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ORIGINAL PAPER

Social Acceleration: A Challenge for Companies? Insights for Business Ethics from Resonance Theory

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Abstract
In modern capitalist societies, companies are exposed to enormous pressure to accelerate. However, it has increasingly become apparent that the social and economic acceleration which is the result of systemic imperatives tends to produce conflict both on the micro-level of personal temporal patterns and rhythms and on the macro-ecological level, where it tends to undermine the proper times for natural regeneration and reproduction. Corporations are increasingly called upon as corporate citizens to fulfil their responsibilities to stakeholders such as employees or ecosystems. Business ethics approaches therefore seek to develop strategies for fulfilling this responsibility in view of these conflicts created by social acceleration. In this contribution, we first present a diagnosis of acceleration imperatives for companies based on a sociological analysis of social acceleration. Then we examine the normative aspects of conflicts created by acceleration for employees and the ecosphere using the sociological conception of resonance. We attempt to articulate conceptually the normative requirements for a business ethics which are capable of dealing with the problems of social acceleration in corporations with a particular focus on a resonant stakeholder approach.

Keywords Social acceleration · Resonance · Stakeholder ethics · Stress · Sustainability

Introduction

Fifteen years ago, in his book "Social Acceleration" (Rosa, 2013), Hartmut Rosa identified and analysed a problematic development in the dominant space–time regime of modern societies. The core of the diagnosis was the insight that modern societies are only able to maintain and reproduce their structures in a mode of *dynamic stabilization*. This means that societies as a whole—as well as individual corporations within them—have become structurally dependent on constant increase in the form of growth, acceleration and innovation in order to maintain their institutional status quo (Rosa, 2013; 308ff.; Rosa et al., 2016).

The sociological definition of social acceleration and the identification of a requirement for steady increase and optimization both at the individual level and at the level of society have led to broad academic discussions and further analyses. On the individual level, research has been conducted on the constraints of self-optimization and the personal conduct of life,[1] while on the societal level, discussions have focussed on the paradoxes of the capitalist economic system.[2] Yet, what has largely been missing from

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[1] See, for example, the results of the project „Aporien der Perfektionierung in der beschleunigten Moderne. Gegenwärtiger kultureller Wandel von Selbstentwürfen, Beziehungsgestaltungen und Körperpraktiken " (Aporias of Perfection in Accelerated Modernity. Contemporary Cultural Change in Self-Designs, Relationship Formations and Body Practices) by Vera King, Hartmut Rosa and Begnina Gerisch, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation (among others: King et al., 2019). See also Wajcman and Dodd (2017).

[2] See, for example, the results and publications that have emerged from the DFG research group "Landnahme, Beschleunigung,

the discussion on social acceleration up to this point is an analysis of the causes and consequences of speed at the meso-level of society as exemplified, for example, by companies.[3] In the following, we will use a sociological analysis of acceleration in order to analyse specific problems which have been induced by acceleration for two categories of corporate stakeholder; for employees (as internal stakeholders) on the one hand and for ecosystems (as external stakeholders) on the other.

Time and temporal regimes shape organizational and managerial processes within corporations[4] in a variety of different ways. As these processes confront different systemic constraints relating to acceleration, the measurement of time in planning, producing, accounting, and delivery processes becomes increasingly necessary. This can lead to manifold tensions and ethical conflicts on the part of corporations and their stakeholders. We will develop this diagnosis in relation to specific categories of stakeholder in the form of employees and ecosystems in Sect. "Diagnosis: Forms Of Social Acceleration And Corporations". As we will show, conflicts related to regimes of temporality have a normative dimension since they are related to individual as well as collective conceptions of the good life.

Based on the diagnosis in Sect. "Diagnosis: Forms Of Social Acceleration And Corporations", we will reflect on these normative aspects using the framework of resonance theory. The insights and consequences of resonance theory for corporations and for corporate relationships to employees and ecosystems will then be developed in Sect. "A Sociological Perspective: Resonance Theory and Corporations".

Business ethics approaches[5]—and stakeholder theory in particular—are concerned with the creation of good relationships between corporations and stakeholders in order to avoid costly conflicts and to respond to requirements to act as responsible corporate citizens. As a result of these considerations, business ethics tends to contribute to an increase in wealth—understood in its broadest sense. Therefore, on the basis of insights developed in Sect. "A Sociological Perspective: Resonance Theory and Corporations", in the Sect. "Insights For Business Ethics from Resonance Theory" we will develop some further ideas and concrete suggestions for the improvement of stakeholder relationships with employees and the natural environment. These will suggest ways of meeting the requirements placed on corporations when faced with the speed imperatives of contemporary markets.

Diagnosis: Forms of Social Acceleration and Corporations

In order to understand the social acceleration imperative, it is crucial to bear in mind the categorical distinction made between three forms of social acceleration,[6] namely technological acceleration, the acceleration of social change and the acceleration of the pace of life. For each of these three dimensions, social acceleration can be defined *as an increase in quantity* of one sort or another *per unit of time*. We may speak of social acceleration, for example, when there is an increase in the number of miles we can travel per hour (*technological acceleration*), when there is a rise in the number of fashion trends we see per decade (*acceleration of social change*), or when there is an increase in the number of discernible activities a person undertakes in the course of a day (acceleration of the pace of life) (Rosa, 2013; 71ff.).

Social acceleration thus manifests itself according to a range of different forms, and this leads to a variety of different phenomena and problems within corporations. The first form of acceleration, *technological acceleration*, can be defined as *the acceleration of goal-directed processes*, and is primarily generated by technology (Virilio, 1998, 2000, 2006). Processes of transport, communication and production have become faster as a result of increases in average speeds, and this speed has led to the multiplication both of cycles of consumption and of organizational,

Footnote 2 (continued)

Aktivierung. Dynamik und (De-)Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften" (Appropriation, Acceleration, Activation. Dynamics and De (Stabilization of Modern Growth Societies)—in short: Kolleg Postwachstumsgesellschaften (Post-Growth Societies Research Group)—led by Klaus Dörre, Stephan Lessenich and Hartmut Rosa at the University of Jena (among others: Rosa et al., 2016). Cf. also the special issue on 'Aceleración y modernidad: estructuras temporales, cambio social y crítica', in: Pléyade 27 revista de humanidades y ciencias sociales, Vol. 27 (2021), with contributions by Arthur Bueno, Vera King, Mauro Basaure, Anders Petersen, Celeste Viedma, Héctor Cataldo and Antoine Faure, Gustavo Bustos Gajardo (Bueno, 2021) and the special issue 'Hartmut Rosa's Concept of Resonance', in: *Journal of Political Power* with contributions by Kieran Keohane, Mark Haugaard, Anne Fuchs, Maeve Cooke, John O'Brien and Hartmut Rosa (Keohane & Haugaard, 2020).

