 27(5), 536-548.

Internalized ideological beliefs as dialectic view to overcome individualism in psychology

Ideology as distorted meaning in service of power – domination through indoctrination

→ **System-justifying ideologies constructed / disseminated top-down by political-economic elites**

→ **Adopted bottom-up based on psychological needs / vulnerabilities (epistemic/existential/relational)**

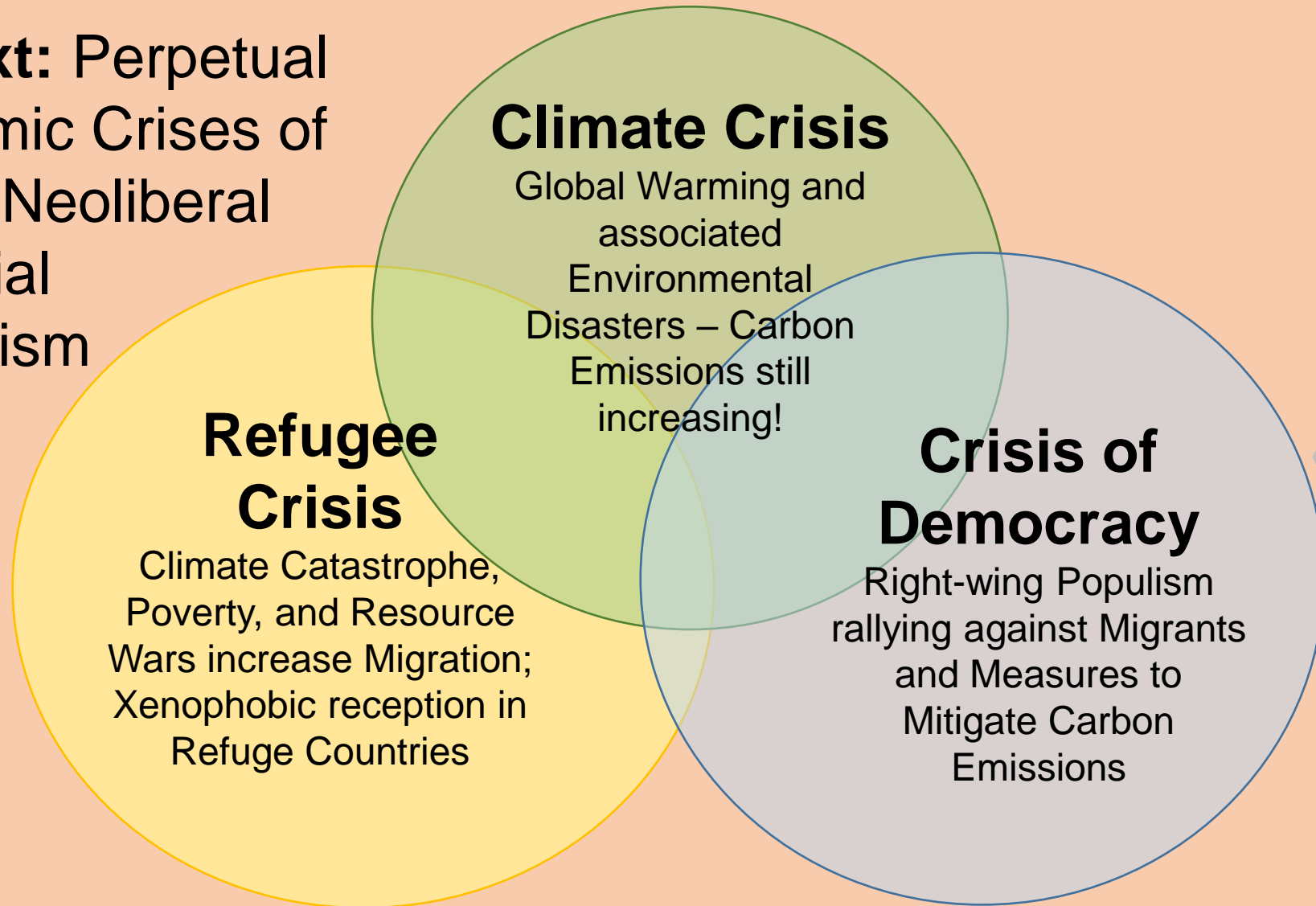
Jost, J.T., Federico, C.M., & Napier, J.L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Rev of Psychol*, 60(1), 307-337

Social-ecological polycrisis increases need for palliative function (safety, security, structure, order) → Ideology as consequence and condition for perpetuation of crisis?

Boukalas, C. (2023). A state without a future: Neoliberal despotism, crisis-fighting, and government through fear. *J of Political Power*, 16(3), 322-344.

Planetary Socio-Ecological Multi-/Poly-/Omnicrisis as Compounding of Ecological, Economic, Social, and Political Crises

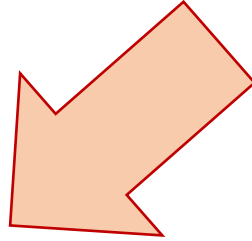
Context: Perpetual
Economic Crises of
Global Neoliberal
Financial
Capitalism



Objective:
Understanding
and challenging
the socially
and intellectually
corrosive
psychology of
hegemonic
neoliberal
ideology in
current
crises

The Psychological Significance of Neoliberal Ideologies in Current Social and Ecological Crises: Three Exemplary Studies

Climate Crisis – Carbon Emissions



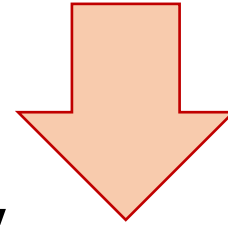
Study 1

System Justification, Neoliberal Ideology, and Individual Climate-Protection

Survey Study (N = 344)

