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conceptions and experiences of injustice in the context of long-term
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1. Introduction: (in)justice in the context of long-term unemployment

Linda is a professional gardener. She loves working outside in nature, but due to her strong arthrosis and other physical and mental health issues, Linda is not able to perform her job anymore. For the last two years, she has been unemployed. However, the unemployment benefits alone are not enough to cover basic needs like food and housing. Therefore, she has to work on the side, which was, under certain circumstances, allowed by the social authorities. When the regulations changed, without Linda's knowledge, and this allowance was taken back, she unintentionally worked undeclared for less than a month. The consequences of this mistake were far-reaching. For seven months, Linda was withdrawn from her insurance and welfare state benefits. Furthermore, her house in the countryside was sold by the social authorities. For the reader, the question arises – were the consequences of Linda's mistake justified? Did she receive fair treatment?

Let us look at another example. Jakob lost his job at an elderly home almost three years ago. Despite countless attempts to get a new job, it was impossible to find a compatible position with his prerequisites. Jakob suffers from bipolar disease, and each time his mental health comes up at a job interview, he feels that he needs to justify himself and eventually does not get the job. Is this just? Elisabeth is a single mother of three, and there were times in her life when she could not sleep at night because she was not sure if she could afford to pay all the bills. Is this fair? In this thesis, I will not be able to provide a general answer to this question, nor will I conclude what is just or unjust because I will not politically or philosophically evaluate what justice or injustice means.

Instead, I am interested to learn more about how Linda, Jakob, or Elisabeth themselves *perceive* the justice of their situation. I mainly aim to *understand how* and *why* individuals regard specific, precarious living situations as unjust. The examples mentioned above stem from the interviews conducted within the scope of this thesis. In all of the cases, the documented living situations' precarity is significantly shaped by the long-term unemployment of the respective individuals. Especially gender-sociological research points to the fact that precarity, characterised by long-term unemployment, can be experienced in multiple dimensions of life (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef, 2015; Motakef et al., 2018). Subsequently, the assumption arises that (in)justice questions also become relevant in multiple dimensions of life arrangements (Motakef et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, research suggests that injustice can be experienced in the area of employment or regarding one's financial situation and in terms of health or social relationships (Motakef et al., 2018; Wimbauer & Motakef, 2017).

However, why focus on justice? What makes justice a relevant concept for sociology? John Rawl's (1999) [1971] famous "theory of justice", which has dominated the philosophical discussion around justice since it was first published in the early nineteen-seventies (Cullen, 1992, p. 18), is based on the

idea that every person “normally” has a sense for justice (Goppel et al., 2016, p. 2). Findings from social sciences and the relevance of justice-related questions in other realms of life and science seem to confirm this assumption. Even amongst children, the indignant criticism that something is “unjust” or “not fair” appears as a natural part of everyday language (ibid.). However, depending on the context in which justice becomes relevant, the term is understood in very different ways. There is a broad spectrum of justice definitions in the scientific context due to the different research perspectives and varieties in respective philosophical or epistemological backgrounds.

Generally, justice is a value concept evolving in Greek philosophy, significantly influenced by Aristotle, and rooted in religious beliefs (Kaufmann, 2020, p. 265). Given the sociological context of this thesis, focusing on subjective perspectives, justice can be understood as a “yardstick to judge individuals and institutions” (Rieger, 2002, p. 161) in society, fulfilling the function of legitimising power in a particular social order and the distribution of goods (ibid.). Against this definition’s backdrop, it becomes evident that justice is a politically and normatively charged term, often used to legitimise social inequality (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Hadjar, 2015) and therefore highly contested. What is regarded as a just distribution or a legitimate entitlement is the product of power relations and hegemonic discourses, providing specific interpretative patterns that shape the individual experience of (in)justice (Fraser, 1989). Already this basic assumption points to the inherently social character of justice and reveals its relevance for sociology. However, instead of applying a normative idea of justice to empirical data, this thesis aims to approach the concept of justice critically to make existing social hierarchies and power structures visible and avoid reproducing them.

Considering this as a conceptual starting point, I will discuss different ways of understanding justice in this thesis’s theory section by critically deconstructing what the concept implies. By doing this, I will be drawing on different research findings and theoretical approaches, which are presented throughout the following chapters. In the literature review and the theory section of this thesis, I will gradually explore the theoretical and analytical tools used to approach the research interest presented in more detail in the next chapter. The second half of this thesis is devoted exclusively to the empirical work undertaken to investigate the subjective experience of (in)justice. First, the chosen data collection and analysis methods will be presented and reflected before finally moving on to the core of this thesis: the presentation of five single-case reconstructions, which exemplary illustrate the social mechanisms and logics of individual conceptions and experiences of injustice. In the conclusion, the empirical findings will be summarised and related to the core theoretical assumptions. Before exploring relevant literature and research findings to embed this project into the already existing body of research, the research interest, its most important underlying theoretical assumptions, and its methodological implications will be presented in the following.

2. Research interest and research questions

Generally, the goal of this master thesis is to investigate the subjective experience of injustice. This initial research interest has crucial implications for the methodology of this project. First, my interest refers to the individual's level, instead of, for instance, to the level of discourses, groups of individuals, or even larger entities such as communities or nations. More precisely, I am interested in the specific *perspectives* of single individuals. How people experience and interpret the world surrounding them is particularly relevant for the research interest. The second element of the research interest defines a specific area of the social experience that I will focus on in this thesis: (in)justice. Here, *what* is experienced as injustice and *why* individuals perceive something as (un)just interests me. The meaning of justice must be discussed, and its elements and dimensions must be reconstructed to learn more about this. Thus, in more general terms, I am looking to *understand* (1) how individuals construct their reality and ascribe meaning to their experiences and (2) which rules they base their actions on.

Against this initial research interest's backdrop, a fundamental methodological decision had to be made at the beginning of the research process. Due to its idea of the social construction of reality, only an *interpretative research design* responds to the research interest of this thesis (a.o. Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Hoffmann-Riem, 1980; Rosenthal, 2018). Interpretative research allows a reconstruction of the conditions under which meaning arises and thereby enables the researcher to develop a theoretical understanding of empirical phenomena (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009, p. 78). Due to interpretative methodologies' orientation on the subject, the *logic of generating knowledge* in interpretative research is grounded in the relevances of the field, instead of basing it on theoretical presumptions (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Hoffmann-Riem, 1980; Rosenthal, 2018). At the beginning of the research process, theoretical assumptions only set a (preliminary) focus without limiting the *openness* of the interpretative research perspective.

The following **basic assumptions** about individual injustice conceptions and experiences served as a theoretical starting point of this thesis:

- **Justice is a social construct.** In this thesis's social constructivist context, justice is understood as inherently connected to individual notions of entitlement and therefore "subjective by nature" (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008, p. 209). Thus, the only way of understanding experiences and conceptions of (in)justice starts from a subjective perspective.
- **Conceptions of justice are related to justice norms and identity.** Notions of entitlement and justice are shaped by processes of "self-constitution", which develop in the biographical course and in reference to existing justice principles and norms (Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014).

- **Identifying grievances is a way to express injustice.** Therefore, justice conceptions can be reconstructed based on narrations about subjectively experienced grievances in every-day-life (Motakef et al., 2018).
- **Injustice can be experienced in all dimensions of life.** However, not in all dimensions of life arrangements (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef et al., 2018) perceived grievances are criticised as injustice. Depending on the availability of justice norms, some grievances are expressed as violations against legitimate *claims* to justice, and some only as unfulfilled *wishes* (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014).

These theoretical starting points enabled me to enter the research field with sensitivity to specific aspects of justice without compromising the interpretative approach's openness to the research¹. To maintain this openness while simultaneously focusing on my research interest, suitable data collection and analysis methods had to be chosen. Narrative interviews with an initial biographical question were conducted (Rosenthal, 2018; Rosenthal & Loch, 2002) to document individual injustice conceptions and aspects of self-constitution (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). Five such interviews were carried out with long-term unemployed individuals in two different national contexts: Austria and Sweden. The background of working with data from two different countries was the initial assumption that injustice experiences and conceptions in the context of long-term unemployment could differ depending on the respective institutional and hence national (welfare state) context. However, given the type of data that was conducted and the chosen method of analysis, identifying such country-specific differences in justice conceptions was beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, this research interest was altered in the empirical process, which had the advantage that complete focus could be paid to an extensive reconstruction of the single cases. My bilingual background, and the fact that Stockholm was my home during most of the time in which this thesis was written enabled me to perform this two-country-based research and gave me the unique opportunity to collect data in Sweden and Austria.

A multi-level-hermeneutical analysis was performed to live up to the requirements of an interpretative research design and understand how and why the interviewees experience injustice. By applying the "fine structure analysis" (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003), which can be considered as a variant of the sequence analysis in objective hermeneutics (Oevermann et al., 1979; Reichertz, 2004), *latent meaning patterns* could be reconstructed. This allowed the development of extensive single case reconstructions, which are presented in the findings section (chapter six). A basic assumption of objective hermeneutics and the fine structure analysis suggests that societal structures are mirrored in individual cases (a.o. Froschauer & Lueger, 2003; Wernet, 2009). Therefore, the social conditions of

¹ A more detailed characterization of the principles and basic orientation of interpretative research can be found in this thesis's methodology section in chapter five.

justice conceptions can be reconstructed by applying objective hermeneutics' methodology. Since the specific always reflects the common, focusing on single cases allows the development of a general theory about the experience of injustice in long-term unemployment, which is grounded in empirical data (Glaser et al., 2008).

In line with the methodology of interpretative sociology, research questions were developed *during* the empirical process instead of determining them ahead of the research. After multiple reflections and adaptations, the final analytical focus of this thesis was summarised in the following over-all research question:

How are the subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice of long-term unemployed people in Austria and Sweden shaped in terms of "life arrangements"?

It is essential to mention that the term "subjective" does not imply that injustice conceptions and experiences are solely private or determined by personal views. Moreover is "subjective" not seen as the opposite of something presumably "objective". Conversely, interpretative sociology views the relationship between the subjective and the objective as inherently interdependent (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Rosenthal, 2018). In the context of this thesis, the term "subjective" refers to the *processes of socialisation* in which individual actors ascribe meaning to their actions and the social world. These socialisation processes are shaped by the rules of social reality and social structures and can therefore be seen as collective processes (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 18).

In addition to the overall question summarising this thesis's research interest, three sub-questions were formulated. They mirror the above-mentioned theoretical dimensions of grievances, claims, wishes, justice norms and entitlements, which reflect my analytical focus. The following three sub-questions served as an analytical guideline for the analysis:

- Which grievances in different dimensions of life are experienced as unjust and why?
- How are justice claims formulated in contrast to wishes?
- What are the norms and notions of entitlement that experiences of injustice are based on?

Drawing on the work of Motakef et al. (2018), "grievances" is considered a relevant, more *accessible* term to translate the somewhat abstract wording of "injustice conceptions and experiences" into the living realities of the interviewees. In the interpretative analysis, I focused on narrations about general grievances in different life dimensions. This focus enabled me to take those experiences of injustice into account, which were perhaps not framed as indignant critique or apparent violations of

entitlements. By looking at grievances in general, two dimensions of injustice conceptions and experiences were identified; Injustices, which are expressed as violations against justice *claims*, and those formulated as unfulfilled *wishes*. Taking the two categories of claims and wishes into account allows to demonstrate in which dimensions of life arrangements a normative framework for injustice is available, and in which not. This approach enables an understanding of this thesis's overall research question, namely how conceptions and experiences of injustice are shaped in different dimensions of life arrangements. All theory beyond the above-mentioned basic assumptions about the field has been chosen *based on the analysis*. The approaches presented in the theoretical section of this thesis mirror aspects of justice that have proven to be relevant during the empirical process. By choosing the theory based on the empirical findings, openness towards the field's relevance's is guaranteed which is vital for maintaining the logic of the interpretative research paradigm (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Hoffmann-Riem, 1980; Rosenthal, 2018).