[3] An exception here is the study of Heike Ulferts, Christian Korunka and Bettina Kubicek (2013) on processes of social acceleration at the work place from the perspective of organizational psychology. The empirical findings of the authors essentially confirm the three-dimensional structure of social acceleration (technological acceleration, acceleration of social change, acceleration of the pace of life) in the two working areas under investigation, i.e. office work and aviation service work. For the field of academic organizations, see Vostal, 2016.

[4] We use the terms corporations and companies interchangeably.

[5] We refer to business ethics as a discipline interested in describing normative aspects within corporations as well as investigating business legitimacy from a normative perspective (see also Rendtorff, 2020b).

[6] The diagnosis of Hartmut Rosa is grounded in social theories developed by Manuell Castells (1996, 1997, 1998), Anthony Giddens (1987) and John Urry (2000) which show that processes described by globalization and the communications revolution change the perception of time (Rosa 2013; 102).

decision-making, administrative and control processes in organizations (Rosa, 2013; 74). The number of logistics centres in Germany, for example, has increased sharply in recent years in order to enable faster distribution of goods to retailers and consumers (Kunz & Reck, 2016/17).

The pandemic crisis has triggered further acceleration for corporations through the associated push towards digitalization (Kunze et al., 2020). Since, for example, easy participation in video conferences between Berlin, New York and Nairobi has become increasingly common, with none of the usual delays associated with the need to overcome large distances through travel, goal-oriented processes can now take place more rapidly. This example also illustrates the effect of technological acceleration known as "spatial shrinkage" (Rosa, 2013; 72).

The second form of social acceleration is that of *social change*. This refers to the speed at which forms of practice and patterns of association are changing on the one hand and the speed at which associational structures and patterns of relationships are shifting on the other (Rosa, 2013; 74). The ever-shorter periods of time in which the reorganization of working processes now takes place are one example of the acceleration of social change, but so is the pace at which new technologies are implemented. In a nutshell, it is now possible to speak of a "contraction of the present",[7] if we understand the present to refer to the period in which the space of experience and the horizon of expectation are unchanged and thus congruent (Rosa, 2013; 76). The speed with which the reorganization of work processes towards mobile work was implemented in the SarsCov2 crisis is an impressive example of the acceleration effects of social change at the company level (Hofmann, 2021).[8]

The third form of social acceleration is acceleration in the *pace of life*. This relates to an increase in the number of actions and/or experiences per unit of time (Rosa, 2013; 78). The acceleration of the pace of life mainly manifests itself in a shortening of periods of action. Such contraction can be identified in the working processes of organizations (e.g. the time taken to deal with a client, to produce a tool, etc.). There are two ways by which the time taken for different actions can be shortened (Rosa, 2013; 78): Firstly, acceleration can be achieved by increasing the speed of an action, for example by speeding up a production line in industrial production or by speeding up communication in administrations through digital technology (e.g. by switching from post to e-mail). Secondly, acceleration is also possible by reducing the breaks between actions or periods of idleness, i.e. by condensing the number of actions per unit of time (Rosa, 2013; 78). Corporate processes of rationalization often aim to reduce the amount of waiting between different periods of action and thus aim to foster an increase in productivity.

In general, an acceleration in the pace of life involves an increase in the speed of action as well as structurally induced changes in the experience of time in everyday life (Rosa, 2013; 80). During the pandemic, this experience of an acceleration was especially intense for individuals who experienced entanglement between time for work and time for their private lives due to working from home (Holst et al., 2021).

The three forms of social acceleration which we have described are entangled with one-another and reinforce each other in a vicious circle (Rosa, 2013; 151ff.). Technological acceleration contributes to social change, which leads to an acceleration in the pace of life. Individuals attempt to react to this accelerated situation through use of the possibilities available through technological acceleration and this cycle is thus self-reinforcing, producing an ever-increasing pressure for further acceleration. Technological acceleration occurs primarily as a response to a perceived shortage of time. Other drivers of social acceleration include, from a cultural point of view, a promise of increasing amounts of life before death as the world is brought within reach and, from an economic point of view, competition (Rosa, 2013; 161ff.).

Corporations find themselves experiencing a pressure to accelerate as the result of a competitive system which measures the performance and survivability of companies in terms of growth rates and other statistical measures in comparison with other companies (benchmarking). Increasing productivity, e.g. by reducing the duration of work required per output, plays an essential role in increasing efficiency. This efficiency orientation is driven in particular by managerial strategies for maximizing shareholder value. This has led to an increase in productivity and growth which, in the course of the second half of the twentieth century, has brought unprecedented economic prosperity to modern Western societies (Rosa & Henning, 2018; 6ff.). However, alongside this efficiency-driven acceleration of existing business processes, companies are also obliged to 'reinvent' themselves at an ever-faster pace to respond to the increasing

[7] The concept of "contraction of the present" was introduced by Hermann Lübbe (2009) and also suggested in Niklas Luhmann's system theory (1978, 2012/2013). Following Lübbe, we can define the present as a stable period of time (*Zeitraum*) in which, in Reinhard Koselleck's terms, the space of experience and the horizon of expectations are unchanged and thus congruent. Only within such time periods can conclusions about the present and the future be drawn on the basis of previous experiences, and only in them do experiences and learning processes have an action-orienting power, because expectations achieve a certain measure of certainty. From this perspective, then, the past characterizes everything that is *no longer valid*, whereas, in contrast, the future encompasses that which is *not yet valid* (cf. Rosa 2013; 76).

[8] A survey in Germany conducted by the Fraunhofer-Institut für Arbeitswirtschaft und Organization among 500 companies reported that 70% of office workers worked completely or mostly at home while in 21% of cases the 50:50 split model was chosen (Hofmann, 2021; 30).

demands of a wider range of stakeholders in addition to shareholders. Stakeholder theory draws attention to the different stakeholder demands that need to be met in order for companies to retain their 'licence to operate' (Rendtorff, 2009; 98; Sachs & Rühli, 2011; 95ff.).

Now, let us take a look at the effects of social acceleration on corporations in relation to two particular examples, namely internal stakeholders, in the form of employees, and external stakeholders, in the form of ecosystems.