Controlling for environmental attitudes, neoliberal ideology mediates negative relationship between system justification and climate-protective behavior, which, together with income, predicts personal carbon footprint

Refugee Crisis – Eroding Solidarity



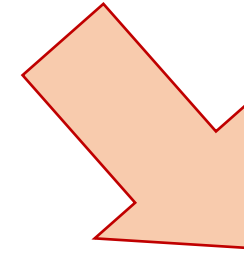
Study 2

Neoliberal Ideology, Moral Disengagement, and Civic Engagement for Refugees

Survey Study (N = 276)

Moral disengagement from the treatment of asylum seekers mediates a negative relationship between neo-liberal ideology and prosocial civic engagement for people seeking refuge

Crisis of Democracy – Right-Wing Populism



Study 3

Internalization of Neoliberal Ideology among the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged

Interview Study (N = 9)

Individuals in precarious life situations and unemployment; internalization and psychological functions of neo-liberal ideology for reducing cognitive dissonance and appeasing epistemic and existential motives

Neoliberal Ideological Beliefs – Implications of Studies

- ***Neoliberal Ideology relates*** negatively to climate-protective behavior, and attitudes towards refugees and civic engagement for human rights
- ***Neoliberal Ideology reproduces*** justification of societal inequalities and social tensions in the belief systems of those relatively deprived by the system
- ***Self-Reinforcing Hegemony:*** Escalating socio-economic crises lead to more support for neoliberal ideology to reduce dissonance, insecurity, threats
- ***Social Corrosion of False Consciousness:*** Neoliberal ideological erodes attitudes and behaviors that could lead to socio-ecological transformation
- ***Xenophobic and Authoritarian Turn:*** Amalgamation of market ideology with crypto-fascist themes – Social Dominance Orientation, Group-based Enmity
- **How to break vicious circle of ideology? Counter-hegemony of radical humanist values? Central question of Critical Theory**

The Ideological Rift in Organizational Scholarship

Traditions – Two broader antagonistic undercurrents of economic vs. social paradigms: instrumental, profit-oriented, technocratic vs. developmental, people-oriented, democratic

Economistic (Neoliberal) Ideology

Dominating political-economic doctrine; utilitarian philosophy and economic theory; interests of financial and corporate elites

Self-interest, money and markets to coordinate all areas of society, blocking or dismantling regulation / redistribution for welfare and social justice (homo oeconomicus, laissez-faire, market radicalism)

Underlies approaches of scientific management, personnel assessment and selection, incentive schemes, high-performance organizations

Permeates organizations via socially corrosive logics of individualism, competition, instrumentality

Radical Humanist Ideals

Largely marginalized antithetical perspective; humanistic, critical and existential philosophy, psychology, social science

Inherent human value, agency and capacity for moral responsibility and actions; work as medium for personality development, self-actualization, growth, social consciousness

Research on organizational democracy, sociotechnical systems, human relations, quality of working life, work redesign

Promising alternative ways of organizing, promoting individuation, solidarity, emancipation

Tensions – Humanistic values / ideals vs. legitimizing, prioritizing & promoting economic performance & profit imperatives; resulting conditions detrimental to health & wellbeing

The Ideological Rift in Organizational Scholarship

Neoliberal / Utilitaristic Ideology

Projects of Economic Rationalization

Neoliberal ideology as dominating, hegemonial belief system, permeating organizations, society and research via principles of **individualism, competition, instrumentality**

Utilitarian and economic philosophy of money & markets, system-justification, profitability, legitimacy; “The ruling ideology at any time has always been the ideology of the ruling class.”

Historically installed in waves of **economic rationalization domination** (Scientific Mgt, Bus Reengineering, Flexibility), prioritizing research on selection, performance, proactivity

Ideological frictions pacified by naturalizing market forces, myths of employee-employer interest-congruence & effortless performance, focusing on privileged working populations

Self-masking omnipresence of neoliberalism, unconsciously **shaping beliefs & thinking** of scholars, inoculating itself as the embodiment of rationality beyond ideological interests

Humanist / Emancipatory Ideals

Projects of Social Transformation

Humanistic perspective on work as source of meaning and personality development, rooted in critical, and existential psychology, values **individuation, solidarity, emancipation**