Now, the only question remains: Why study the injustice experiences and conceptions of long-term unemployed people? Why not choose a different societal group, for instance, employees, students, couples, millionaires or politicians? There are two main reasons why I decided to interview long-term unemployed people. Firstly, reviewing the relevant literature during the first phase of this thesis revealed a research gap. As the literature review in the following chapters will show, most qualitative, empirical justice research explores employees' justice conceptions, with some recent studies focusing on precarious workers (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Motakef et al., 2018; Walker, 2017). While there is a multitude of research on the subjective experience of long-term unemployment or on receiving social assistance (a.o. Dörre et al., 2008; Globisch & Madlung, 2017; Jahoda, 1986; Paul et al., 2016; Stadlober et al., 2018), none of these studies mainly focus on experiences and conceptions of injustice in terms of life arrangements. Generally, investigating justice regarding life arrangements is widely unexplored so far, as Motakef et al. argue (2018, p. 104). Additionally, Liebig and Sauer (2016) suggest that there is still a lack of empirical evidence for the relations between justice conceptions and individuals' social positions (ibid., p. 52). By interpretatively exploring injustice conceptions and experiences of long-term-unemployed individuals, my research project can help fill this identified gap in justice research.

The other reason I was originally interested in the injustice perceptions of long-term unemployed persons is rooted in the social dimensions of unemployment. As the literature review will show, both in Sweden and Austria, long-term unemployed people are at a particularly high risk of poverty. Beyond the aspect of material deprivation, a loss of social status, agency, recognition but also decreasing levels of emotional and physical well-being are among the subjective experiences of long-term unemployment (a.o. Dörre et al., 2008; Globisch & Madlung, 2017; Jahoda, 1986). Given these vast social consequences of unemployment, the assumption arises that exceptionally *high levels* of

personal grievances and thus experienced injustices in different life dimensions accompany long-term unemployment. Therefore, although the group of long-term unemployed people is highly heterogeneous, as the literature review will show, their potentially shared experiences make them predestined to become the subject of a study on experienced injustice.

3. Literature review

The following chapters provide an overview of current research on the subjective experience of (in)justice and the experience of being long-term unemployed. This literature review is divided into three sections. The *first section* covers the area of sociological justice research with a focus on justice conceptions and attitudes. I will start by giving a preliminary definition of justice, which is taken up again and further elaborated in this thesis's theory section. This definition will show that entitlement and justice notions are strongly connected to justice principles (a.o. Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008). This thesis will discuss a selection of research on relevant justice principles by staying within the area of attitudes and conceptions of justice.

Furthermore, a first contextualisation will be made, in which justice conceptions will be related to the level of institutions. After discussing the relationship between individual and institutional justice conceptions, this thesis will explore the role of justice in the welfare state. The welfare state is relevant, given that the experiences of injustice of the interviewees of this thesis are closely related to their experiences with welfare state institutions. In the next step, selected studies from sociology and gender studies will be presented, which have a similar focus to this thesis, either in terms of research interest or methodology. They represent empirical and theoretical groundwork on which the idea and the realisation of this thesis are based. The *second section* of this literature review is solely devoted to sociological research on (long-term) unemployment. Here, the thesis will briefly define unemployment and its societal consequences before presenting relevant research on the subjective experience of (long-term) unemployment. Finally, the *third section* of this literature review refers to the circumstance that this thesis's empirical data is based on in two different national contexts, namely in Austria and in Sweden. Therefore, this thesis will provide the reader with essential contextual information on the welfare state system in Austria and Sweden and current data on the general unemployment situation in both countries. These national contexts are framed by a brief general characterisation of current labour market policy trends on a European level.

3.1. Sociological research on justice attitudes

Exclusively dealing with empirical phenomena, empirical justice research focuses on the empirical validity of conceptions of justice in terms of (1) structures and processes in society and other forms of social aggregation (institutions, organisations, groups) and (2) individual attitudes and behaviour

(Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 37). Against this background, the goal of studying justice from a sociological perspective is to “determine its empirical relevance for individuals and society” (ibid.). The following chapters will be structured based on this categorisation of sociological justice research. While first focusing on justice perceptions and attitudes (chapter 3.1.1.) the institutional level of justice will be addressed after that (chapter 3.1.2.). However, before exploring these two dimensions of sociological justice research, an overview of the different ways of conceptualising and categorising justice principles will be given. A more detailed and theory-oriented discussion of the sociological perspective on justice will be given in chapter 4.1.1. of the theory section of this thesis. Given that justice attitudes represent the overall topic of this thesis, I will start off with a short overview over the development of studying justice attitudes, concluding with a definition of justice as a basis for the literature review.

While the normative aspects of justice were a core topic of philosophical thinking from its early beginnings (Cullen, 1992), it was not before the middle of the last century, when sociology started to study justice perceptions empirically (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 37). During the 1960ties until the 1980ties, it was mainly the “grand theories” that dominated the sociological discourse, offering explanations for social phenomena on a macrolevel of society (Alexander, 1987; Calhoun et al., 2012 introduction). The two dominant theoretical paradigms of that time, Parson’s structural-functionalist theory and Marx’s theory of capitalism and political economy did not leave a lot of space for empirically studying justice attitudes. Individuals were not in the focus of these theories, which understood justice mainly as a normative category (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 48). However, due to the far-reaching societal changes in the 1990ties², sociology started to become more interested in social justice attitudes and beliefs, and sociologists started to carry out comparative attitude research, for instance, Kluegel, Mason and Wegener (1995), who analysed public opinions in capitalist and post-communist states. Comparative attitude research aims to identify shared understandings and try to explain why certain patterns of justice attitudes exist in a society in the first place (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 48). Later on however, during the late 1990ties and after 2000, the formerly communist transformation countries as well as Western countries faced growing income and wealth inequality, which was why the analytical focus shifted to perceptions of income inequalities (a.o. Hadler, 2005; Kelley and Evans, 2008; Verwiebe and Wegener, 2000).

While quantitative studies on justice shifted their focus on income inequalities during the late twentieth century, early sociological and social psychological studies on the subjective experience of (in)justice often focused on relative deprivation (a.o. Merton and Rossi, 1957). According to relative deprivation theories (Crosby, 1976), a feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction arises in when comparing

² Liebig and Sauer (2016) particularly refer to the fall of the Berlin wall’s essential meaning and its far-reaching consequences for Central and Eastern Europe (ibid., p. 48).

an outcome to some external standard (ibid.). Therefore, it is not the objective but the relative outcome that determines the level of personal gratification or deprivation. Thus, the experience of relative deprivation shows similarities with that of (in)justice since both notions are caused by social (self or other) comparisons (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008, p. 210). Even though some differences in studying relative deprivation and social injustice developed over the years³, both theories start from the assumption that individuals employ specific deservingness criteria when they compare their outcomes to others (ibid., p. 211). Against this background, some scholars, for instance, Homans (1982), considered the notions of relative deprivation and distributive justice as identical (ibid., p. xiii).

In contrast to the philosophical perspective on justice, justice's sociological and social psychological analysis starts from the assumption that justice is a social construct and therefore not objectively definable (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008, p. 209). Since sociology and social psychology consider justice as "subjective by nature", the only way of defining it starts from a subjective perspective.

"In general, justice prevails when what we give and receive, and how we treat and are treated by others, corresponds to what the recipient is considered (by himself/herself or others) entitled to." (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008, p. 209)

This definition can be seen as the first step towards a social constructivist, subject-oriented understanding of justice. It describes the basic mechanism on which individual justice evaluations are based and therefore provides the groundwork for a more detailed and de-constructing approach to defining justice. An extensive discussion about how justice is understood in the context of this thesis will follow at the beginning of the theory section (see chapter 4.1.1.). For the purposes of this literature review, Kazemi and Törnblom's (2008) definition is preliminarily sufficient. According to the two scholars, entitlement notions, which are an essential part of justice conceptions, as the above-mentioned definition shows, are usually based on various justice principles (ibid., p. 209). Therefore, the following chapters will provide an overview of different approaches to categorising justice principles in social justice theory and current research findings.

3.1.1. Justice principles – theoretical approaches and empirical findings

Justice principles influence our thoughts, reactions, and emotions and structure the individual experience of injustice (Dubet, 2008, p. 17f.). According to Dubet (2008), justice principles determine individuals' "critical activities" and represent the societal experience's normative aspect. Dominating principles of justice are regarded as legitimate, or "obligatory" as Durkheim (1993) would put it, and

³ For example, Kazemi and Törnblom (2008) argue that while relative deprivation theories usually focus on comparisons between one's own and other's outcomes, studies on distributive justice typically include comparisons between inputs, meaning the respective basis for a person's entitlement, as well (ibid., p. 210).

are supported by morality. This makes decisions and actions that are based on justice principles seem autonomous and independent (Dubet, 2008, p. 18). Depending on the social situation in which justice becomes a matter of scientific interest, a wide variety of justice principles can be distinguished. This leads to individuals developing their own moral activities within a specific normative framework (ibid.). Empirical justice research often focuses on dimensions of distributive justice and their societal reasons and consequences (Liebig et al., 2013, p. 286f; Kittel, 2020). Studying individual ideas about what is just and what is unjust, sociologists found out that people have certain expectations regarding the distribution of outcomes and how they are achieved (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 50). Based on Wegener's (1992) classification, Liebig and Sauer distinguish between three types of attitudes in terms of how distributional outcomes should be achieved: (1) order-related justice attitudes, (2) procedural justice attitudes, and (3) outcome-related justice attitudes.

3.1.1.1. Order-related justice attitudes

Research on order-related justice attitudes usually wants to determine why individuals prefer certain distributive principles over another in specific social situations (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 50). Even though there is much disagreement on the exact characteristics of the principles underlying distributive justice, most sociological and psychological scholars distinguish four principles: equality, equity, entitlements, and need (Konow, 2001; Liebig & Sauer, 2016; Miller, 2008). While the principle of equality suggests that everyone should receive the same, the equity principle claims that benefits and burdens should be distributed proportionally to personal investments (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 50). Following the needs principle, everyone should get enough to cover basic needs, whereas the entitlement principle suggests distributing benefits and burdens depending on the ascribed or achieved status characteristics of individuals (ibid.). Such status characteristics can be social categories like gender, education, class, or ethnic background.

Törnblom (1992) found six factors to be influential for a person's perception of distributive justice principles: the characteristics of an actor, their contribution, their social relationship, the socio-cultural and historical context, the outcome, and the outcome allocation (ibid., summarized in Kazemi and Törnblom, 2008, p. 212). The type of social relationship especially seems to influence the allocation of justice principles. While equality and need are the preferred principles in long-term, strong-tie relationships, the equity principle dominates short-term, competitive relationships, whereas entitlement plays a significant role in hierarchical relationships (Törnblom, 1992). Moreover, individuals are more likely to base their actions on the equality or need principle if they participate in the allocation decision process (Konow, 2001). However, the correlation between the type of social relationship and the selected justice principle also goes the other way around, since "the validity and application of the relevant principle of justice also affect the nature of the social relationship." (Liebig

& Sauer, 2016, p. 50). Schwinger (1985) suggests that close, long-term relationships are strengthened in social systems, where the dominating rules are based on the principles of equality or need, while competitive, short term relationships are promoted in systems that function based on the equity principle (ibid.). According to Liebig and Sauer (2016), the evidence conducted on individual preferences of justice principles suggest that there is no principle that is superior to others. Instead, the application of justice principles depends on the specific social situation and the typical social relationships and types of burdens and goods allocated in the respective context (ibid., p. 51f.). The authors support this argument by referring to Fiske's (1993) ideal-typical distinction between "four elementary forms of human relations". While in "solidarity communities" (Fiske, 1993), such as families, the needs principle tends to be applied, the principle of entitlement corresponds with hierarchical structures, which can, for instance, be found in organisations (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 51). Entitlement is crucial for the latter type since an individual's position in the social hierarchy determines what they are entitled to (ibid.). Conversely, the third type of social relation is characterised by an absence of rank differences and is based on mutual exchange and strict reciprocity. This kind of social relation can usually be found in non-hierarchical networks, peer groups, or cooperatives, where the dominant standard for action is the equality principle. Finally, the equity principle is characteristic of short-term economic market relations, which are oriented by personal profit maximisation and represent the fourth type of social relationships (ibid.).