In the pandemic crisis, *employees* have experienced technological acceleration and spatial shrinkage as a result of both the push towards digital technologies (Kunze et al., 2020) and of increasing possibilities for working at home and associated reductions in commuting. Technological acceleration by digital means not only has positive effects on productivity, but also leads to technology-induced anxiety, also known as technostress. "Technostress not only inhibits workplace productivity, reduces performance, weakens employee commitment, and decreases job satisfaction, but also increases the reported frequency of absenteeism, burnout, and job turnover. The consequences of technostress are widespread and costly and can have a severe impact not only on companies and their afflicted workforce but also to the global economy" (Boyer-Davis, 2018; 48). Employees working from home during the pandemic could reach the whole world from a single room through the use of video conferencing and, as a result, experienced their working conditions as both more condensed and increasingly accelerated.

As research has shown (Ahmad et al., 2021), social changes such as advancements in information technology, greater productivity, and tougher competition create stress in the workplace. The main cause for stress is a lack of resources and time (Campbell et al., 2007; 8). As a result, the family lives and mental health of employees are greatly affected by job-related stress. "[…] stress is anything related to work that presents a threat to employees at the workplace. […] Job stress has become the major concern for the organization. […] For all organizations it is vital […] to manage human resource [sic] properly" (Ahmad et al., 2021; 41). Only employees that are both satisfied and can cope with stress will be committed to their work and will contribute to the success of the corporation.

Job-related stress is symptomatic of a perceived acceleration in the pace of life[9] and not only affects subjective experiences of satisfaction, but also results in a range of health issues, such as sleep disturbances. A study by Åkerstedt et al. (2002) has shown that stress and the social environment of the workplace are strongly linked to disturbances in sleep and impaired ability to wake up in the morning, and that the inability to stop worrying about work during free time may be an important link in the relation between stress and sleep. The necessary time for regeneration of body and mind is difficult to reconcile with processes of acceleration at work and leads both to health problems for employees and, as a consequence, problems for the corporation. "The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) is aware of the problems of overworked employees all over Europe. According to EU authorities, the national cost of work-related stress in France, for example, amounts to 4–6 billion euros ($4.2–6.3 billion)" (DW, 2015).

Table 1 Persons reporting a work-related health problem by type of problem (stress, depression, anxiety) for selected countries (Eurostat, 2022)

Persons reporting work-related stress, depression, anxiety	2013	2020
Selected Countries in Europe	%	%
Sweden	6.6	9.1
Luxembourg	1.6	3.6
Belgium	2.0	2.7
Denmark	1.7	2.7
Germany	0.8	2.6
France	2.6	2.1
European Union—27 countries (from 2020)	**1.2**	**1.9**
Euro area—19 countries (from 2015)	**1.2**	**1.8**
Austria	2.0	1.8
Portugal	1.5	1.5
Ireland	0.5	1.2
Spain	0.7	1.0
Italy	0.8	0.8
Czechia	0.5	0.4
Greece	0.7	0.2
Hungary	0.3	0.2

The numbers represent the percentage of persons aged 15–74 years old that are currently working or were working during the last 12 months before the reference week of the survey, that report work related health problems (based on self-assessment). Information concerning Eurostat metadata can be found on the website (Eurostat Metadata, 2022)

As can be seen in the Table 1 below the percentage of persons employed and previously employed reporting health problems with the diagnosis stress, depression, anxiety increased from 2013 to 2020 for most European countries and in the European Union in sum. According to these data, health problems related to stress, etc., increased in Europe in the last years. In Germany, the diagnosis of burnout caused an increase in days of incapacity to work per 1000 members of the AOK (Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse—one of the largest health insurances in Germany) from 96.9 in 2011 to 131.7 in 2020 (Meyer et al., 2021; 502f.).

As a result, we can see that all forms of acceleration tend to create conflicts between the different temporal patterns

[9] A survey among upper and middle management revealed that 65 per cent of the sample believed that their stress level was higher than five years ago (Campbell et al., 2007; 6).

and life rhythms of employees. This results in restrictions of the good life of employees, who are impaired in their opportunities to flourish and their physical and psychical health.

What are the consequences of corporate processes of acceleration when it comes to *ecosystems*? As described above, we can speak of social change when our past experiences, i.e. the knowledge we have about established procedures, rules and routines, no longer serve as reliable guides for predicting the future; when we expect the future to be different from the past. Experience in corporations is shaped by existing routines, reliable institutions and entrenched production processes. Routines in production processes create economies of scale and offer incentives to stick with successful processes. But corporations are part of the economic system that creates environmental problems. Extreme weather events, storms, floods and fires are just a few examples of the environmental problems that have taken place all over the world in recent years. Thus, when it comes to corporations, the expectations for consumers and other external stakeholders are being decisively shaped by the ecological crisis and the expectation of massive transformation (Hollstein, 2020). These expectations have been articulated, for example, by researchers in sustainability (see Göpel, 2016 as one example among many) and in political announcements relating to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the European Green Deal of the EU which articulate expectations of a climate-neutral, sustainable and just global society (United Nations, 2015, European Commission, 2019). Many multinational companies have committed themselves to these sustainability goals—for example by adhering to the Global Compact (United Nations, 2021). These expectations for rapid change in the direction of sustainability combine with the crisis-ridden experiences of the present, and the tangible consequences of issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss so as to make an increase in the pace of transformation ever-more urgent.

Most of the time, corporate attempts at technological acceleration—in order, for example, to reduce CO2 emissions—are annihilated by rebound effects[10] (Sorell, 2011), and therefore create additional pressure for social change. In comparison with the situation with human beings, there are relatively few possibilities for accelerating the pace of life of nature. Natural processes of regeneration or growth need time, and some natural processes are irreversible—for example the extinction of species. Thus, social acceleration detaches economic processes from the rhythms of nature, leading to problematic consequences for nature's ability to regenerate.[11] In normative terms, this poses a problem of justice in relation to future generations, who should have the same development opportunities as the present. This, at least, is what the Sustainable Development Goal, to which most members of the United Nations have committed themselves, demands (United Nations, 2015).

Corporations in modern capitalist societies are thus exposed to enormous pressures for acceleration from a variety of different directions. Corporations and their stakeholders have to cope with an intensifying pressure to process multiple tasks over ever-shorter and denser time regimes, causing stress and affecting the wellbeing of employees while simultaneously experiencing a de-synchronization with natural time regimes which serves to hinder the regeneration ability of ecosystems. Corporations have to be faster, to produce or offer their services more efficiently, to innovate and to constantly 'reinvent' themselves in order to maintain the status quo and their existing position in the market.