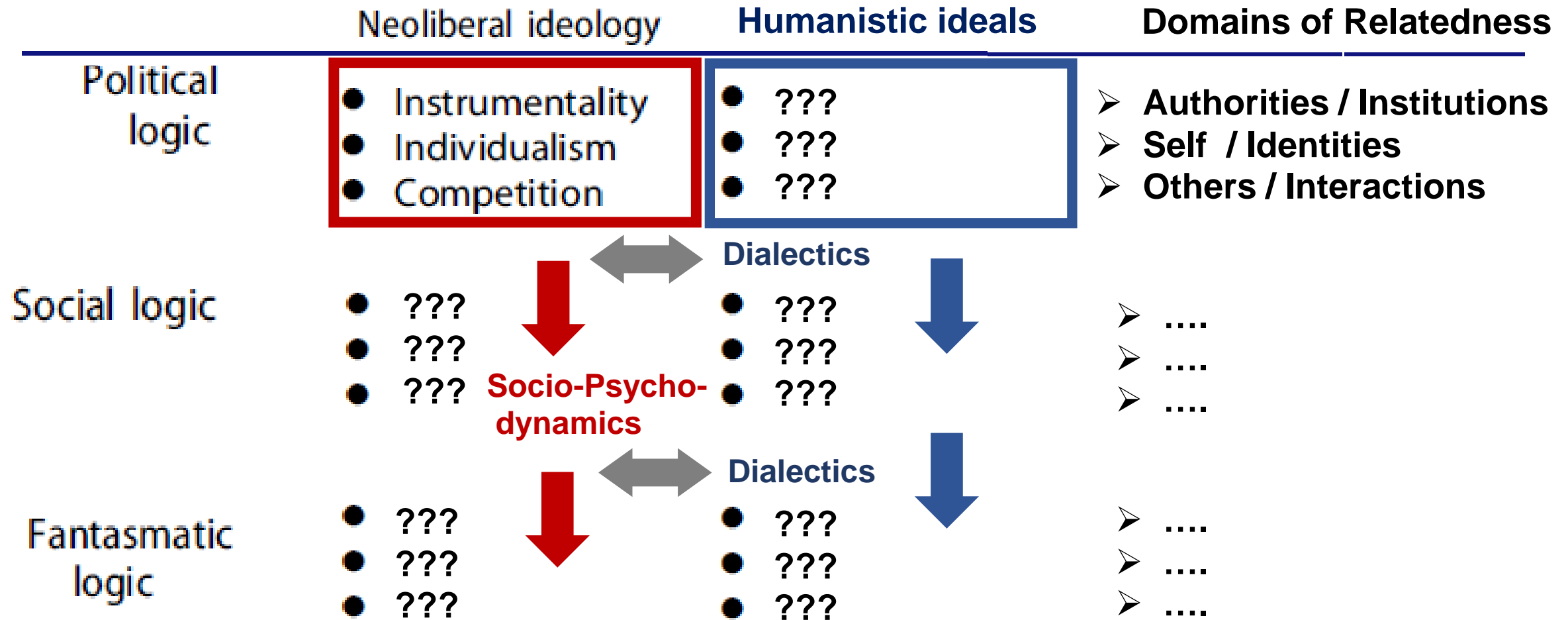
Counterbalancing ideals, historical movements & research on alternative work organization, humanistic management, group work, redesign, organiz. democracy, human relations

Emancipatory counter-movements often **marginalized and excluded** as unrealistic, unscientific, uneconomic – or **reinterpreted, assimilated, neutralized** by the mainstream

Work & Organizational Psychology and related fields as **ideologically highly contested territory** at core of the capitalist production and societal reproduction process

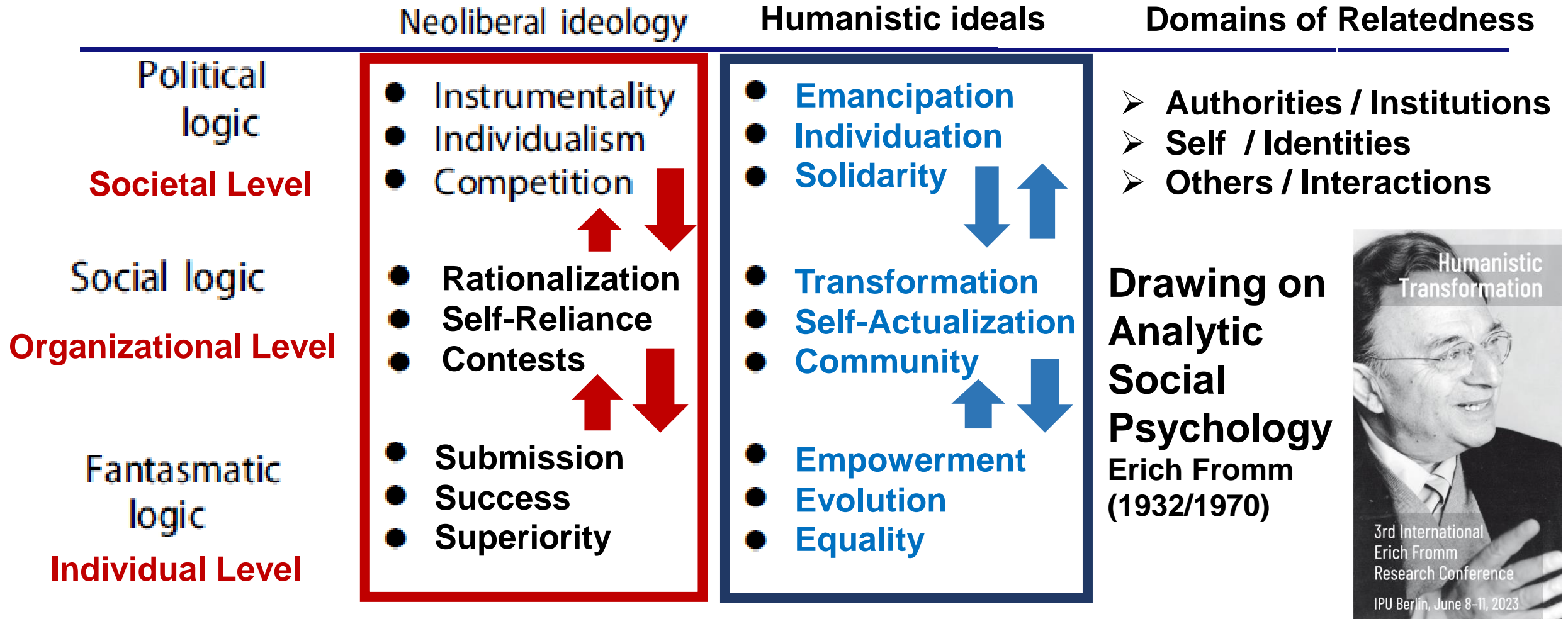
Struggle of Critical Management Studies instructional for subtle mechanisms **establishing scientific hegemony** through marginalization, assimilation and normalization

Revised and Extended Matrix Model based on Bal & Dóci (2018)