Moreover, evidence from cross-national studies suggests that justice perceptions are influenced by socialisation processes derived from different cultural and political backgrounds (Wegener & Liebig, 1995). According to Wegener and Liebig, both normative and rational considerations are needed to explain differences in justice principal preferences (ibid., p. 240). In analysing differences in justice perceptions in Germany and the US, the authors make a theoretical distinction between primary and secondary justice ideologies (ibid., p. 242). While primary justice ideologies are rooted in society's cultural history and influence distributive justice ideas of the majority of society, secondary justice ideologies are maintained by particular societal subgroups. The groups' members developed non-mainstream, alternative justice conceptions because they pursue certain "rational" goals (ibid.). Based on this rational choice assumption, the authors assume that individuals prefer justice principles, which give them "an advantage in the allocation of goods and burdens" (Wegener and Liebig, 1995, cited in Liebig and Sauer, 2016, p. 52).

An individual's or groups' position in the social inequality structure is another determining factor for the preference of justice principles. This hypothesis is supported by Sachweh and Olafsdottir (2012), who compared attitudes to the prevailing distributive practices in three countries, which can be allocated to different welfare state models: Germany, Sweden, and the United States. One of their

main findings was that perceptions vary across countries and between social groups within a country (ibid., p. 149). According to their evidence, social grouping categories such as socioeconomic position or gender can influence stratification aspirations. Despite some country differences, they identified the overall pattern that those who are less favoured by a specific welfare regime, and thus aspire to an equal society in a low socioeconomic position (ibid., p. 161). Even though there is plenty of macrolevel evidence on the influence of status on justice attitudes (additionally also Gerlitz et al., 2012, a.o.), Liebig and Sauer (2016) conclude that convincing explanations for how “position-related interests” translate into justice attitudes are still missing (ibid., p. 52).

In this thesis, I am taking this identified research gap as a starting point even though I will not be able to identify and thus analyse any “position-related interests” (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 52) of the interview partners, since the term has a rational choice theory background and is therefore not compatible with the interpretative, social constructivist design of this thesis. Granted, also I will contextualise justice attitudes with individual social positions. However, instead of “interests”, I will analyse how the specific societal, biographical positions and “life orientations” (Hürtgen and Voswinkel 2014) are related to perceptions of (in)justice in the context of life arrangements (Motakef et al., 2018). Although in a way that is adapted to the micro-level, interpretive design of this study, this thesis will contribute to the research gap identified by Liebig and Sauer (2016).

3.1.1.2. Procedural justice attitudes

Findings on procedural justice attitudes often stem from social psychology and emphasise the importance of “fair decision-making procedures and treatment by authorities” (Tyler et al., 1996, p. 913) for evaluating justice. The basic assumption is that individuals are influenced by how they perceive the fairness of decision-making processes in social interactions (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler et al., 1996). Evidence suggests that procedural justice is related to group-oriented attitudes and behaviour (Tyler et al., 1996, p. 927). Regarding *why* procedural justice influences group-oriented behaviours and attitudes, psychological research emphasises the social bonds between group members and group authorities (Tyler et al., 1996, p. 913). Regarding identity theory, it is argued that individuals perceive two aspects of identity as necessary: “their position within the group (respect), and the position of the group as a whole (pride)” (ibid., p. 926). Violations against these two identity categories during the decision-making processes can be experienced as injustice, emphasising the importance of fair and respectful treatment by authorities (ibid.). Even unfavourable outcomes can be considered just if they are communicated sympathetically and respectfully. Extending the findings of Tyler et al. (1996), recent studies found that decisions compatible with comprehensive rules can also be perceived as just, even though they might cause unfavourable outcomes (Struck et al., 2008). Analysing justice attitudes towards layoffs in Germany, Struck, Pfeifer, and Krause (2008) found out that the chosen layoff criteria

are crucial for how fair or unfair firings are perceived (ibid., p. 117). For instance, a dismissal is considered more just, if the respective person has worked at the company for a shorter time (ibid.). In general, equal treatment, the possibility to formulate an objection, transparency of the decision-making process, and comprehensibility are essential criteria for procedural justice (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 52f.). In an attempt to formulate a sociological critique on the “group value-model” by Lind and Tyler (1988), Bora and Epp (2000) suggest rethinking procedural justice. The authors reconstruct procedural justice as a “contested concept” (ibid., p. 33) that is often used against the background of particular hidden, rational interests. Actors tend to represent different logics of entitlements (ibid., p. 15), but those who gain interpretative power are often the ones with the most resources. However, these “procedural paradoxies” (ibid., p. 33) are usually not addressed and thus made invisible by dominant procedural justice theories.

3.1.1.3. Outcome-related justice attitudes

The third type of research on justice attitudes, namely the studies on outcome-related attitudes, focus on the justice evaluation process itself (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 53). In reference to some of the already mentioned theories of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976), the evaluation of justice is a comparison process in which individuals compare their position and outcomes with others. However, results do not always have to be the same for them to be regarded as just. According to equity theory (Adams, 1963; Homans, 1982), inequalities can be considered fair if based on different inputs. In line with sociological theories, claiming that the meritocratic principle is a normative mechanism to legitimise social inequality (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Dux, 2013; Hadjar, 2015; Schimank, 2005), the equality principle is replaced by the equity principle, which “seeks to achieve relative equality” (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 53). Against this background, “relative” means relative to individual inputs and thus merits. Both equity theory and relative deprivation theory share the assumption that (in)justice notions arise if individuals feel that they do not receive outcomes that they are legitimately entitled to (Major, 1994, p. 298). Coming from a social-psychological background, Major defines entitlement and deservingness as the subjective feeling of “having a right to something” (ibid.). The author distinguishes between three aspects relevant to the psychological development of entitlement. First, social comparisons others provide information pertinent to a judgment of entitlement (ibid., p. 300). When referring to the comparison of outcomes, the question arises of how reference standards are chosen. According to Major, individuals are more likely to compare themselves with others who are close to them (such as friends, co-workers, or family members) or who are similar to them regarding central characteristics (such as class, gender, race, abilities, or values) (ibid., p. 302f.). Generally, Major summarises that “people typically feel they deserve the same treatment or outcomes that they have received in the past or that others like themselves receive” (ibid., p. 303). Sociological perspectives on entitlement

emphasise its normative dimension, defining entitlement as “an expectation with normative force” (Singer, 1981, p. 88). A more detailed sociological discussion of the social concepts of entitlement and deservingness will be given in the theory section of this thesis (see chapter 4.1.1. and 4.3.). Moreover, one can also find a critical reflection of the justice principles underlying the now presented findings on justice attitudes in this thesis’s theory section (chapter 4.1.2. and 4.4.).

3.1.2. Justice on an institutional level

Research on justice within institutions usually aims to determine existing distributive practices and structures’ underlying justice conceptions. Starting from the idea of the mutual dependency of structural conditions and individual actions (Kittel, 2020, p. 2), the focus lies on identifying either in what way justice conceptions are embedded in societal institutions or how these institutions shape the justice attitudes of the citizens within a society (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 44). Describing the basic idea behind the institutional approach in justice, Liebig and Sauer (2016) claim that “justice conceptions gradually permeate different institutional regimes in the political, economic and welfare state realms” (ibid., p. 44). In the following, I will explore the relationship between individual justice perceptions and institutionalised justice before addressing justice in the welfare state’s context and its current changes. The institutional level is significant in the context of this thesis because the interviewees whose justice perceptions were analysed are long-term unemployed and therefore in close contact with social authorities and welfare state institutions. Institutionalised justice concepts impact their lives since they shape the processes of receiving social assistance or unemployment benefits. Against this backdrop, the relation between individual and institutional justice conceptions becomes relevant for analysing injustice experiences in terms of being unemployed.

3.1.2.1. Relation between individual and institutional justice conceptions

Societal institutions constitute the macro level of societies and determine individual actors’ social positions by shaping the distribution of benefits and burdens. Therefore, institutions function as “agents of socialisation” (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 45) and thus influence the formation of justice attitudes. By witnessing how institutions allocate good and burdens, people learn legitimate distributive practices and appropriate instruments for resolving social conflicts (ibid.). Since the welfare state relies on the citizens’ support by making their payment contributions, it is a systemic necessity that the citizens show a certain degree of acceptance regarding the dominant principles of distributive justice. Current research about the welfare state acceptance among citizens is proposing an interdependent relationship between welfare state attitudes of the citizens and the welfare state’s specific design (Lessenich, 1999; Ullrich, 2008). To understand why people support collective welfare arrangements, Mau (2004) emphasises the crucial role of the reciprocity norm. The starting point of

his argument is that the welfare state is an arrangement of institutionalised reciprocity, which is why “people tend to invoke norms of reciprocal fairness when evaluating welfare transfers” (ibid., p. 68). Having internalised this reciprocity norm, people contributing to the social system usually expect to receive a symbolic or material reward in return. However, reciprocity scripts can differ highly among welfare states, providing different normative models for legitimate and socially acceptable welfare state transfers. Therefore, Mau summarises that the legitimacy of the welfare state “is the outcome not only of beneficial involvement but also of valid and plausible concepts of reciprocity that are part of institutionalised welfare exchanges” (ibid.).

Not only how justice perceptions are formed by societal institutions such as the welfare state or the economic systems, but also the reverse relation, how justice conceptions shape the distributive practices within institutions, is a subject of sociological justice research. In his studies on “local justice”, Elster (1992) analysed institutions’ decision-making processes to determine how conceptions of justice affect institutional designs. One of his main findings was that “justice conceptions were mainly used as ex-post-legitimation” in distributive practices of the welfare state and the economy (Elster, 1992; cited in Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 45). Instead of justice considerations, institutional logic (for example economic effectiveness) plays a more important role for an institutions’ decision-making-processes (Elster, 1992). Summarising the broad variety of findings on the relation between institutionalised and individual justice perceptions, Liebig and Sauer (2016) conclude that most of the research emphasises the institutions’ role in shaping individual justice perceptions by offering available justice norms in society (ibid., p. 45).

3.1.2.2. Justice and the welfare state under reconstruction

In the context of welfare states, a distinction between three justice principles of distributive justice is usually made, each pointing to one model of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The principle of *equity*, which is associated with conservative welfare states, suggests that those who pay in more should also receive more in the event of social hardship. On the other hand, liberal welfare states are predominantly based on the principle of *need*, according to which priority should be given to those in need of social benefits. Third, there is the principle of *equality*, which is assigned to universalistic, social democratic welfare states, and in which every citizen is entitled to the same level of benefits, regardless of need or the number of contributions paid (Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013, p. 1176). Based on Esping-Andersen’s (1990) threefold, ideal-typical conceptualisation, the social-democratic model is traditionally represented by the Scandinavian countries, while liberal welfare regimes can be found in the Anglo-Saxon nations. Finally, the continental European countries show most characteristics for the conservative welfare state model (Sachweh, 2016, pp. 296–299). Despite being the most prominent concept for welfare state research, Esping-Andersen’s approach is widely

criticised since, in practice, welfare states are unlikely to follow the principles but rather represent a mix between the ideal-typical distinctions (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 44). According to more recent comparative welfare state research, welfare state regimes and institutional arrangements are becoming more alike (Torp, 2010). From a perspective of the history of institutions, Torp compared the welfare state regimes of Great Britain and Germany.