A central result of research into sociological acceleration is the insight that social acceleration and the necessity for economic growth produce systemic imperatives that, on the one hand, come into conflict with the individual temporal orientations of employees and, on the other hand, have become detached from the rhythms of nature, with problematic consequences for its regenerative capacity (Rosa, 2013; 165ff.). Hartmut Rosa, Klaus Dörre and Stephan Lessenich have shown that dynamic stabilization is a defining feature of modern societies (Rosa, 2017). Dynamic stabilization refers to the fact that capitalist societies require (material) growth, (technological) dynamization and high rates of (cultural) innovation in order to reproduce their structure and to preserve the socioeconomic and political status quo. One 'motor' of this dynamization is (socio-cultural) acceleration, which leads to the mentioned problems for employees and the eco-system in the realm of corporations.

In the following, we will try to reformulate the aforementioned phenomena in terms of a theory of world relations (resonance theory). By doing so we want to offer new concepts able to grasp the mentioned conflicts created by acceleration and their normative dimensions. Resonance theory offers some conceptual tools that can help to analyse and possibly resolve conflicts between companies and their stakeholders (especially employees and ecosystems) created by acceleration.

[10] "There are direct and indirect rebound effects. Direct rebound effects occur when energy efficiency gains result in higher demand in the same area. For example: after insulating your house, you adjust the heating so that the average temperature in the house is higher than before renovation. Indirect rebound effects occur when efficiency gains in one area lead to higher resource consumption in other areas. For example, a lower heating bill after building insulation can create financial leeway for new and more energy-intensive lighting in the house, or for long-distance travel. Indirect rebound effects can also occur if I install more energy-intensive lighting after insulating my building because I think I've already done enough to protect the environment" (IÖW, 2022).

[11] For a comprehensive overview concerning loss of biodiversity and other ecological problems like climate change, see the reports of the IPCC, for example Pörtner et al., 2021.

A Sociological Perspective: Resonance Theory and Corporations

In this section we will reformulate the results of our diagnosis in terms of resonance theory. Within the framework of mainstream economics, the necessity to accelerate, innovate and grow, which requires companies to permanently improve their products and services, has rarely been problematized. Rather, over the course of the last century, this imperative was the cause of an enormous increase in prosperity in modern capitalist societies. Maintaining competition in markets for goods and services has been seen as an important economic policy task. But the aporias of the acceleration and growth paradigm are increasingly showing up in more and more areas.

At the individual level, people show symptoms of exhaustion when they are caught up in the hamster wheels of everyday life, and they often articulate a resultant desire to slow down. Interestingly, however, even when corporations see stress as a problem in relation to time pressure and its tendency "to be detrimental to the individual's physical and psychological health" (Harms et al., 2017; 179), the proposed solutions usually involve training for leaders in order to increase resilience and to develop effective coping strategies (Harms et al., 2017; 185) rather than reduction in the causes of stress which can be found in imperatives for acceleration.

With regard to health-related interventions against stress at work (Cox et al., 2007), a distinction is usually made between condition-related interventions and person-related interventions, with person-related measures predominating (Bamberg, 2004; 272). Condition-related interventions refer to work design measures (work task, working conditions, role insecurity, social relationships and group work), but the results of empirical studies regarding these measures are contradictory, as both positive, negative and no effects are proven (Bamberg, 2004; 272). The person-related measures refer to stress management and health behaviour (Bamberg, 2004; 272). Regarding the efficiency of these measures, which are, however, rarely evaluated, it is assumed that they are moderately effective (Bamberg, 2004; 273). However, it seems problematic that these measures are about employees developing strategies to deal with stress—not about reducing stress or its causes. Therefore, employees are trained to optimize their individual stress management.[12]

At the global level, it is evident that the externalities generated by an accelerated economic system, as well as the mismatch between growth imperatives and planetary boundaries, can lead to life-threatening consequences for the planet and humanity (Rockström et al., 2009).

On the basis of the sociological diagnosis of acceleration presented in Sect. "Diagnosis: Forms Of Social Acceleration and Corporations", it becomes apparent that the dominant approach to the world in modern societies, with their pressure to optimize, grow and innovate, is one of aggression, of parametric optimization and of alienation. This conceptual reformulation also highlights the normative implications as will be shown in the following.

The *mode of aggression* (Rosa, 2019; 420) is present in interactions with people (such as employees) and material things (such as natural resources), because market-based competition means that corporations are confronted with the imperative to appropriate resources, to control people and to overcome competitors. The logic of the market is one of competition, optimization and acceleration: Time is money. Corporations are driven by a) the fear of losing out in competition – and b) the desire to increase the options for what is available, attainable and accessible (Rosa, 2019; 421ff.). They have to search for new opportunities within markets, for better processes within their organization and for more efficient interactions with the 'world' and with their stakeholders. In order to do this, they not only accelerate their processes by means of technical acceleration, but they also try to prioritize flexibility in order to be able to change the direction and functioning of the company and to react to social change (Eversberg, 2018; 101). In this context, money represents a universal and flexible means of enablement and is thus the central means by which the world is made available. The fear of missing opportunities therefore leads to a desire to maximize money (Rosa, 2019; 19), which in turn explains the motivation for income and profit maximization.

Unfortunately, as has been shown in Sect. "Diagnosis: Forms of Social Acceleration and Corporations", the acceleration imperative comes into conflict with processes in different spheres of life, causing crises of de-synchronization. As we have seen in relation to employees and ecosystems, not all spheres of (social) life can be accelerated at the same pace. Faster systems assert aggressive and systematic pressure on slower systems—and thereby risk de-synchronization. Financial markets, for example, react in seconds, while real economic processes, managerial changes and reorganization processes involving employees take time to adapt. Nature and natural processes seem also to react too slowly to these aggressions. Regeneration of forests or lakes and the renaturalization of former plants or areas of contamination need time; sometimes natural processes are irreversible (for example the extinction of species or deaths which occur in relation to toxic materials). For some processes, such as the concentration of micro-plastics in the oceans, the consequences are not clear, but here time is also a crucial factor (Alfaro-Núñez et al., 2021).

[12] For an example of suggestions for combining physical fitness and self-leadership practices to reduce executive stress, see Lovelace et al., (2007; 384).