- **Conceptual Development:** Neoliberal economic doctrines vs. antithetical humanist concepts across abstract political (societal / macro), applied social (organizational / meso), and implied psychological “fantasmatic” (individual / micro) logics / levels – and domains of relatedness

Revised and Extended Matrix Model based on Bal & Dóci (2018)



- **Conceptual development to evaluate workplace practices, basis for complementary scale**
- Hornung, Höge, & Unterrainer (2023). *Normative foundations of neoliberal economism and radical humanism in society, organizations, and individuals*. 3rd Int Erich Fromm Research Conf on Humanistic Transformation. IPU Berlin

Social Character Theory (Erich Fromm)

- Posits that **socio-economic structure of society shapes personal orientations and character structures** of members in a way that they want to do what they should to do
- Combines the **Marxian dictum that material conditions of life determine consciousness** with **dynamic conception of character in psychoanalytic theory**; social character results from the **interaction** between socio-economic structures and the psychological structure of individuals
- **Theoretically developing the concept, social-philosopher and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, identified ideal types of social character** in different historical phases of the capitalist political-economic system, such as the **hoarding, receptive, authoritarian, and marketing character**
- **Ego-oriented character** later identified as a complementary ideal-type in advanced Western capitalist societies increasingly governed by **neoliberal doctrine and ideological hegemony**
- Societies can promote or impede realization of human potentials; **capitalist societies evaluated as psychologically “insane”**, promoting destructive (e.g., egoism, greed, rivalry) and impeding “productive” character orientations (e.g., altruism, dedication, growth).
- Compatible with this theory, focal model of **neoliberal ideology specifies individualism, competition, and instrumentality as dominant political logics manifesting in psychodynamic fantasmatic logics relating to ego-oriented, marketing, and authoritarian character**

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals in Society, Organizations, and Individuals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
Abstract Political Logics – Societal Macro-Level – Economy and Culture			
Neoliberal Ideology vs.			
Radical Humanist Ideas			
Applied Social Logics – Organizational Meso-Level – Work and Employment			
Neoliberal Workplace vs.			
Humanistic Management			
Implied Fantasmatic Logics – Individual Micro-Level – Socio-Psychodynamics			
Neoliberal Social Character vs.			
Radical Humanist Consciousness			

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals in Society, Organizations, and Individuals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
Political Logics	Societal	Macro	Level
Neoliberal Ideology	Individualism	Competition	Instrumentality
Radical Humanist Ideas	Individuation	Solidarity	Emancipation
Social Logics	Organizational	Meso	Level
Neoliberal Workplace	Self-Reliance	Contests	Rationalization
Humanistic Management	Self-Actualization	Community	Transformation
Fantasmatic Logics	Individual	Micro	Level
Neoliberal Social Character	Success	Superiority	Submission
Radical Humanist Consciousness	Evolution	Equality	Empowerment

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
	Societal Level	Societal Level	Societal Level
Political Logics of Neoliberal Ideology	Individualism Naturalization of individual self-interest and attribution of full responsibility for one's own life situation; shift of societal risk toward individuals	Competition Markets as best way to ensure progress and optimal allocation of resources in all areas of society; competition and rivalry as inherent to human nature	Instrumentality Objectification and utilization of humans for particular interests according to cost-benefit calculations for maximizing performance and profits
Political Logics of Radical Humanist Ideas	Individuation Emphasis on conditions for personality development and self-transcendence; overcoming self-interest in meaningful social contexts and relationships	Solidarity Empathy, supportive social relationships, collaboration with others; sharing resources with those facing adversity; universality of human experience	Emancipation Revealing, overcoming and transforming limiting power-dependence relationships; liberation from oppression and exploitation
	Organizational Level	Organizational Level	Organizational Level
Social Logics of the Neoliberal Workplace	Self-Reliance Contingent employment with limited commitments; employees responsible for performance, health, learning, and careers	Contests Competitive allocation of performance-based rewards based on zero-sum, winner-take-all-type tournaments	Rationalization Focus on increasing metrics of economic performance and efficiency; work intensification; employees as human resources
Social Logics of Humanistic Management	Self-Actualization Secure working conditions, individual and collective autonomy, self-determination, learning, socio-moral development	Community Seeking common good in diversity and pluralism; consideration of personal needs, win-win strategies, generative resources	Transformation Alternative organizing beyond hierarchies, coercion, and manipulation; promoting participation and democratization
	Individual Level	Individual Level	Individual Level
Fantasmatic Logics of Neoliberal Social Character	Success Idealizing excellence, outstanding achievements, and performance; exceptionality; overcoming odds of the situation	Superiority Focus on outperforming and dominating others; winner-loser mentality; inequality as result of individual differences, effort	Submission Responding adaptively to market forces; conforming with social roles, seeking status and recognition; system-justification
Fantasmatic Logics of Radical Humanist Consciousness	Evolution Attaining psychological growth and personality development; knowledge, self-realization, insight, higher-level consciousness	Equality Universality of human experience, dignity, interconnectedness; perspective-taking for equal rights and social justice	Empowerment Active role in radical social reform; challenging and overcoming power structures, oppression, exploitation and inequality

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
	Societal Level	Societal Level	Societal Level
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Political Logics of Radical Humanist Ideas	Individuation Emphasis on conditions for personality development and self-transcendence; overcoming self-interest in meaningful social contexts and relationships	Solidarity Empathy, supportive social relationships, collaboration with others; sharing resources with those facing adversity; universality of human experience	Emancipation Revealing, overcoming and transforming limiting power-dependence relationships; freedom from oppression, objectification, and exploitation