Conversely to the UK's traditional allocation representing the liberal and Germany embodying the conservative model, Torp (2010) found the two countries to be converging. While still maintaining some significant differences regarding the pension system, it is mainly the needs principle that becomes more and more important in both welfare regimes, especially regarding handling the risk of unemployment (Torp, 2010, p. 11). However, what counts as a legitimate need is highly politically contested and subject to political conflict, as Fraser (1989) points out. Discourses about needs and what a "minimally decent life" (Sachweh, 2016, p. 298) entails are political arenas that symbolically mirror social inequality and power structures (Fraser, 1989, p. 291). According to Fraser, achieving hegemony with one's interpretation of legitimate needs requires having the "sociocultural means of interpretation and communication" (ibid., p. 294). By this, she means "the historically and culturally specific ensemble of discursive resources available to members of a given social collectivity in pressing claims against one another" (ibid.). This structure enables dominant social groups to articulate their needs-interpretations while simultaneously de-legitimising alternative needs definitions of subordinate groups and pushing them out of the realm of social and political discourse. In male-dominated capitalist societies, the division between the public and the private sphere leads to a depoliticization of domestic institutions and makes the formulation of claims and needs regarding the supposed private sphere more difficult (ibid., p. 298). Moreover, dominant, male-oriented needs interpretations are often internalised by the members of subordinate groups, even though they work to their disadvantage. Scaling back individual aspirations and adapting one's beliefs becomes necessary to lead a life with reduced "cognitive and affective dissonance" (ibid., p. 299).

The diagnosis that welfare state models are becoming more alike in terms of an increasing significance of the needs principle corresponds with the general trend of welfare states becoming increasingly conditional and selective in the rationing of benefits (Oorschot, 2008, p. 354). The economic and fiscal crisis of the late nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties led to cutbacks in social expenditures, which caused a – still ongoing - process of reconstructing and deconstructing the welfare state (ibid.). Against this background, current research suggests that it is not only the specific arrangement of the welfare state but also its changes of the last years and the political debates surrounding them which shape particular ideas about *who should get what and why* (Schadauer et al., 2019).

3.1.3. Sociological justice research in the context of work

While studies on the principles of distributive justice often focus on income (Hadler, 2005; Sauer et al., 2016; Verwiebe & Wegener, 2000) or welfare state benefits (for instance, Oorschot, 2008; Reeskens and van Oorschot, 2013), sociology of work usually studies justice perceptions and entitlements of employees (Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014; Kratzer et al., 2015; Walker, 2017). Considering the extensive research that has been undertaken in the context of injustice and inequality at work, only a small selection of studies can be presented in the scope of this thesis. The primary selection criteria for the studies chosen for the literature review were either similarity to the topic of this thesis (injustice and work/unemployment) or to its methodological approach (qualitative/interpretative methods).

An essential reference for many studies in work-related justice research and for this thesis is Dubet's (2009, 2008) study on subjective (in)justice perceptions of employees in France in terms of their workplace. Based on the interviews he conducted, Dubet made a conceptual distinction between three justice principles, forming the normative frame of reference for addressing injustice experiences: equality, merit, and autonomy. Each of these dimensions refers to one meaning of labour, structuring individuals' moral experiences to their work (ibid.). The principles do not fully determine individuals' justice experiences but represent a normative framework in which social actors develop their moral activities. Starting from the assumption that by formulating criticism and feelings about their work-life, individuals are forced to develop arguments to justify them, it was possible to reconstruct the underlying justice principles. Dubet (2008) and his team collected three types of materials that formed the analysis basis. They carried out eleven group interviews consisting of employees from different work sectors, analysed 261 personal interviews, and surveyed 1144 individuals (ibid., p. 48f.). One of the study's main findings was that in criticising their situations at work, employees hardly related their experiences of injustice to political concepts like class war or working class (Dubet, 2009, p. 223f.). Opposing the widespread claim of a "classless society", Dubet argues that development towards "society-less classes" (ibid., p. 223) is the reason why it became almost impossible for individuals to relate beliefs about justice to social class. This development is rooted in the end of the modern, industrial society, changing work structures and concealing awareness for individual positions in the social order (ibid.). Moreover, Dubet found out that the justice principles were highly integrated and connected and equally important for the interview partners, without any principle standing out (ibid., p. 230). The author offers a broad normative framework for analysing justice on a subjective level. Moreover, his study shows parallels to the research design and interest of this thesis since it also operates on the subjective level of justice perceptions and analyses justice in the context of work. For

these reasons, the justice principles of equality, merit, and autonomy will be presented in more detail in the theory section of this thesis in chapter 4.3..

Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) focus on logics of entitlement and justice claims of employees in standard employment relations in Germany. Starting from the basic assumption that notions of entitlement and justice develop in biographical processes and are embedded in life orientations (ibid., p. 28), the authors analysed subjective justice perceptions in the context of life arrangements (ibid., p. 21). They conducted biographical interviews with employees, representing the “middle” of society regarding their employment relationship. Having secure, full-time jobs, including welfare benefits, the interview partners embody a societal “normality” of employment and a normative point of reference for work relations (Castel, 2010). Summarizing their analysis, Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) emphasise two main findings. First, they found out that, conversely to the theoretical assumptions based on the economic crises and general trends of precarisation, their interview partners are not insecure about their entitlements. Regardless of increasing societal insecurity, they expect a good income, appropriate working conditions, being treated respectfully by their superiors, and having a proper work-life balance (ibid., p. 18). Instead of adapting to neoliberal narratives in terms of the highly flexible, self-selling and constantly self-optimising, even ruthless worker, like for instance diagnosed by Richard Sennett (1999), Hürtgen and Voswinkel’s interview partners orientate their ideas of normality on a social, human, merit appropriate and responsible working conditions (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 19). Nevertheless, in the second main finding of their study, a significant level of uncertainty could be identified among the interviewees, however, not in terms of their expectations per se, but regarding the common validity of their claims. The interview partners were unsure whether their own ideas of normality still reflected common ideas of what is “normal”, which points to the issue of the normative accountability and legitimacy of individual notions of entitlement (ibid., p. 20). Moreover, based on their analysis, Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) argue that a conceptional distinction between justice wishes and justice claims is essential for understanding subjective entitlement logics (ibid., p. 18). Due to this crucial finding, wishes and claims represent important analytical concepts for the analysis of subjective justice conceptions and experiences in this thesis, which is why there will be a more detailed discussion of them in chapter 4.5.2..

One year after the study of Hürtgen and Voswinkel, Kratzer and others (2015) published a study on employees’ justice norms in Germany’s industry and service sector. Their investigation aimed to identify subjective patterns of legitimation of the capitalist social order by analysing concrete situations in which legitimate expectations turn into injustice and critique experiences (Kratzer et al., 2015, p. 13). The authors were able to identify five moral patterns of justifying justice claims based on their analysis: performance, care, self-realisation, participation, and dignity (ibid., p. 21). An important

finding was that the interview partners tried to formulate morally legitimate and rational claims. In formulating these rational claims, the interviewees referred to what Kratzer et al. summarized as technical-functional, bureaucratic-organisational and economic claims for rationality (ibid.). Both claims for justice and rationality are constantly being evaluated and re-evaluated by the respective individuals, referring to changing societal conditions. Contextualising individual injustice experience with more general changes in the work sphere, the authors found out that violations against legitimate entitlements can have different outcomes. Either they result in “legitimacy crises”, leading to political activation (“De-Legitimierung”), or they result in a normative regression by taking back certain moral expectations about work (“Ent-Legitimierung”) (ibid., p. 22). While experiencing a wide variety of violations against legitimate justice claims, merit remains a dominant pattern of justifying employees’ claims (ibid., p. 393). Generally, the authors identified a negative perception of prospects regarding decreasing living and working conditions among the interview partners. Against the background of having experienced the financial crises, the interview partners observe a downward trend, particularly among groups they compare themselves with (people from similar work branches). While the interviewees perceive themselves as relatively unharmed by the crises, their comparative patterns for forming justice ideas are shifting “downwards” (ibid., p. 401). Kratzer and others describe this dynamic as an “erosion of comparative structures for forming justice conceptions” (ibid.). Thereby employees tend to compare their situation with others who are further down in the social order instead of making comparisons with more privileged social groups.

In his analysis of the political consequences of unemployment, Faas (2010) considers both direct and implicit and contextual experiences of unemployment, and in one section of his study, he also takes perceptions of (in)justice into account. In particular, the author investigates how the experience of being unemployed is related to justice perceptions (ibid., p. 210). Basing his argument on relative deprivation theories (Crosby, 1976), Faas (2010) claims that unemployed individuals are more likely to perceive their situation as unfair because it contradicts their interests as economically thinking, rational individuals (ibid., p. 211). He assumes a correlation between the experience of unemployment and injustice since unemployment is a violation of deeply rooted normative ideas. In particular, he refers to the needs-principle since unemployment possibly causes financial distress, as well as to the high degree of societal orientation on employment (ibid., p. 215). The analysis of survey data from Germany confirmed this hypothesis, showing that individual justice perceptions are related to the experience of unemployment. In this correlation, both the perception of the personal financial situation, as well as a high recognition of work in general, combined with a self-perception as hard-working, turned out to be particularly relevant (ibid., p. 221). Conversely, political orientations (conducted by utilizing a self-positioning on a left-right scale) did not seem to have any effect at all (ibid.).

In terms of the research interest, the topic of Faas' (2010) study shows more similarities with the subject of this thesis. However, due to its deductive, quantitative research design, neither its theoretical starting positions nor its findings are particularly suitable for applying to this thesis. The previously discussed studies by Dubet (2009, 2008), Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) or Katzer et al. (2015) are more similar to this thesis in terms of their methodological approach, but their research interests strongly focus on justice in the context of work and employment. They are therefore not fully corresponding with the topic of this thesis either. Against the backdrop of this research gap, a selected study stemming from feminist justice research is presented in the following to enable a broader perspective on justice beyond the realm of work since it serves as a core reference for this thesis.

3.1.4. Feminist justice research in the context of work

Justice is a core concept in feminist political theory (Fraser, 2005; Nussbaum, 2003; Rössler, 2016; Young, 1990). A discussion on the feminist perspective on justice will be in more detail in this thesis's theory section (see chapter 4.4.). It can be stated that the central starting point of feminist justice theory is that patriarchal structures, such as the gendered division of labour, or the subordination of the private sphere under the public, are crucial obstacles to achieving social justice (e.g. Rössler, 2016). For instance, feminist scholars criticize mainstream sociological justice research for applying justice principles, which are implicitly orienting on the public sphere, making it more challenging to address injustices in the private realm (e.g. Nussbaum, 2003). Dismantling power structures in existing social justice discourses, feminist justice theorists create more visibility for justice claims and injustice beyond the norm of the working, white male⁴. Fraser, for instance, critically addresses hegemonial needs discourses, as it has already been pointed out in chapter 3.1.2.2. (Fraser, 1989). As an example for empirically applying a feminist perspective on justice issues beyond standard employment relations, the recent study from Motakef, Bringmann and Wimbauer (2018) on conceptions of justice in life arrangements is presented in more detail in chapter 4.4.3. of the theory section.