The desire and need to optimize, increase and improve leads to a *parametric optimization* of life and work (Rosa, 2019; 374). Corporations react to the aggressive pressure to accelerate by making achievements measurable in terms of timestamps and numbers, thereby making them visible, comparable, and improvable. This leads to a fetishization of the number (Gudeman, 1998) and a tendency to improve the digits rather than the (qualitative) parameter itself. Parametric optimization allows for a targeted identification and quantification of (individual) responsibility and accountability. Responsibility is interpreted in terms of quantitative parametric optimization and not in qualitative terms and good organization (Hayward & Osborne, 2019).

Mainstream economic theory, with its tendency to generate mathematized models, delivers the perfect framework for this. On the one hand, it provides the illusion of making economic processes operable and of bringing them under control. On the other hand, it enforces worldviews and habits oriented towards quantitative data instead of qualitative aspects of the good life. Here too, we have a self-enforcing cycle. In business, we can increasingly observe attempts to make performance measurable through quantitative key figures by means of controls, evaluations, compliance (Hayward & Osborne, 2019; 9). Increasingly frequent reorganization processes and the more-frequent introduction of new guidelines and regulations all lead to an increasing devaluation of quality, routine, experience and knowledge.

Finally, aggression and parametric optimization lead to *alienation.* Alienation defines a mode of being in the world in which there is no 'internal', vibrant relationship: The world is within reach, instrumentally and causally connected, but it is also deaf, dead, mute, non-responsive, silent and grey, becoming hostile or indifferent to individual subjects (Rosa, 2019; 121; 174ff.). Individuals feel a loss of self-efficacy and of intrinsic connection to others, to things, to their work and, as a result, they have an instrumental approach to others, to the self and to the world. As Charles Taylor puts it: "This world doesn't 'speak to' us, or doesn't 'answer' our attempts to find meaning" (Taylor 2021; 43).

Resonance theory suggests an alternative mode of approaching the world: *Resonance* is a mode of being in the world characterized by four elements (Rosa, 2019; 174):

1. Af→fection, which means being touched or moved by someone or something.
2. E←motion, meaning a response that bestows a sense of self-efficacy to the agent. This bi-directional process of mutual 'touch and response' leads to a
3. Transformation of those involved.
4. Unpredictability or uncontrollability (Rosa, 2020), which carries the double meaning that resonance cannot be enforced, ensured or controlled and that it is open-ended in terms of its results.

For individuals, resonant relationships are grounded in a stable self-relationship that locates their personal identity within a narratively developed moral topography. In this process, the individuals orient themselves to particular ideas of the good life that shape their identity and the way they lead their life, ideas which will be continuously updated over the course of their life (Taylor, 1989.). When collective actors are involved, such ideas of the good life must be interpreted in terms of the 'common good'.

Companies need a conception of their purpose in relation to a vision of the good life or the common good. Narratives formulating the goals of a business company in a purely instrumental way (making profit) lose all connection to the ideal of a good life and the common good and hinder the development of resonant relations in relation to the company's goals.

Resonance theory can, therefore, be used to describe not only the relations of individual subjects to the world, but also those of corporations. Corporations are under the same constraints as individual subjects when it comes to acceleration imperatives. They use technical acceleration, they are driven by competition from the market and their members experience an increasing pace of life.

Management research has demonstrated both that creating a vibrant and motivating work environment—in our terminology a resonant workplace—is paramount for good results on the part of the corporation and that time pressure affects creativity in a negative way (Amabile et al., 2002). Therefore, human resources managers attempt to create resonant relations with their employees in order to increase motivation as well as creativity, efficiency and productivity.[13] Modern companies attempt, for example, to design work environments which improve the wellbeing of their employees (Thatcher & Milner, 2014), to establish flat hierarchies that enable cooperative relations between colleagues, and to build work environments in which employees and organizations can flourish (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2012). As a result, corporations experience two conflicting tendencies: continuous aggressive pressure for acceleration on the one hand, and resistance to acceleration, which they recognize to be inefficient beyond a certain pace, on the other.[14]

According to resonance theory, resonant corporations develop axes of resonance across three dimensions (Rosa, 2019; 195ff.):

[13] The demand for "good work" and not simply "more money" played a role in campaigns by international workers' movements and shows that efficiency-oriented aspects (productivity) and normative aspects (good work for a good life) belong together (Mayer-Ahuja, 2018).

[14] For example, business organizations invite critics of acceleration to symposia and courses for business leaders.

- *Social Resonance*: Companies build and maintain resonant relationships with a range of people (colleagues, customers and clients, etc.), but they also allow for resonance within and between these different groups. Improving relationships with different stakeholders has been addressed in the context of business ethics research on corporate social responsibility (CSR), for example by Bhattacharya et al. (2009).
- *Material*[15] *Resonance*: Companies develop resonant relationships with elements of material reality such as tools, raw materials, resources, products, waste, the physical workplace and ecosystems. While resonance in relationships between products and consumers have been studied in the context of business ethics research under the keyword "brand identification" (see for example Dalman et al., 2019), comprehensive business ethics studies on the relationship quality of employees to products, tools or raw materials have been lacking so far.
- *Existential Resonance*: Companies' purpose and 'character' allow for a sense of resonance with—or a responsive connection to—broader encompassing realities; whether those be nature, history, life, the universe or something else. This kind of resonant relationship with the world as a whole is an essential requirement for any viable conception of the good life. In business ethics research, the problem of dissonance between corporate goals and the good life has been studied under the heading of 'moral stress'. As with workplace stress, the consequences of moral stress are fatigue, lower job satisfaction and turnover intentions (De Tienne et al., 2012 with more references).

Thus, resonance theory provides us with a new and integrating perspective on corporations and the challenges they face as a result of processes of acceleration and different modes of approaching the world. In the following, we will use this perspective to develop different possibilities for responding to acceleration imperatives from the perspective of business ethics.

Insights for Business Ethics from Resonance Theory

In the contemporary world, corporations are increasingly called upon to assume particular social responsibilities in relation to wider society and to specific stakeholders such as employees and ecosystems, both in their role as corporate citizens and in their own interests. In many cases, the demands of the market, stakeholders, nature and the good life appear to be difficult or impossible to reconcile. This is especially true for questions of temporality and the mediation of different time structures, as we have shown above.

But how has business ethics reacted to this pressure to accelerate and to the diagnosis of de-synchronization? While, in the 1970s, Milton Friedman emphasized that "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" (Friedman, 1970), since the 1980s critique of the economic mainstream has become established in business ethics, pointing to the unintended consequences of systematic economic imperatives relating to acceleration and paradigms of growth.