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
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Social Logics of the Neoliberal Workplace	Self-Reliance Contingent employment with limited commitments; employees responsible for performance, health, learning, and careers	Contests Competitive allocation of performance-based rewards to individual employees based on zero-sum, winner-take-all-type tournaments	Rationalization Focus on increasing metrics of economic performance and efficiency, work intensification; employees as human resources
Social Logics of Humanistic Management	Self-Actualization Secure working conditions to support individual and collective autonomy, self-determination, learning, and socio-moral development	Community Seeking common good in diversity and pluralism; consideration of personal needs, win-win strategies, generative resources	Transformation Alternative organizing beyond hierarchies, coercion, and manipulation; promoting participation and democratization

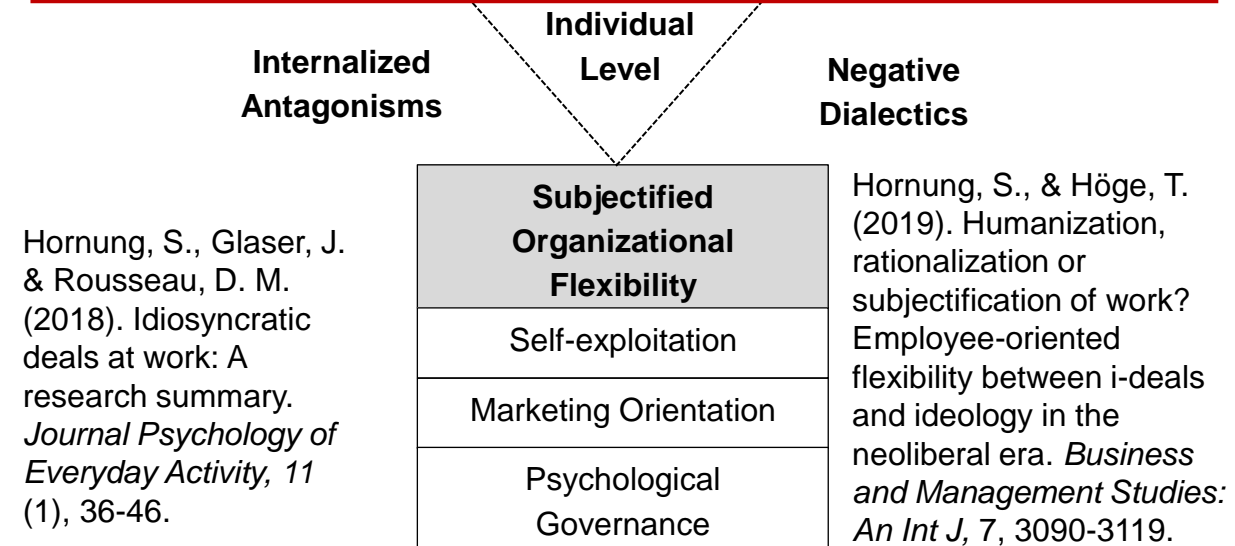
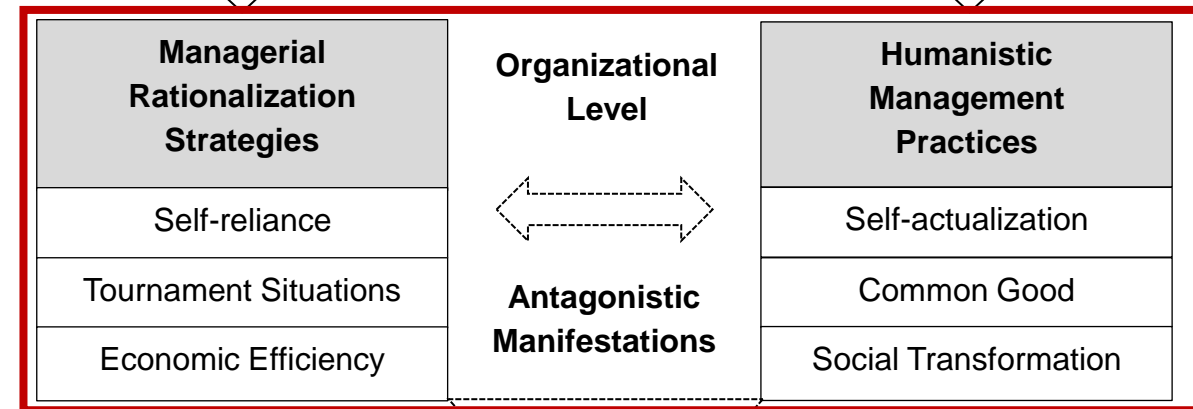
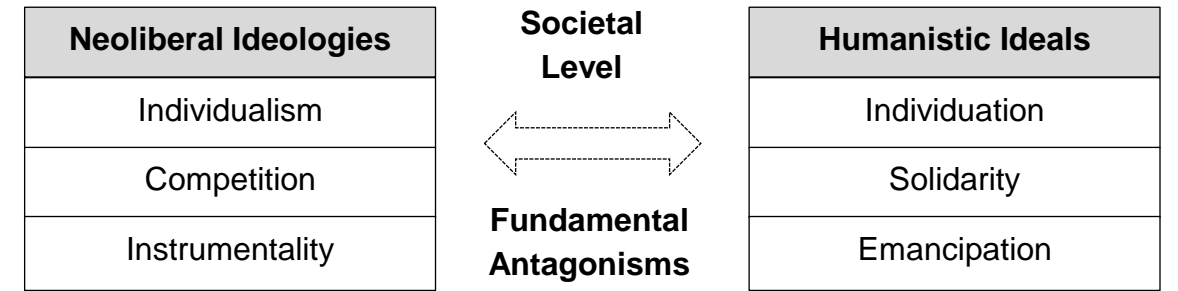
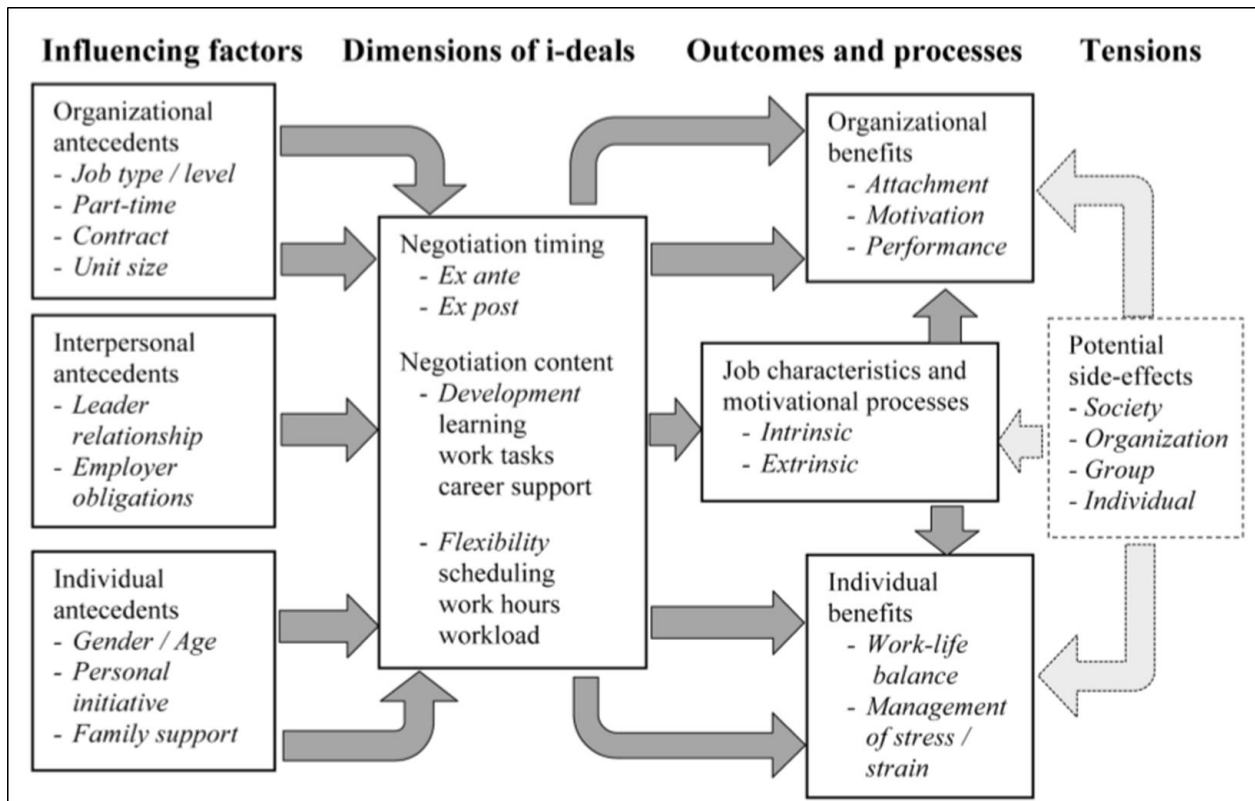
Hornung, S., & Höge T. (2019). Dialectics of workplace flexibility between humanistic ideal and neoliberal ideology—preliminary considerations. *Journal Psychologie des Alltagshandelns / Psychology of Everyday Activity*, 12(2), 73-83.