Based on feminist research on precarity (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef, 2015; Wimbauer, 2012) and concepts of "everyday lifestyles" (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993), Motakef and others (2018) develop a research heuristic to analyse justice perceptions of precarious workers. Taking different living dimensions, such as employment, living situation, love recognition, social relationships or health, into account, the study has a particular focus on justice experiences regarding the dimensions of care and self-care (ibid., p. 102). Similar to Dubet (2008) and Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), Motakef and others

⁴ In this thesis, the terms „male“ and „female“ are regarded as socially constructed categories ascribed to individuals and structure social inequality. Following Lorber (2001), gender is seen as „a social creation, a product of human inventiveness adopted for its usefulness in allocating reciprocal rights and responsibilities, work tasks, and the physical and social reproduction of new members of any society“ (ibid., p. 257).

(2018) start from the assumption that justice conceptions become visible in the formulation of critique or grievances (ibid.). Such grievances can potentially be found in all life dimensions, but they are not always expressed as injustices since individuals prioritise certain dimensions of life over others (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014; Wimbauer, 2012). Drawing from Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), Motakef and others also make a conceptional distinction between justice wishes and justice claims, pointing to the degree of relevance, which the interviewees ascribe to their critique in different dimensions of life (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 105). Applying a hermeneutic analysis method on passages from narrative interviews with precarious workers, the authors chose interview passages documenting lacking recognition for their analysis (ibid., p. 106). Their findings, present three single case reconstructions from people, who are, according to Castel's (2010) definition, in the zone of precarity. According to this definition, unemployment phases can mix with employment (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 106). Applying a perspective on life arrangements, Motakef and others found out that employment is still the essential normative point of reference for formulating injustice (ibid., p. 112). Simultaneously, justice claims are much less likely to be addressed to supposedly "private" dimensions of life, even though there are significant grievances in these dimensions of life as well (ibid.). Regarding care and self-care, which was the study's focus, problems in terms of care were formulated as violations against legitimate justice claims, while the dimension of self-care is being subordinated. The authors argue that the reason for this dynamic is a lacking normative basis for formulating self-care as an entitlement (ibid., p. 113).

Motakef, Bringmann and Wimbauer (2018) emphasise that both the content and the relevance of justice claims regarding employment only become understandable if they are analysed in the context of life arrangements. Therefore, a broadened theoretical perspective, going beyond employment and income and taking different dimensions of life arrangements into account, is indispensable for adequately analysing experiences of (in)justice (ibid., p. 113). However, according to Motakef and others, this approach has not yet been fully established in empirical justice research. Against this background, my thesis can be seen as a contribution to filling this identified research gap.

3.2. Unemployment

After different theoretical models and recent findings on justice principles, attitudes and experiences were discussed in the previous chapters, the literature review of this thesis will be completed by addressing the second relevant topic of this study: unemployment. Since this thesis investigates the justice perceptions of (long-term) unemployed individuals, a short overview over a selection of sociological theories and findings on unemployment will be presented in the following. A complete review of the vast sociological literature on unemployment would go beyond this paper's scope. After initially defining unemployment from a sociological point of view and discussing some of its societal

consequences, selected theories and findings on the subjective effects of (long-term) unemployment will be addressed before finally giving a short overview over the unemployment situations in the national contexts which are relevant for this thesis: Austria and Sweden.

3.2.1. Definition and societal consequences

Unemployment is considered a fundamental characteristic of the capitalist social order and an inherent part of the capitalist system (Flecker, 2017). Calling it the “industrial reserve army” (Marx, 1973), Marx emphasised the systemic necessity of unemployment to keep wages low and maintain economic leverage for the working class. Even though unemployment is a social construct, has economic reasons and is, therefore, a societal issue, it is often perceived as an individual problem (Flecker, 2017, p. 66). The stigmatisation of unemployment and thus prejudice against unemployed people is deeply anchored in society (Grint & Nixon, 2015; Wacker, 1983). Measured by the dominant postulate of bourgeois reasoning and rationality, unemployment appears in the public conception as self-inflicted due to laziness, irrationality, or lack of proficiency (Wacker, 1983, p. 16 cited in Flecker, 2017, p. 67). Perceptions of employers also tend to take over the stigmatisation of unemployment, which is documented in prejudices employers tend to have towards applicants who show signs of unemployment in their biographies. These assumptions are often based on the widespread belief that the applicants earlier phases of unemployment are related to poor performances in previous employment relations (Grint, 2005, p. 39). This so-called “employer hostility” (ibid.) increases with the duration of joblessness, making it even harder for long-term unemployed people to reintegrate into the job market.

Moreover, the negative public perception of unemployment is often mirrored in unemployed individuals’ self-image. Although unemployment is a social problem rooted in economic and societal structures, the people in question experience it as their fault, feeling personally responsible for their situation (Grint, 2005, p. 39). By taking over the ruling class’s interpretations and perceptions, a social issue’s responsibility is shifted from a structural to an individual level (ibid.). This dynamic is embedded in the broader pattern of individualisation, in which structural risks and social inequality appear as the result of individual decisions and responsibility (Solga, 2005, p. 39). In contrast to the definition of Beck (1986), who views individualisation as an increase in individual possibilities and risks, Solga (2005) argues that individualisation is a term that is used to *redefine* social inequality and structural risks as problems of individual optimisation (ibid.). Flecker (2017) describes this pattern of taking over such dominant interpretations of personal responsibility as an example of what Bourdieu calls “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 2005). Against this backdrop, revolting against suppressive economic structures, such as engaging in political activism, becomes more unlikely for those who see themselves as responsible for their situations. Political engagement is usually correlated with high levels of self-

esteem and sufficient financial resources (Gallie, 1989), poverty, status loss and social disintegration, as some of the main characteristics of unemployment, tend to lead to apathy, resignation and a loss of resistance (Jahoda et al., 2018 [1933]).

Unemployment does not necessarily mean being out of work. Yet, the standard definition of unemployment is “those seeking work and signed on for unemployment benefit” (Grint, 2005, p. 37), which “mirrors the state-supported ideology of work as full-time non-domestic, and hence masculine, phenomenon” (ibid.). As the population of unemployed individuals is very heterogeneous, being unemployed differs highly and is determined by the respective person’s social position. For instance, gender is one factor that makes a difference in the unemployment experience. Given the still dominating pattern that women perform the majority of house and care work⁵, they usually remain active despite the loss of their job (a.o. Jahoda et al., 2018 [1933]).

Moreover, class influences the subjective experience of unemployment. According to Fineman (1983), members of the middle-class experience a higher fear of status loss as a consequence of unemployment compared to the working class, whereas the latter suffers more from the financial implications of being “out of work” (Grint, 2005, p. 38; referring to Warr, 1983). Also, the factor time plays a vital role in how unemployment is experienced individually. Studies show that usually, after an initial shock, a perception of unemployment as a “temporary rest” (Grint, 2005, p. 41) follows, which then transitions into a phase of actively looking for a new job. While this phase is still characterised by optimism, the mental experience shifts towards pessimism, as being out of work is prolonged (Ashton, 1986; Eisenberg & Lazarsfeld, 1938). After a period of about six months, the fourth phase of “fatalism” (Lazarsfeld, 1938) sets in, in which unemployment is experienced more “as a way of life rather than a transient experience between jobs” (Grint, 2005, p. 41). This fatalistic fourth phase is particularly characteristic of the experience of long-term unemployment (Flecker, 2017).

3.2.2. The subjective experience of (long-term) unemployment

Regardless of the context-related circumstances of unemployment and the specific consequences for individuals, there are many general experiences that are related to a loss of employment. Social psychology results suggest that unemployment severely affects the individual psychological well-being (Paul et al., 2016). The most influential study on unemployment’s psychological effects stems from Marie Jahoda (1986) (Paul et al., 2016, p. 373). Besides a manifest and financial function of paid work, she distinguishes between five types of latent functions linked to paid labour (Jahoda, 1986, p. 136).

⁵ Eurostat-polls on how men and women spend their time conducted between the years 2005 and 2018 show that in all European countries, although with cross-country differences, women are significantly more involved in household and care work than men (www.ec.europa.eu).

First, employment gives the day a time structure. A lack of temporal structuring of the day represents a central problem in being unemployed, Jahoda argues. Second, employment expands the range of social relationships and provides opportunities to interact with people outside the family or immediate neighbourhood. Third, the division of labour that often accompanies gainful employment enables participation in collective goals and achievements. Thus, individuals experience that they can make a difference in collaboration with others. Fourth, people define their social status in society through their work, which makes paid work a source of identity. Fifth, employment forces people to become active regularly and to pursue activities to achieve common goals (ibid.). Jahoda argues that these experiences represent human's basic psychological needs to lead a meaningful life. Unemployment, however, deprives individuals of these experiences and makes it more difficult or even impossible to fulfil those needs, which negatively influences individual well-being and mental health (Jahoda, 1986; Paul et al., 2016, p. 374).

More recent studies support Jahoda's findings empirically (Paul & Batinic, 2010; Selenko et al., 2011). However, Jahoda's approach has been criticised for paying too little attention to the material deprivation of unemployment (Fryer, 1986). Referring to this "agency restriction model" (1986), Fryer argues that the financial restrictions of unemployed individuals prevent them from pursuing their goals and planning their future (ibid.). These agency restrictions harm the affected individuals' mental health and increase with prolonged unemployment. Therefore, long-term unemployed people are at a particularly high risk of suffering from physical and mental health problems as well as from poverty (Nüß, 2017, p. 1). Conversely, a German study from the nineteen nineties argues that individuals suffering from poverty have more agency than both science and the public discourse grants them (Leibfried, 1995). Leibfried (1995) defines poverty as a "phase in individual biographies" (ibid., p. 9) in which agents have the chance to change their situation or actively engage in shaping it (ibid., p. 42f.). A core theoretical assumption of the study is the dialectic relation between individual and state, in which the welfare state significantly influences but not fully determines individual lives (ibid., p. 24). Analysing duration, course and the subjective experience of receiving social assistance, the study identifies three types of dealing with long-term unemployment and shows that the recipients' group is very heterogeneous. The degree of subjectively experienced agency varies due to age, education, health and general prospects of reintegrating into the labour market (Leibfried, 1995).

In their recent study on the subjective experience of receiving social assistance in a rural region of Austria, Stadlober and others (2018) emphasise that the subjective experience of receiving social assistance is characterised by balancing objective difficulties, like financial hardship with subjective attitudes, perceptions and expectations (ibid., p. 50). Even though most interviewees are suffering from the circumstances of their living situation, wishing to find a job and reintegrate into the labour

market as quickly as possible, a certain degree of agency could be found in the interviews. Like Leibfried (1995), Stadlober et al. (2018) also point to the different motives of receiving social assistance. For instance, some people in their study regarded receiving social assistance as a strategy to combine their life philosophies with the labour market demands (ibid., p. 50). However, Stadlober et al. emphasise that people following such strategies and personal agendas in receiving social assistance were in the absolute minority. Generally, the biggest everyday life challenges for recipients are financial, especially regarding the housing situation, where the costs are higher than the financial resources provided by social support. Moreover, recipients are confronted with high social pressure levels due to the negative public image of social assistance and discourses promoting poverty hostility (ibid., p. 51). The study shows that instead of individual choice or will, multiple, cumulative factors are responsible for lack of reintegration into the labour market. These factors can either be on the individual level, like disability, sickness or disease, low education, high age or single care responsibilities or on a structural level, such as lacking public childcare or insufficient infrastructure⁶ (Stadlober et al., 2018). Other studies find similar factors for long-term unemployment (e.g. Eppel et al., 2018; Globisch and Madlung, 2017; Leibfried, 1995; Saraceno, 2002).