Business ethics has adopted a range of different approaches when it comes to the unintended consequences of social acceleration and processes of de-synchronization and to their problematic consequences for employees and for the natural world:

Rational Efficiency Strategy

Ingo Pies and others describe a rational-choice based strategy (ordonomic approach) of dealing with dilemma situation in business ethics. They suggests to focus on the realization of common interests through the wise design of a regulatory framework that, like the market, enables a win–win situation for all parties involved (Pies et al., 2008).

This way of a business ethics approach, the creation of win–win situations, is based upon an economic paradigm that emphasizes the rational efficiency orientation of economic actors, and it offers one possibility for dealing with the problems of de-synchronization. When it comes to de-synchronization with respect to the rhythms and boundaries of the planet, this approach entails taking these boundaries into account through pricing—for example of CO2 emissions. The application of market logic to natural resources as well as to pollution sinks,[16] is supposed to resolve ecological problems since the market sets incentives for the reduction of nuisances on the one side and for innovative ecological products and processes on the other (von Weizsäcker et al., 1998). However, a vision of green growth via a revolution in efficiency seems to be insufficient in itself, due to the numerous rebound effects which it creates. In addition to technical innovation, increasing efficiency, novel products and new industrial processes leading to more sustainable development, it seems obvious that the lifestyle of those living in the global north, with its large ecological footprint, will also need to change in order to provide a solution to current challenges (Hollstein, 2020; 1662).

[15] Aspects of materiality have been discussed in sociological and philosophical discourses (for an overview see Rosa et al., 2021).

[16] A pollution sink is a technical or natural system that removes pollutants from the environment. It is thus the opposite of a pollutant source. Natural sinks include, for example, forests and oceans (Ökoinstitut, 2021; 65).

On the individual level, we have proposals to alleviate acceleration and compulsive growth through economic instruments such as a universal basic income (van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017). Here, the pressure exerted on one side of the market (in this case the side of the workers in the labour market) can be reduced with the help of a market mechanism, but the principle of competition and the market are not suspended. Another approach is to use ethics to counter negative effects of work stress, as described in the study of Ajmal and Irfan, using data from 120 questionnaires collected in educational institutes, banks, and government and private organizations in Rawalpindi, Pakistan (Ajmal et al., 2014; 65).[17] Irrespective of the fact whether the empirical data basis was collected according to scientific standards or not, this contribution is an example of how ethics is instrumentalized to achieve economic goals (lower rate of turnover).

Ethics is used in this study as a sort of remedy to the consequences of stress, not as a reflective tool to analyse the situation of work stress in order to realize a better life for employees.

In these examples the cycle of acceleration will be maintained because, most of the time, technological or institutional innovations lead to new impulses towards acceleration instead of more time and ethics are used instrumentally as a remedy. Efficiency becomes a goal in itself without any relation to a vision of the common good (on the social level) or the good life (on the individual level). Rational conceptions which are oriented towards efficiency are therefore often blamed for "ethical blindness" due to their tendency to neglect the importance of sense-making and their blindness with regard to social and organizational contexts. Overcoming such ethical blindness will mean building a normative theory of business ethics (Rendtorff 2020a; XIX).

Normative Strategy

This strategy seeks to eliminate the pressure to accelerate through the help of a universal norm in the form of a categorical imperative that ends the pressure to accelerate. In the context of the pandemic, we have seen that such a thing is possible when it comes to protecting a universal good—in this case, health and life (Hollstein & Rosa, 2020). However—as can also be seen from the pandemic—the pressure to return to a mode of acceleration is enormous.

Normative business ethics approaches contest the rational economic paradigm and look for a foundation for economic ethics in normative principles. One example can be found in Kantian approaches, which assign responsibility for the common good to companies, even if this is not profitable for the firm (Bowie, 1999). In this approach, companies have a duty to provide meaningful work for employees. In a situation where pressure to accelerate is leading to alienation, companies' responsibility towards their employees as well as to the common good provides a barrier to further acceleration. The main theme of ethical training programmes in corporations, for example, is the improvement of the capacity for moral decision-making. Kantian moral philosophy enables the definition of unconditional minimum moral conditions for economic interaction. Duties towards justice which are based on human dignity require corporations to respect partners and customers and to treat them as ends in themselves instead of merely as a means to an end (Neuhäuser & Siebke, 2020; 756). This may involve a duty to end processes of acceleration that are harmful to employees or ecosystems. However, Kantian moral philosophy does not explain why organizations or individuals should comply with unconditional norms.

The republican business ethics developed by Peter Ulrich is another example of a normative approach (2008). This approach challenges the economic efficiency approach, suggesting that it is an "identity-forming principle of a normative discipline, namely an ideal theory of rational action in a world of scarce resources" (Ulrich, 2013; 10). From this perspective, efficiency orientation entails not only blindness to values but, even more, as this orientation becomes an absolute norm and universal value, it begins to replace the specific values of the individuals or the society. The integrative ethics approach of Ulrich wants to give a philosophical foundation to an ethics of economic reasoning and declares the primacy of (political) ethics over the logic of the market (Ulrich, 2013; 12–22).

Elements of both the efficiency and the normative approach, therefore, need to be combined since, on their own, they either restrict their focus to certain institutional arrangements improving efficiency without looking at underlying ideas of the good and their articulations, or they assume that the formulation of normative philosophical foundations, values or duties would automatically lead to changed practices and institutions. It is essential that self-commitment and institutional rules are mutually supportive (Ulrich, 2013; 25).

[17] The study wants to show that "Islam highly focuses on patience, tolerance, brotherhood that is why Islamic Work Ethics positively moderate the relation between job stress and job satisfaction" (Ajmal et al., 2014). "In Islamic Work Ethics, success, fulfilling oneself and to get peace of mind is achieved by work (Nasr, 1985). In addition, employees turnover intent can be predicated by Islamic Work Ethics Research imply, Islamic Work Ethics oriented employees have less rate of turnover (Ahmad, 2011). Therefore, it can be believed that such employees are with less turnover intent, more satisfied, show high job involvement who are high in Islamic Work Ethics" (Ajmal et al., 2014; 64).

Resonant Stakeholder Approach

In order to put forward a new response to acceleration imperatives on the basis of resonance theory we need a business ethics approach that avoids an exclusive orientation either towards efficiency or towards normativity. Additionally, this business ethics approach must have the capacity to focus on resonant relationships between corporations and the 'world', especially its stakeholders, as discussed above. The stakeholder approach seems to be a good candidate, since it is a management theory oriented around real efficiency problems. It is also a normative theory, and the focus of this approach is the relationship to stakeholders.

What can the stakeholder approach learn from resonance theory in order to create a resonant mode of stabilization for corporations?