Hornung, S., & Höge, T. (2019). Humanization, rationalization or subjectification of work? Employee-oriented flexibility between i-deals and ideology in the neoliberal era. *Business and Management Studies: An International Journal*, 7, 3090-3119.

Research on Workplace Practices and Flexibility

Application: Developed as criteria to analyze, evaluate, and design work / HRM practices

- **Flexible workplace practices** (Hornung et al. 2018/19)
- **Research on occupational health** (Hornung et al. 2022/23)



Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals

	Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
	Individual Level	Individual Level	Individual Level
Fantasmatic Logics of Neoliberal Social Character	Success Idealizing excellence, outstanding achievements, and performance; exceptionality; overcoming odds of the situation	Superiority Focus on outperforming and dominating others, winner-loser mentality; inequality as result of individual differences and effort	Submission Responding adaptively to market forces; conforming with social roles, seeking status and recognition; system-justification
Fantasmatic Logics of Radical Humanist Consciousness	Evolution Attaining psychological growth and personality development; knowledge, self-realization, insight, higher-level consciousness	Equality Realizing the universality of human experience, dignity, and interconnectedness; perspective- taking for equal rights and social justice	Empowerment Active role in radical social reform, challenging and overcoming power structures, oppression, exploitation and inequality

- Neoliberal fantasies of success, superiority, submission, reflect **ego-oriented, marketing-oriented, authoritarian components in social character theory**; logics of humanist consciousness resemble **productive orientations**

Hornung, Höge, & Unterrainer (2023). *Normative foundations of neoliberal economism and radical humanism in society, organizations, and individuals*. 3rd Int Erich Fromm Research Conf on Humanistic Transformation. IPU Berlin

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals in Society, Organizations, and Individuals

Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
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Individualism	Competition	Instrumentality
Self-Reliance	Contests	Rationalization
Success	Superiority	Submission

Self (Identity / Person)	Others (Interactions / People)	Authorities (Institutions / Power)
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Individuation	Solidarity	Emancipation
Self-Actualization	Community	Transformation
Evolution	Equality	Empowerment

Abstract Political Logics – Societal Macro-Level – Economy and Culture

Applied Social Logics – Organizational Meso-Level – Work and Employment

Implied Fantasmatic Logics – Individual Micro-Level – Socio-Psychodynamics

PARALLELS AND CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ANALYTICAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH ON IDEOLOGIES