Summarising findings from various studies in the German-speaking area, Globisch and Mandlung (2017) emphasise two aspects of long-term unemployment. Firstly, employment seems to be the central, normative point of reference for the subjective experience of long-term unemployment. And second, studies found high levels of activity among long-term unemployed people. However, these activities are not in the sense of labour market policy “activation” (Globisch & Madlung, 2017, p. 323), but more in terms of engaging in alternative activities in different social fields, which can result in regaining recognition and compensating for lost recognition (ibid., p. 326, see also Motakef et al., 2018). Dörre et al. (2008) are among those scholars who emphasise the strong, normative orientation on employment among long-term unemployed people (ibid., p. 31). The interviewees from their study strongly distanced themselves from anything that could be interpreted as a “lower class habitus” (ibid., p. 32). Due to the social stigma of receiving social assistance, it becomes even more important to distance oneself. The authors argue that the idea of social assistance refers to a concept of procedural homogeneity, which socially and culturally does not exist. It forces people from highly heterogeneous backgrounds with different employment biographies to live on the “edge of respectability” (ibid.), causing social tensions and a loss of legitimacy, not only of the institutions and actors on the labour market but also of the political system as a whole (Dörre et al., 2008, p. 32).

⁶ Especially for people living in rural areas, lacking infrastructure is a crucial obstacle to successful reintegration into the labour market, making it impossible to reach potential workplaces (on time) (Stadlober et al., 2018, p. 50).

The interviews conducted for this thesis mirrored multiple of the now described experiences and social consequences regarding long-term unemployment. Especially the lastly mentioned loss of legitimacy and respectability was clearly documented in the present cases. Due to the specific scope of this paper, not all of the findings from current research will be discussed in relation to the interviews of this thesis. Those findings that are particularly relevant for experience of injustice will be addressed in this thesis's conclusion (see chapter 7.). Concerning justice conceptions, my analysis showed that also for the interviewees of this project, employment serves as a central normative frame of reference, especially regarding the formulation of justice claims and entitlements. Therefore, I will discuss several relevant justice norms in the context of work in the theory section (see chapter 4.3.).

3.3. National contexts of unemployment

Since this thesis's empirical material is stemming from two different European countries, namely Austria and Sweden, the following chapters are dedicated to the various national contexts of the data. After briefly characterising the institutional arrangements of the social system in each country, and summarising current unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, the basic regulations and amounts regarding unemployment benefits and social assistance in Austria and Sweden are presented. The respective national laws may not be directly relevant for the analysis since no quantitative comparisons of amounts or access restrictions are made. Nevertheless, the regulations and structures pose the institutional, bureaucratic framework in which the interview partners' experiences are embedded. Before getting into more detail about Austria and Sweden, a brief introductory overview over central aspects of labour market policies on the European level is given in the following.

3.3.1. Unemployment on the European level

European social policies shape national welfare state strategies, especially in terms of reacting to modern capitalism's various crises (Globisch & Madlung, 2017). For instance, for dealing with the increase of long-term unemployment, which was and still is a consequence of the financial crises, strategies were developed on a European level and then adapted and enforced by national actors (ibid., p. 323). Some general processes of re- and deconstructions of the welfare state, which have already been described above (see chapter 3.1.2.2.), are rooted in a change in political narratives on the European level (ibid.). Regarding labour market policies, scholars diagnose a general trend towards "activating" individuals who are not participating in the labour market (e.g. Daly, 2011, p. 3; Klenner et al., 2012, p. 214). Current, new policy ideals are enabling, or even compelling employment, self-actualisation and self-sufficiency (Daly, 2011, p. 3). As a result, decommodification and social benefits decreased, which connected social security more strongly to employment, making engagement in paid labour almost the only alternative for individuals (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 214). The Lisbon strategy of

the year 2000 led to a shift in labour market policies towards a stronger focus on “activating” individuals to engage more strongly and self-driven on the labour market (Globisch & Madlung, 2017, p. 323). Underlying the concept of “activation” is a criticism about the “old”, caring welfare model, which was considered too expensive and inefficient, and gave individuals too little incentives to reintegrate into the labour market. Lewis (2006) argues these policy reorientations’ backgrounds are the various social changes in both families and the labour market, fundamentally changing the assumptions underpinning labour market policies (ibid., p. 33). The former basic assumption underlying labour market policies was the “male breadwinner model” (Lewis, 2001, p. 156) and has now been replaced by a new employment strategy by the European Union. Lewis calls this new EU strategy the “adult worker model” (ibid.) since it is based on the fact that it has become widely accepted and normalised that women engage in paid work. At present, in most western countries, a “dual-breadwinner model” has become the norm (ibid.), in which female employment is not only normalised but even expected (ibid., p. 158). The normative model underlying these policies is based on the sociological diagnoses of individualisation (Beck, 1986), establishing a new narrative in social policies in terms of “activating” and “supporting” the individual to take their self-responsibility. The welfare state’s role and its enforcing organisations shifted mainly to issue sanctions if the formal requirements are not met (ibid.). Against this normative background, social policy treats individuals as actual or potential workers and emphasises their agency, framing labour market participation as an expression of free “choice” (Daly, 2011, p. 4f.). Thus, unemployment appears not as a crisis of the labour market but as a crisis of the subject and is also treated as such (a.o. Flecker, 2017, p. 66; Globisch & Madlung, 2017, p. 323f.; Grint, 2005, p. 39).

In their report published in February 2021, Eurostat diagnosed “a sharp increase in the number of claims for unemployment benefits across the EU” (Eurostat, 2021, p. 2), triggered by the outbreak of COVID-19. Simultaneously, a significant part of people registered at national unemployment agencies had to take full-time care responsibilities for their children and therefore no longer look for a job, as Eurostat reports (ibid.). Thus, discrepancies occurred in the number of registered unemployed and those categorised as unemployed by definition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Eurostat defines unemployment based on the guidelines of the ILO and counts as unemployed “someone aged 15 to 74 without work during the reference week who is available to start work within the next two weeks and who has actively sought employment at some time during the last four weeks.” (www.ec.europa.eu). Moreover, Eurostat defines the unemployment rate as “the number of people unemployed as a percentage of the labour force” (ibid.). According to Eurostat’s unemployment statistics in February 2021, the overall unemployment rate in Europe (Euro area) was at 8,3% in December 2020 and thus increased by 0,9% compared to the previous year (Eurostat, 2021).

3.3.2. Unemployment in Austria

In comparative welfare state research, the Austrian welfare state is usually classified as a conservative, continental or male-breadwinner model (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Heitzmann & Österle, 2008). The Austrian welfare state is characterised by comparably high social expenses and dominated by the social insurance principle (Heitzmann & Österle, 2008, p. 49). The latter functions based on the equity principle of justice, in which the amount of payment contributions determines the number of social benefits (a.o. Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013, p. 1176). This equity-principle-based mechanism regulates other aspects of the welfare state, such as the pension system and the unemployment support. While Austrian social policies were prioritising low unemployment rates for a long time, policy priorities shifted during the nineteen nineties towards budget consolidation and liberalisation (Heitzmann & Österle, 2008, p. 58). In these developments, labour market policies changed their focus on activation in employment training and similar measures (ibid., p. 59). Like the general changes in welfare state arrangements, broader reorientations towards privatisation and outsourcing of benefits took place in the Austrian welfare state (Atzmüller et al., 2012). One of these outsourced institutions is the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), which manages Austrian labour market policies on the national and regional levels. In contrast to the definition of the International Labour Organisation (see previous chapter 3.3.1.), the national definition of unemployment is based on the number of all people who are registered as unemployed at the Public Employment Service and the national social security institute (Hauptverband der Sozialversicherungsträger) (www.statistik.at).

There has been a significant increase in the current unemployment rate in Austria due to the COVID-19 crises. According to recent statistics published by the AMS, Austria's unemployment rate was at 11,4% in January 2021 and thus 2,8% higher than a year before in January 2020 (www.ams.at). In January 2021 the highest unemployment rate in Austria since 1950 was recorded (ibid.). During years before the pandemic, the unemployment rate had continuously decreased with a mean value of 7,4% in 2019 (www.statistik.at). The lowest rate was documented in 2000 with 5,8% before it increased due to the financial crises to 9,1% in 2016; it continuously decreased until now (ibid.). According to Eurostat's international standards, Austria's unemployment rate was 5,8% at the end of 2020 (Eurostat, 2021, p. 4).

Like the unemployment rate, the rate of long-term unemployment was at a historical high at the beginning of 2021 (www.arbeitplus.at). The tense situation on the labour market makes it even harder for people who have already been jobless before the pandemic to reintegrate into the labour market (ibid.). Every person, who has been registered as unemployed at the AMS for more than 365 days, counts as long-term unemployed (www.ams.at). In an even broader definition

(“Langzeitbeschäftigungslosigkeit”), participation in training and programmes are added to the duration of unemployment, and the counting first ends if it is interrupted by more than 62 days. Statistics based on this broader definition give a more accurate impression of the situation of long-term unemployment in Austria (arbeit plus, 2017, p. 16). The number of long-term unemployed individuals is increasing more than unemployment in general. In 2021, there were three times as many long-term unemployed people in Austria as ten years ago, which is a trend that is expected to continue in the future (www.arbeitplus.at).

The necessary amount of unemployment benefits in Austria is calculated based on previous income and previous monthly contributions to the social insurance under several specific, duration related conditions (www.ams.at). In general, the introductory amount of unemployment support is 55% of the previous non-tax income. In terms of duration, unemployment benefits can be received for up to 20 weeks. Depending on the amount of time the person has previously worked or the person’s age, the period can be prolonged to a maximum of 52 weeks. Under specific conditions, or when the person attends training, it can be extended for up to 3 or 4 years (ibid.). If, after this time, the person has not found a job, they can apply for social assistance (“Notstandshilfe”) but have to fulfil certain conditions. The conditions catalogue of the AMS emphasises the ability and willingness to work and accept a job, including working hours of at least 20 or 16 hours (in case of care responsibilities) per week. If these requirements cannot be met, the last option is to apply for regionally differing social assistance (“Mindestsicherung” or “Sozialhilfe”). In the region where the Austrian interview partners of this thesis come from, the amount of financial aid is 946 Euros for individual households, 1328 Euros for couples and extra payments for each child (www.no.e.arbeiterkammer.at). The poverty line in Austria is at 1286 Euros per month for a single household, which is thus significantly higher than the amount of financial aid an individual receives (www.armutskonferenz.at). Therefore, long-term unemployed people are at a significantly higher risk of suffering from poverty and financial precarity (www.arbeitplus.at).

3.3.3. Unemployment in Sweden

Sweden used to be considered a classic example of a universalistic, social-democratic welfare regime, with generous benefit payments for the population (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Sachweh & Olafsdottir, 2012). However, similar to many other European welfare regimes, also Sweden has undergone multiple reforms in the last decades, in which the social system has been decentralised and partly

⁷ Due to a law introduced in 2019 by the right-wing-conservative government, “Mindestsicherung” changed into a new, cut back and more strict form of social assistance, called “Sozialhilfe”. Among the new regulations are maximum benefit amounts and a stronger focus on non-cash benefits. Moreover, to be granted “Sozialhilfe”, individuals have to have spent their assets up to a sum slightly over 5500 Euros (www.no.e.arbeiterkammer.at).

privatised (Hort, 2008, p. 525). Today, the Swedish model's universality has decreased, and the welfare state has become more selective, promoted by arguments for higher efficiency and a stronger orientation towards economic growth and competition (ibid., p. 544). Even though this reorientation took place, Hort argues that the Swedish welfare state is still rather universalistic in international comparison (ibid.). A fundamental characteristic of the Swedish welfare state model is its variety of active labour market policies to integrate as many people from the working-age population in the labour market as possible (ibid., p. 529). Unemployment benefits are eligible under several requirements designed to bridge short-time unemployment spans. Long term unemployed people have to participate in public qualification programmes to maintain unemployment benefits. Alternatively, individuals can apply for needs-based social assistance at local authorities. Generally, the social support system is designed to bind social security to employment and thereby financially forces people to work (ibid., p. 535).