A mode of stabilization can be called *adaptive* when it is capable of growth, acceleration and innovation in order to change the status quo, but when growth is *not forced* in order to reproduce the institutional and structural status quo. This needs an economic and a cultural transformation, therefore, integrating aspects of the efficiency and the normative strategy.

Qualitative changes with regard to the world relations which in Sect. "A sociological perspective: Resonance theory and corporations" were described in terms of resonance—are essential within an adaptive strategy. Resonance defies the logic of accumulation, optimization or increase. Listening and answering are key themes within resonance, enabling it to give birth to real innovation and creativity.

Stakeholder theory is an approach which is compatible with resonance theory and might provide a clue towards how to integrate different approaches and goals into a deliberative process. Robert Edward Freeman popularized the stakeholder approach to business ethics from the 1980s through to the 2010s (Freeman, 1984, 2004), and stakeholder theory as a "genre" has become widely diffused among other disciplines (Freeman et al., 2010; 64). Freeman et al. claimed to belong to a pragmatic current (Hollstein 2023), adhering to pragmatist principles such as the orientation towards real-world problems: "In pragmatic terms, a good theory has to help managers create value for stakeholders and enable them to live better lives in the real world" (Parmar et al., 2010; 14).

Nevertheless, even if stakeholder theory is oriented towards the real problems which managers face, its normative position brings it near to resonance theory, which is a theory critical of neoliberal capitalism. Stakeholder theory "reflects a shared aspiration to participate; it highlights the questionable nature of the distinction between those who have rights and those who do not. […] That is why, although it undeniably derives form management studies, it can also be regarded as a theory critical of neo-liberalism" (Bonnafous-Boucher & Rendtorff, 2016; 2). Stakeholder theory, as conceptualized by Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, takes its starting point in "the republican sentiment of the 'good life with and for the other in just institutions', which is realized through the basic ethical principles of autonomy, dignity, integrity, and vulnerability" (Rendtorff, 2009; 17, with reference to Ricoeur, 1992). This description of stakeholder theory adopts a normative standpoint by setting certain ethical principles as fundamental, principles which can be analysed from the perspective of resonance theory. Therefore, stakeholder theory can provide a basis for a business ethics approach that is compatible with resonance theory.

In addition, the articulation, perception, consultation and negotiation of conflicting claims on the part of different stakeholders are communication processes that themselves take time and thus fundamentally contradict the acceleration imperative. The stakeholder dialogues developed in stakeholder theory are deliberative processes that take time and thus conflict with the acceleration imperatives of modern societies.

In the following, we analyse the axes of resonance described in Sect. "A sociological perspective: Resonance theory and corporations" to develop new perspectives for stakeholder theory. Stakeholder theory aims to balance the justified claims of stakeholder groups within the framework of stakeholder dialogues. By recognizing employees and sustainability activists (advocating for ecosystems) as stakeholders whose demands should be heard, the prerequisite for *social resonance* is created, building on successful relationships with stakeholders as listening and answering subjects. Institutional structures, as for example explicit codes of conduct, are highly relevant for social resonance, since they create hierarchies and define both power relations and access to positions with advocatory power.

Such institutional structures can be found, for example, in the ways that regulations for working from home or for video conferencing are designed within corporations. Always starting and ending video meetings with five minutes of 'small talk'—asking about private stress factors, sharing positive experiences, telling a joke or simply listening together to a piece of music—may affect individuals' ability to experience social resonance. Another example could be the regular organization of a volunteer day for the whole company so as to improve the natural environment of the firm—an event with possible impacts not only on social resonance, but also on material resonance.

Self-resonance relates to body, emotions and biography. These aspects are important primarily for a company's employees. Creating a workplace that allows experiences of self-resonance is a topic that many human resource departments already consider important, as we have seen above. However, if one considers the company as a corporate citizen with physicality, emotions and a biography, we can also

use the framework of resonance theory to locate specific elements within the company that enable the establishment of resonant relationships with itself. For example, the spatial design of a company and its workplaces must be in harmony with its corporate identity. In addition, the company's history plays an important role, serving as the biography of the company. Companies that have achieved economic success in the past through forced labour or colonial exploitation, for example, must face up to this past in order to enable resonant relationships with their own corporate identity.[18]

The aspect of *material resonance* provided by the concrete workplace is a part of this self-resonance. However, material resonance can also occur in relation to raw materials, resources, tools, products, ecosystems etc. The relevant stakeholders, in this regard, are the employees handling materials, tools and products as well as the environmental activists advocating for the rights of nature. Sustainability and design are important issues in this respect that determine whether resonant relations are capable of being established.

One interesting example in relation to corporations' efforts to enable material resonance between employees and ecosystems is that of 'green ergonomics'. Thatcher describes green ergonomics "as ensuring human and natural system wellbeing through understanding the bi-directional relationship between natural and human systems" (Thatcher, 2013 cited in: Thatcher & Milner, 2014; 381). Psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing, productivity and perceptions of the physical environment were measured in a one-year longitudinal comparison of two groups of employees. The 'green' building group had significantly increased self-reported productivity and physical wellbeing (Thatcher & Milner, 2014).

A company's *existential resonance* relates to its purpose and establishes a sense of a resonant relationship with the good life and the common good. Research on moral stress has shown that encouraging discussions of morality-related issues in the workplace increases employee perceptions of a more ethical climate and reduces role-related moral stress (De Tienne et al., 2012; 387 with reference to Schwepker & Hartline, 2005). Stakeholder dialogues can serve to bring out hidden ideas regarding the good life and the common good and the potential contribution of the company to bringing it about. Stakeholder dialogues with employees should address existential aspects of the firm (its purpose) as well as those of the employees. Labour is an important part of a vision of the good life: Employees experience self-efficacy and recognition, and they feel themselves to be a relevant part of the world—participating in the effort for a better life. Stakeholder dialogues with environmental activists can shape this aspect and, at the same time, question problematic processes which endanger the common good and help to improve them.

Stakeholder dialogues bring together representatives of stakeholders such as corporations, governments and NGOs. This offers the chance to obtain a multi-perspective view on problems of social acceleration and to develop resonant world relations with partners. "[T]he interrelationship between different types of organizations is increasingly important in meeting social challenges. If a genuine dialogue is to arise from such an interrelationship, it is essential that organizations rethink the way they see themselves. In this sense, we think that a partnership approach will be one of the keys to organizational ethics in the future" (Lozano, 2013; 123). Future research is needed on this point.