1) Multi-level Approach:	Society – Organizations – Individual (Established Levels Analysis – Macro/Meso/Micro) Political Logic – Social Logic – Fantasmatic Logic (Ideologies) Interests – Institutions – Identities (Domains of Critical Analysis) Reciprocal Determination / Top-down & Bottom-up Processes (System Justification)
2) Socio-Critical Approach:	Social Character as specific form of internalized social control (subjectification) Historical transition from coercive and ideological to biopolitical power and control Progression: Formal & Real (Marx) to Normative & Formative subsumption (Foucault)
3) Dialectic Approach:	Antagonism of genuine Humanist Ideas and interest-guided Neoliberal Ideologies 1) Individuation vs. Individualism (→ Self) 2) Solidarity vs. Competition (→ Others) 3) Emancipation vs. Instrumentality (→ Authority)
4) Social-Psychological:	Social relatedness as criteria for structuring content dimensions; Relationship to 1) Self (Person/Identity) 2) Others (People/Interactions) 3) Authority (Power/Institutions)
5) Psychoanalytical:	Formation of psychological deep-structure through socio-dynamic processes / fantasies 1) Evolution vs. Success (→ Ego-oriented Social Character) 2) Equality vs. Superiority (→ Marketing Social Character) 3) Empowerment vs. Submission (→ Authoritarian Social Character) (→ Mediation through organizational / institutional practices)
6) Reflexive Approach:	Complementarity of external and internal critical insights; unity of denaturalization and critique of societal ideologies and critical self-reflection and expansion of consciousness

EXPLORING MODEL DIALECTICS AND DYNAMICS

- Model not devised as static, but assumes **socio-psychodynamic and dialectic interdependencies**, cascading across levels via bi-directional processes of top-down and bottom-up influence, intersecting within individuals, **shaping states of consciousness and social character structures**
- Starting point on **societal level** is a trinity of neoliberal political logics, prescribing **individualism, competition, and instrumentality** as core principles governing advanced Western capitalist societies
- In a dialectic analysis, economistic and socio-morally corrosive political logics are antagonistically counterbalanced on the societal level by **radical humanist ideas of individuation, solidarity, and emancipation**, representing productive relationships to self, others, and authority
- On the **organizational level**, neoliberal political logics manifest in workplace practices **embodying social logics of self-reliance, contests, and rationalization**, whereas humanistic management practices emphasize oppositional principles of **self-actualization, community, and transformation**
- These manifested **social logics, in turn, mediate or channel** socializing forces of political logics from the societal level towards shaping unconscious (sub- or semi-conscious) **psychodynamic imageries and narratives (fantasmatic logics) on the individual level** (and vice versa)