Like the Austrian case, an outsourced institution called "Arbetsförmedlingen" manages the labour market policies in Sweden. As the AMS in Austria, the Swedish Public Employment Service defines the unemployment rates based on the number of people registered by them as unemployed. According to the recent statistics released by Arbetsförmedlingen, the unemployment rate in Sweden was at 11% at the beginning of 2021 (www.arbetsformedlingen.se). Like in other countries, the COVID-19 crisis had a tremendous impact on the Swedish labour market. Compared to the employment rate of 6,8% in 2019 ahead of the crisis, it increased to 9,4% in 2020 and is growing (ibid.). According to Eurostat, Sweden had an unemployment rate of 8,5% at the end of 2020, which was relatively higher than the rate of 5,8% in the Austrian case (Eurostat, 2021, p. 4).

In recent publications, the Public Employment Service of Sweden argues that the coming years' most significant challenges will be the increase in long-term unemployment (www.arbetsformedlingen.se). Like Austria, also in Sweden the numbers of people who have been jobless for more than 12 months have risen continuously in Sweden. In late 2020, more people were registered as long-term unemployed than after the financial crises, and this trend will continue to grow, according to Arbetsförmedlingen (ibid.).

The unemployment benefit in Sweden is called "a-kassa" and can be received under the condition of meeting several formal criteria. Similar to the Austrian model, the amount of a-kassa is based on previous income and requires at least 12 months of having worked and paid into unemployment insurance before (www.arbetsformedlingen.se). Depending on how long the person has paid unemployment insurance contributions in a previous job (was a "member" of a-kassa), they either receive a payment that is based on their previous income or a basic financial aid benefit

("Grundbelopp"). While the unemployment benefit can be up to 80% of the previous income (or max 26 400 Swedish crowns per month, which equals about 2600 Euros, before tax), the maximum amount of essential financial aid is 11 220 crowns before tax (equals about 1106 Euros), depending on how much the person has worked before. The maximum duration of a-kassa is 300 days, but if the person has children under eighteen, it rises to 450 days. The general requirements for receiving any of the unemployment-related benefits are to be registered at Arbetsförmedlingen and be "available" for the labour market by being able and "willing" to work at least three hours a day or seventeen hours per week (www.arbetsformedlingen.se).

Moreover, to continuously be granted "a-kassa", an active job search process has to take place, and the person has to participate in all scheduled meetings and training and is obligated to hand in monthly reports of their job search. There is no official poverty threshold or financial yardstick in Sweden, but everyone under a certain income level is eligible for financial aid (Mood, 2013, p. 122). In Sweden, it has to be applied for at the social services of the respective local municipalities and consists of two benefits: a subsistence allowance (försörjningsstöd) and financial support (bistånd). While the subsistence allowance is paid monthly and should cover basic needs, defined by nation-wide need norms (Riksnormen) as well as individually varying, "appropriate" (www.socialstyrelsen.se) costs for housing, home insurance, etc., the financial support is meant to cover day-to-day expenses (ibid.). Financial aid benefits are intended to be a last resort for people with temporary financial difficulties having first having applied for other situation-specific aid (for example housing support, sickness support, etc.). Therefore, to be eligible for financial assistance, the respective person cannot have any money left on their account or other financial means (ibid.). Studies show that an individual's situation in the labour market strongly determines their poverty risk in Sweden (Mood, 2013, p. 122). Therefore, most social assistance recipients in Sweden are not participating in the labour market, for instance, due to sickness or handicaps.

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework that this thesis is based on. After initially exploring fundamental concepts underlying the notion of justice in general, I will introduce essential characteristics of sociological justice theory (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Goppel et al., 2016; Kittel, 2020; Liebig et al., 2013; Müller, 1992). The sociological groundwork of justice theory will lead me to the theoretical perspective, which is most meaningful in analysing subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice in this thesis: recognition. By demonstrating the connection between justice and recognition, I will argue why I regard a perspective on recognition as essential for understanding the subjective experience of (in)justice (Honneth, 2003, 2010). Moving on, I will explore the meaning of *injustice* by presenting two theoretical approaches that are exclusively focusing on the social conditions and consequences of injustice (Schimank, 2005; Marion Young, 1990). In the next step, I will contextualise justice and connect it with the second element that this thesis consists of, which is work. Three justice norms relevant in the context of work will be discussed: equality, merit and autonomy (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Flecker, 2017; Hürtgen and Voswinkel, 2014; Sayer, 2007). A brief reference to ongoing processes of de- and re-institutionalisation will be made in this section as well (a.o. Mückenberger, 2010; Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013).

To broaden the theoretical perspective and enable an understanding for justice claims and wishes beyond the sphere of work, I will take in a feminist point of view. After first characterising the basic idea of feminist justice theory (Fraser, 1992; Nussbaum, 2003; Rössler, 2016; Marion Young, 2000), the analytical potential of three theoretical approaches will be explored. After first addressing justice and the capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1985), I will move on to discussing the connection between justice and precarity (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef, 2015) before finally arguing why justice in terms of life arrangements (Motakef et al., 2018) has been chosen as the main theoretical focus of this thesis. In the last section of the theory chapter, I will address the subjective experience of (in)justice by drawing mainly on the work of Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014). Leading to the methods section of this thesis, I will present two analytical concepts applied to analyse the experiences of injustice of the interviewees of this thesis. By doing this, I will first refer to the processes in which entitlement notions develop on an individual level before finally exploring the differences between claims and wishes for justice.

4.1. What is justice?

Following a theoretical tradition that started in the antique with Plato and Aristotle thinking about the nature of justice (Cullen, 1992, p. 15), the terms “justice” and “injustice” can be related to either people and their actions or institutions (Goppel et al. 2016, p. 2). Goppel, Mieth and Neuhauser (2016)

illustrate different aspects of justice and their underlying logics by drawing on several examples of unjust treatment (ibid., p. 2f.). The authors argue that in everyday life situations, it is often cases of unequal treatment that create irritation. Referring, for instance, to a children's birthday party, Goppel et al. argue that if one child receives a smaller piece of cake than the others, this is usually perceived as unfair. Other examples of unequal treatment are the gender pay gap or a judge that imposes a harsh sentence for a minor offence. Based on the idea of climate justice, the current resource consumption on the planet is seen as unfair for future generations, and the fact that children's prospects depend highly on their parents' level of education is a violation the idea of educational justice.

The mentioned examples demonstrate that specific rules, procedures, or outcomes can be considered fair or unfair (Goppel et al. 2016, p. 2f.). However, an essential question remains, what exactly are the standards for the rules, procedures and outcomes. The birthday cake example shows, for instance, that these standards can be quite different. Intuitively, an equal distribution between the children might be considered fair: every child should get about the same amount of cake. However, there can be reasons that justify an unequal distribution: based on the meritocratic justice principle, one child might get a larger piece, because they helped bake the cake. Or, referring to the needs-based-justice principle, it could be argued that one child gets two pieces of cake because it has not eaten the whole day and might be in extra need of food (ibid.). Because these different distributive justice rules exist simultaneously and might be competing for validity, the question arises of how justified each approach is. Depending on who is asked in what context, this question might be evaluated very differently.

There is no consensus about what is just, neither in everyday life topics nor in philosophical debates. Goppel, Mieth and Neuhauser (2016) see two main reasons for this variety of perspectives. On the one hand, individually expressed justice beliefs in everyday life contexts can often be traced back to different historical and religious roots. On the other hand, within philosophical justice debates, different approaches to justice are based on widely varying societal concepts, which mirror the variety of current social justice conceptions (ibid., p. 3). Instead of these historical and philosophical explanations, this thesis aims to develop a sociological perspective to understand differences in justice conceptions. The basic assumptions underpinning the sociological perspective on justice are discussed in the following.

4.1.1. Sociological groundwork

While in philosophy, the concept of justice has been a meaningful topic since its early beginnings (Cullen, 1992, p. 15), in sociology, justice has been more of an implicit theme than an explicit topic (Arts & Veen, 1992, p. 143). As it has already been pointed out in the literature review, the sociological perspective on justice starts from the assumption that justice is a social construct and therefore can

be described as “subjective by nature” (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008, p. 209). The primary mechanism for developing individual justice perceptions is based on whether what we receive and how others treat us corresponds with our entitlements (ibid.). This basic definition of a sociological understanding of justice underlines the meaning of entitlements for subjective justice conceptions. The question of what entitlements, demands or claims for justice are and how they evolve on a subjective level will be a recurring topic in this theory section since it is essential for this thesis’s research interest.

Instead of investigating what is just or unjust, the goal of the sociological perspectives on justice is to shed light on what individual or collective actors perceive as just or unjust and why (Liebig et al., 2013, p. 285f.). Sociology analyses the effects of justice claims and the discussions around different justice ideas followed by these claims (Schimank, 2005, p. 335f.). Following this interest, sociological justice research aims to determine what the individual, societal or historical roots for different perceptions of justice and which individual and societal consequences arise from them. Thus, a central question stemming from sociological justice research is what social inequalities seem legitimate and are regarded as fair or just, and which are not (ibid.). Situated between the ideational level discussed in philosophy and the behavioural-level studies in psychology, the sociological account on justice centres around reciprocal relationships and structures (Kittel, 2020, p. 1). Depending on the social context, the kinds of relationships, and the institutions’ people are embedded in, can differ and influence justice perceptions (ibid.).

Sociological justice research is based on the idea of the interdependency of structures and individual actions (Liebig & Sauer, 2016). While, on the one hand, individual actions and attitudes are embedded in social structures, cultural and normative contexts, “these social phenomena are manifestations of the social interactions” (Kittel, 2020, p. 2). According to Liebig, Sauer and Valet (2013), modern societies are characterised by a fundamental inequality not only of the goods (e.g. income and wealth) and the chances (e.g. education) that are accessible for its members but also of the burdens (e.g. taxes) they have to carry (Liebig et al., 2013, p. 286). The vast majority of these inequalities did not appear by chance but are the product of either direct decisions or institutionalised rules and norms which regulate who gets how much and who has to carry which burden (ibid.).

Liebig et al. (2013) define justice as a value concept that is morally reasoned (ibid., p. 286). Durkheim is one of the few “classical” sociologists who addressed the topic of justice by trying to understand society’s moral foundations (Durkheim, 1964). According to Durkheim, society’s justice sentiments are inherently related to solidarity, which binds the society members together (Kittel, 2020, p. 3). The type of solidarity, and thus of justice, should maintain a society’s social cohesion. Kittel (2020) is speaking of a “twin logic in which justice bolsters social cohesion” (ibid., p. 3). This logic consists of individuals

forming subjective justice sentiments on the one hand and societies institutionalising justice concepts that align with the specific form of solidarity in that society (ibid.). Building on Durkheim's work, more contemporary sociological theory distinguishes between a broad range of different justice principles. Depending on the context in which justice is investigated, the underlying principles are categorised and conceptualised differently.