By bringing the stakeholder approach together with resonance theory, the approach can be enriched with respect to aspects that have otherwise fallen to the background as a result of its origins in management theory. The four characteristics of resonance theory described in Sect. "A sociological perspective: Resonance theory and corporations" can function as criteria for the success of stakeholder dialogues, since they describe the conditions within which a relationship can be understood as resonant. Stakeholder dialogues are institutionalized procedures for organizing relationships which aim to reach a mutual understanding. They cannot be compared to the mere exchange of information or the balancing of interests since, in these dialogues, stakeholders bring with them not only their interests, but also their ideas of a good life. It is, therefore, of crucial importance to establish a connection between the stakeholders in order to make understanding possible.

What are preconditions required in order to enable successful stakeholder dialogues? The first aspect, *affection*, refers to the ability to be reached. An *openness* to meet stakeholders at eye level and to be affected by their concerns is thus the first prerequisite for success. The second aspect, *emotion*, refers to the ability to move towards and relate to the other and to experience *connectedness*. Self-efficacy and mindfulness are of particular importance here. *Transformation*, the third element, indicates the need for a *willingness to change*. After the stakeholder dialogue, all participants should be transformed in some way, at least in terms of their understanding of interlocutors and their concerns. Finally, *unpredictability or uncontrollability* implies that resonance cannot simply be ordered, guaranteed or controlled by cleverly institutionalized procedures. Rather, there always remains a residue of *uncertainty* that points to the fact that human processes cannot be fully planned or predicted. This aspect has to be accepted rather than resisted through searching for more and more parameters to measure and optimize. This is also true in the field of economics. In our perspective, a major mind shift in economic thinking is needed that might be difficult to realize. Maybe this

[18] For a differentiated view of the relationships between history and Corporate Social Responsibility see (Phillips et al., 2020).

can only be achieved by a global crisis causing a disruption of well-established routines. The role of routines and the possibilities to change them in different organizational and economic contexts needs more research. On the other hand, there are already social entrepreneurs in different niches trying to challenge economic processes based on acceleration. Only time will tell the results of their efforts.

Both creative adaptations of action and paradigm shifts are always possible, and stakeholder dialogues should be seen as disruptions in the accelerated routines of everyday business that open up temporal opportunities for reflection and creative realignment. This final aspect of uncontrollability seems to be of particular importance for business ethics because stakeholder theory, as a theory of management, has to assume the fundamental "feasibility" of management processes.

Let us end by mentioning some critical aspects and limitations of the concept of resonance. First, as Simon Susen has argued, it might appear necessary to differentiate, in a more specific manner, between processual and structural aspects of world relations and the ineluctable dialectic between them (Susen, 2020; 322f.). While in our analysis we addressed institutional aspects of environment such as the workplace, as well as processual aspects such as stakeholder dialogues, the *relationship* between these different ways of establishing resonant world relations should be analysed in more detail in the future case studies.

Second, some persons might actually "*enjoy* the seemingly disempowering elements commonly associated with alienation" (Susen, 2020; 324, emphasis in original). So, what about people who prefer to do what someone else has told them to do, without asking about the consequences or reflecting on questions of self-efficacy? In the situation of acceleration such an attitude might often be easier than developing axes of resonance. This may point to the question of whether resonance theory is applicable to all kinds of companies and work.

Third, it is worth noting that critics of the resonance concept have pointed out that there could be resonant practices in companies which are not oriented to the good life for all but instead imply violence and exploitation vis à vis others: "What about *highly problematic* practices that may 'resonate' with those performing them, including protototalitarian or fascist regimes that use resonance-generating techniques and activities" (Küpers, 202; 31, emphasis in original; referring to Susen, 2020; 325)? Such problems could also arise within companies using manipulative or oppressive techniques. Such forms of 'negative resonance' are not discussed in our original approach, but this means that "[t]he status of plural dimensions of power and politics in relation to Rosa's normative monism of resonance need to be further explored" (Küpers, 2020; 31).

In our contribution, we suggest the use of resonance theory as a yardstick for the success of stakeholder dialogues. Concerning the normative issue of measuring the quality of world relations with resonance theory, Simon Susen asks (2020; 327):

> "Should critical social scientists rely on *objective*, *normative,* or *subjective* criteria (or, indeed a combination of these) to make accurate judgements about their quality? More importantly, what happens if these are out of sync? For instance, the criteria applied in science ('objectivity') may contradict those employed in other fields ('normativity') and may be at odds with those mobilized by particular individuals ('subjectivity'). A resonance-focused sociology of world-relations needs to account for the potential of actual discrepancies between these levels of perception, if it seeks to provide a genuinely *comprehensive* understanding of the qualitative differences between 'the good life' and 'the bad life'" (Emphasis in original).

Now obviously, the question of what counts as a good life in the workplace may be answered differently in changing contexts or cultures. Therefore, more context-sensitive research has to be conducted in order to develop solutions and measuring instruments for business ethics capable of addressing acceleration-related problems in companies across different areas of production and regions of the world.

Conclusion

In this contribution, we outlined a sociological perspective on processes of social acceleration affecting organizations. In doing so, we identified the existence of cycles of acceleration which exert increasing pressure on corporations and lead to experiences of alienation. Problems created by social acceleration then were exemplified through a closer look at two stakeholders: employees and ecosystems.

In a second step, we reconstructed acceleration issues in terms of resonance theory. We defined resonant relationships as a specific mode of approaching the world in relation to particular stakeholders. We then outlined three axes of resonance relevant to corporations and a number of criteria for enabling successful resonant relationships.

Finally, we discussed the responses of diverse business ethics approaches to current acceleration imperatives, identifying stakeholder theory as an approach with close affinities to resonance theory. Stakeholder dialogues, as a central element of stakeholder theory, can contribute to the creation of shared value horizons and creative, situation-specific solutions through new practices and attitudes—such as openness, mindfulness and willingness to change.

By translating resonance theory considerations into a stakeholder-focused approach, a new perspective was generated that could be fruitfully used alongside stakeholder theory in order to successfully respond to the imperatives of acceleration. At the same time, resonance theory highlights the necessary contingency and unpredictability of economic governance and planning, reminding us that creative solutions to time pressure need their own amount of leisure time—time that provides no guarantee that it will ever turn out to be profitable.

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Ethical approval The article uses previous research of both authors, especially the findings of Hartmut Rosa on Acceleration (Rosa, 2013) and on Resonance (Rosa, 2019) and of Bettina Hollstein on Business Ethics. The new findings in this contribution are the result of the application of previous theoretical research by Hartmut Rosa in a specific context of companies.

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