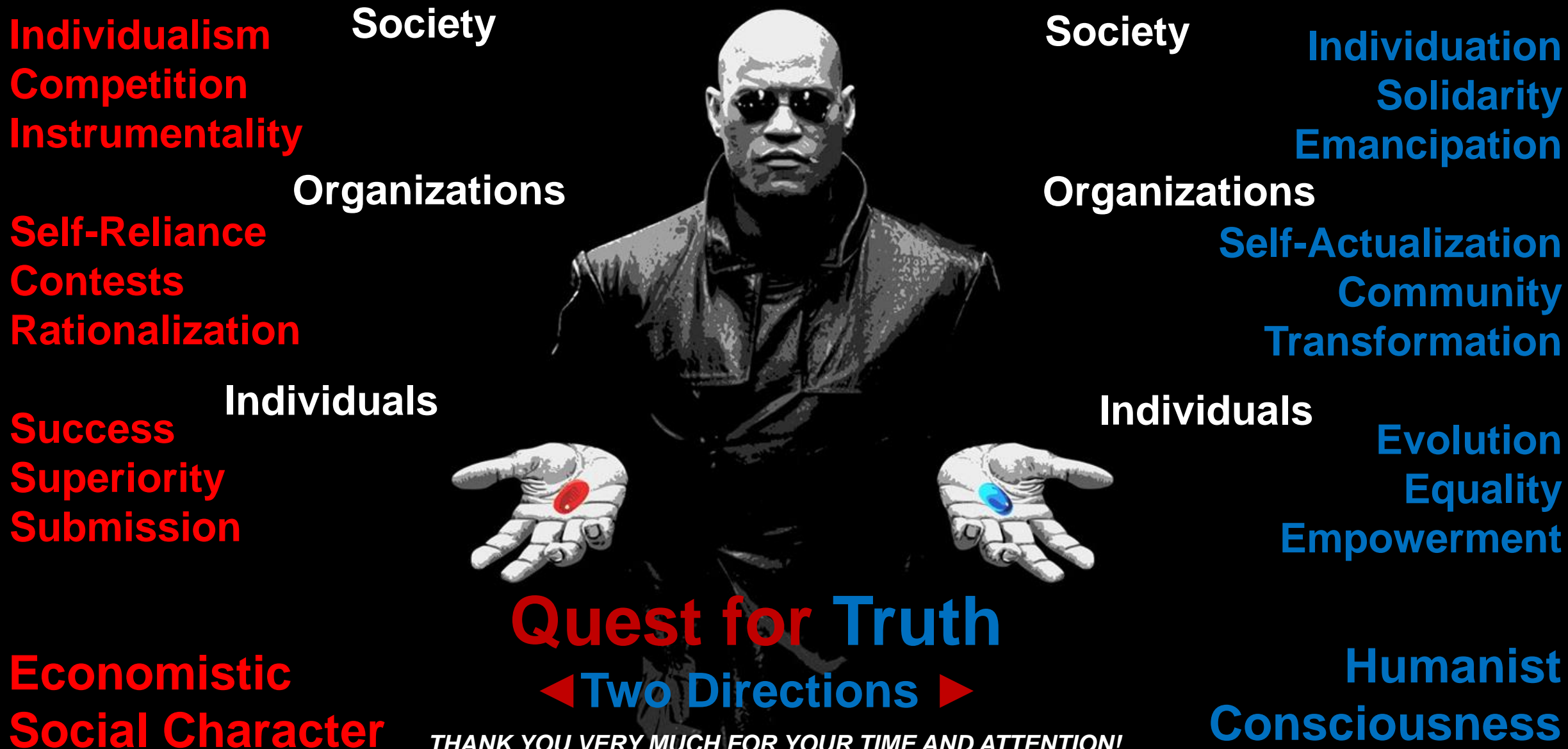
EXPLORING MODEL DIALECTICS AND DYNAMICS

- On the **individual level**, higher-order political and social logics resurface in **semi-, sub-, unconscious fantasies or imaginaries**, reflecting manifestations of neoliberal ideologies or humanist ideas
- In psychoanalytic theory, archetypal neoliberal fantasies of **success, superiority, submission**, reflect **ego-oriented, marketing-oriented, authoritarian components in social character theory**
- Humanistic imaginaries emphasize narratives of **antithetical ideals of humanist consciousness, resembling productive orientations** towards **personal evolution, equality, and empowerment**
- Humanist principle of **synergistic unity of insights** regarding **external and internal social realities** emphasizes the **complementarity** of the **outward directed** denaturalization and critique of societal ideologies with **inward directed** critical self-reflection and psychological development

OUTLOOK AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Presented matrix of constructs offers **abundant pathways for empirical research** drawing on the broader the **critique of neoliberalism and business ethics**, which are largely unconnected.
- While **empirical psychological research** has started to address the socially corrosive side of neoliberal ideology, the **antipodes of radical humanist ideals have received very little attention**
- **In dialectics of hope**, radical critique of **dystopian status quo** must be complemented by **utopian perspective** on **potentials of radical humanism and critical-emancipatory theory and praxis**

Multi-Level Dialectic Model of Neoliberal Ideology and Humanist Ideals



Quest for Truth

◀ **Two Directions** ▶

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION!

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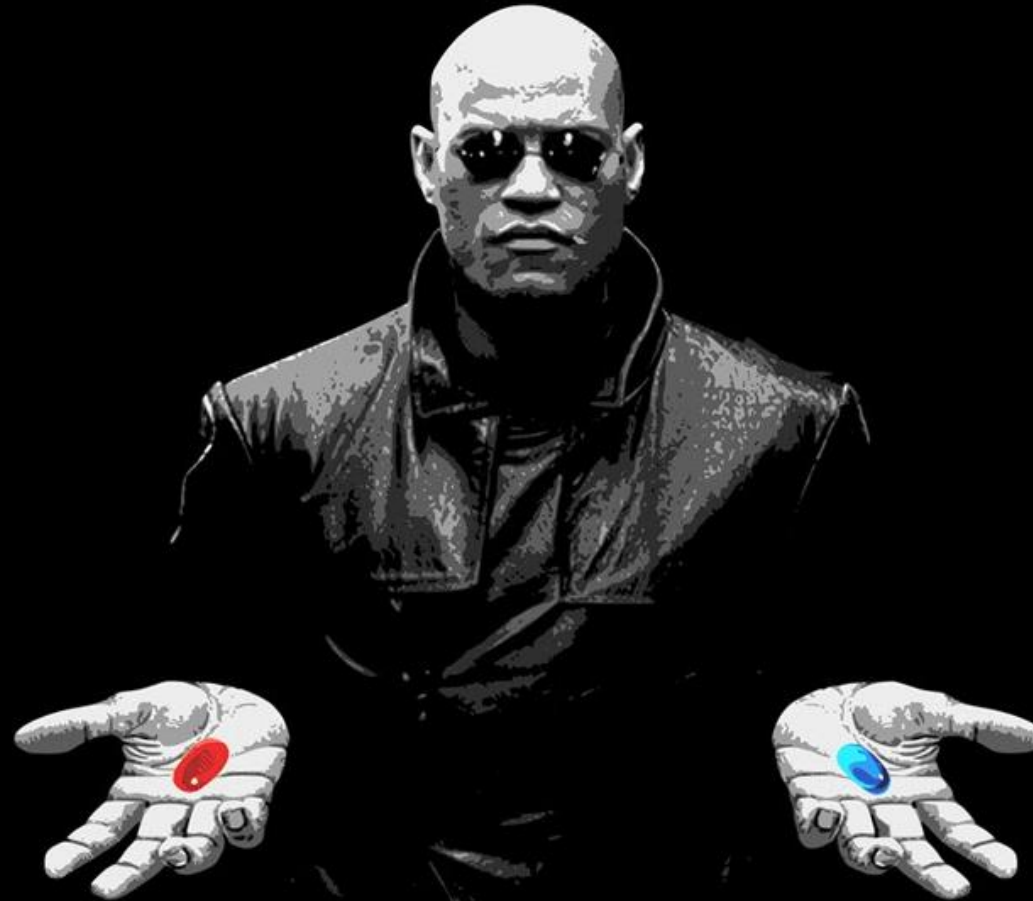
Synergistic Unity of Insights regarding External and Internal Social Realities

The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.

—KARL MARX

No, our science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere.

—SIGMUND FREUD



External

Denaturalization
and Critique of
Societal Ideologies

Internal

Critical Self-reflection
and Psychological
Development

Quest for Truth

◀ Two Directions ▶

Erich Fromm (1962) Beyond the chains of illusion: My encounter with Marx and Freud.