According to Dubet (2008), the normative actions and thus the "critical activities" (ibid., p. 17) of individuals are shaped by justice principles. The author argues that justice principles are the basis for the societal experience's normative aspect in two ways. First, the principles are regarded as legitimate, or "obligatory", as Durkheim would put it (Durkheim, 1982, p. 56) and second, they appear to be an autonomous decision and independent judgement, which is supported by morality (Dubet, 2008, p. 17f.). Serving as the foundation for further elaborated distinctions of justice principles, Müller (1992) distinguishes between four forms of justice. While "commutative" justice refers to the idea of exchange justice, securing the reciprocity in exchange situations between two agents, "contributive" justice describes the contributions that individuals, groups, or occupations make to society. "Contributive" justice, which is also known as the "merit principle", serves as the legitimising basis for social hierarchies in modern industrial societies (Müller, 1992, p. 25). Depending on the "contribution" that each social agent supposedly makes to society, the worth and social position is allocated to this individual or group. Müller describes this form as the "input-side" of justice, whereas the "output-side", on the other hand, is "distributive" justice (ibid.). This third justice dimension refers to allocating goods and resources to the members of society; how these goods and resources are distributed result in what is referred to as social inequality. Despite the differences between contributive and distributive justice, Müller (1992) emphasises that the categories serve an analytical purpose. In everyday life of the social world, the two types are firmly connected since individual's contributing merits are often used to enforce distributive ideas (ibid., p. 26). This dynamic between contributive and distributive norms results in a constant struggle between evaluating merits and allocating goods that Müller describes as the controversy around the "terms of trade" of reciprocity (ibid.). The fourth form of justice, called "constitutive justice", underlies the first three and describes group membership's right (Kittel, 2020, p. 3).

As demonstrated in this chapter, a sociological account of justice regards justice as a normative concept that is socially constructed and serves as a legitimising basis for a particular social order. The idea of justice follows a specific logic which is based on the idea of reciprocity, where contributions should determine the distribution of resources and goods. This logic is the basis for forming certain principles of justice, which, according to Dubet (2008), structure the experience of injustice and thus influence individuals' thoughts, reactions and emotions of. While this basic idea of justice principles

serving as a legitimising basis for social hierarchies serves as an essential theoretical background for this thesis, the standard concepts of justice principles fail to address an aspect that I regard as crucial for understanding subjective notions of injustice. I am referring to the element of recognition, which, as Honneth (2010) argues, is a core characteristic of the last decade's social justice struggles. Taking recognition into account when looking at justice from a sociological perspective enables understanding the symbolic dimensions of injustice and therefore has the potential to go beyond the mere question of a fair (and thus legitimately unequal) distribution of material goods. The relation between justice and recognition represents a core assumption of this thesis and is therefore discussed in detail in the following chapter.

4.1.2. Justice and recognition

In an attempt to formulate what could be called a "comprehensive critical theory of justice" (Forst, 2007, p. 291), Fraser (2005) and Honneth (2010, 2003) present two contesting approaches on understanding justice, which go beyond a mere focus on distributive justice. Due to the vital role of recognition for the analysis carried out in this thesis, Honneth's approach will be presented in more detail before briefly describing Fraser's alternative idea.

Honneth (2003) defines the capitalist society as an institutionalised order of recognition. The starting point of his argument is that humans depend on others' intersubjective recognition, which is determined by the specific ways in which mutual recognition is distributed in society (ibid., p. 162). Subjective expectations of recognition are thus not merely anthropologically derived from personality but instead are the product of the differentiation of three spheres of recognition. The first sphere, affective recognition, meaning emotional affection or love, was already developed in pre-modern societies to enable children's socialisation. The second sphere, legal recognition, i.e. the recognised status of an individual as a member of society with certain rights, has played an essential role in establishing a moral foundation for capitalism's core institutions. The third form of recognition is social recognition, meaning a certain degree of social prestige in societal life (Honneth, 2003, p. 163ff.).

Regarding justice, Honneth (2010) observes a growing gap between philosophical theories of justice and political practice (ibid., p. 52). In his theory of justice, he deconstructs and criticises the three premises that he considers characteristics for all modern justice theories: the basic procedural scheme, the idea of distributive justice and the focus on the state (ibid.). First and foremost, he fundamentally criticises the liberal notion of freedom (which is underlying the paradigm of distributive justice) for not taking the role of intersubjective recognition into account when speaking about autonomy (ibid., p. 54 f.). A fair or equal distribution of goods can only lead to individual freedom if the subjective conditions for personal autonomy are secured (ibid., p. 60). Referring to Kant and Rousseau, Honneth defines

autonomy as “a certain kind of individual self-relationship that allows one to trust one's own needs, stand by one's convictions, and perceive one's abilities as valuable” (Honneth, 2010, p. 60). While utilising the distribution of goods, this kind of self-respect can be articulated and demonstrated, and it cannot be acquired or maintained (ibid., p. 60f.). Since autonomy is a relational variable, absolute autonomy can only be achieved by intersubjective means by recognising our needs, beliefs, and abilities by others. However, this recognition must be mutual since, according to Honneth, it is only through the behaviour of others that we can realise our self-value (ibid., p. 61). Adam Smith (1995 [1759]) already captured this basic assumption that recognition theories are based on his self-perception metaphor in other's mirror. According to Smith, individuals see themselves in this mirror and reflect on themselves and thus form their identity based on how others treat them. Self-esteem and self-confidence can only develop when one feels intersubjectively valued and recognised (Voswinkel, 2015, p. 2). As social beings, individuals are dependent on others' recognition, which makes it possible to either systematically suppress or build up people or even social groups by recognising them or withholding recognition. According to Honneth and others (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Honneth, 2010; Voswinkel & Lindemann, 2013; Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013), social inequality is therefore partly reproduced through relations of recognition.

Against this background, Honneth (2010) argues that distributive justice principles have proven insufficient in analysing justice in modern societies since the underlying assumptions are incorrect. Instead of “goods”, he suggests speaking of relations of recognition, and instead of “distribution”, the attention should be shifted towards processes of “granting justice” (ibid., p. 63). Moreover, he criticises a certain kind of “blindness” of liberal justice theories due to their focus on the state (ibid., p. 68). While the state serves as a core institution of regulating recognition, it does so mainly in a legal sense; however, individuals are embedded in other social contexts that function according to their logics and recognition structures. The workplace or the realm of family and housework are systematically disregarded by liberal justice theories (ibid., p. 66), which is an important starting point of feminist justice theory that is addressed in more detail in chapter 4.4..

The alternative position to liberal justice theory that Honneth (2010) develops consists of three main aspects. First, he argues that the paradigm of distribution should be replaced by integrating all individuals in structures of recognition. Second, instead of constructing fictitious procedures, the normative conditions of the existing forms of recognition have to be reconstructed historically. Third, by applying a decentralised perspective on power (Foucault, 2005), the analytical attention should not only be focused solely on the state's regulating functions but should also take the role of non-governmental agents and organisations into account (Honneth, 2010, p. 69). Thus, apart from legal relations, work and family relations must become relevant dimensions of justice and injustice (ibid., p.

75). Distributive justice, however, does not become utterly meaningless in this model, but its position changes from an independent to a dependent variable in the context of the respective structures of recognition (ibid., p. 70).

While Honneth presents a “monistic” theory of recognition (Forst, 2007, p. 293), Nancy Fraser (2005) suggests a two-dimensional perspective on justice. In her diagnosis of contemporary capitalist societies, injustice’s subjective experience is based on two related dimensions. Not only do individuals experience a lack of social and cultural recognition of their identity, but they also experience a lack of resources due to economic and political inequality (Forst, 2007, p. 293; Fraser, 2005). Based on this analysis, her approach is striving for both transformative strategies of recognition, and redistribution (Fraser, 2005). Honneth (2010), on the other hand, argues that struggles for recognition do not just attempt to receive cultural recognition. To comprehend social injustice, how certain forms of work and contributions to society are evaluated differently have to be analysed. However, these different recognition structures are deeply embedded in economic redistribution, which requires an analytical focus on recognition. Against this argument’s backdrop, Honneth criticises Fraser’s approach as lacking explanatory potential (Forst, 2007; Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Even though this thesis takes a recognition-centred perspective on justice, it is relevant to mention this proposed connection between distribution and recognition, mainly because the interviewees of this thesis are experiencing both a lack of recognition and a lack of financial resources from long-term unemployment. However, as the analysis will show, injustice experiences are often based either on the deprivation of recognition or on the violation of legitimate claims for recognition, and not on claims for financial redistribution. Although I consider Fraser’s argument as highly important for a political perspective on social justice, I argue that for a sociological, interpretative analysis of subjective experiences of injustice, the theoretical concept of recognition has more analytical potential and plays a more meaningful role in this thesis.

4.2. What is injustice?

The research question guiding this thesis addresses *injustice*. Focusing on experiences of injustice of long-term unemployed people in Sweden and Austria, this thesis’s analysis is building on the social concept of injustice. But what is injustice? And what are some of the societal and individual consequences of injustice? The majority of justice related literature that has been presented so far conceptualises injustice as the violation of dominant justice principles or legitimate entitlements. For instance, according to Honneth (2010), unfulfilled expectations for recognition are usually perceived as injustice. Other authors argue that a feeling of injustice arises when a justice principle is applied, which is not appropriate for the respective social situation (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 52). This argument

is solid among scholars who categorise justice principles concerning specific forms of social relationships (see chapter 3.1.1.1.). With the words of Durkheim, injustice can therefore be experienced as a state of “anomie” (Durkheim, 1964 [1893]), since existing allocation and distributive practices are decoupled from the normative logic of the social structure.

However, injustice can also be experienced when individuals interpret social relationships differently dominant in a specific social context (Liebig & Sauer, 2016, p. 52). According to Liebig and Sauer (2016), different normative or ideological ideas of how society should be organised can result in differing conceptions of suitable justice principles. For instance, regarding society as a community based on individuals of the exact origin, the needs principle will most likely be preferred, while having a somewhat hierarchical view of society would correspond with valuing entitlement. Viewing society through a meritocratic lens, on the other hand, where everyone struggles for their benefits, the preferred distributional practice is most likely to be based on the equity principle (ibid., p. 52).

Generally, among sociological justice research, it is often argued that the central question regarding injustice is that inequalities are regarded as legitimate and not (Dubet, 2008; Hadjar, 2015; Liebig & Sauer, 2016; Schimank, 2005). Due to the “cultural equality postulate of modernity” (Schimank, 2005, p. 313), every inequality has to be justified somehow. Liebig et al. (2013) argue that the justification of inequalities can refer to different sets of values or ideologies based on cultural concepts such as mercy or economic arguments such as increases in efficiency (Liebig et al., 2013, p. 286). According to Schimank (2005), the only legitimate reason for justifying inequalities are differences in merit. Regardless of which normative justification is applied, justice sentiments always require a kind of scale or yardstick by which to measure them (Faas, 2010, p. 46). Moreover, perceptions of injustice depend on which group of society they belong to and where this group stands in the social order. This circumstance influences the perception of justice because, depending on an individual’s social standing, different criteria of legitimacy are applied. Social categories like gender, employment status, class, age or ethnic background play a crucial role in developing notions of entitlement and injustice (a.o. Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). When keeping an intersectional perspective in mind, the inequalities become more complex considering simultaneous belongings to different groups and thus the intersection of different social categories. A more detailed discussion of the social denominators for developing notions of injustice on an individual level can be found in chapter 4.5.1..

Presenting a theoretical explanation for increasing levels of perceived injustice in society, Schimank (2005) argues that injustice experiences are often the result of what he calls “justice gaps”. He describes three dynamics of inclusion that lead to justice gaps. First, due to economic and cultural growth dynamics and an increase in people’s expectations, societal participation demands become

higher. As a reaction to these dynamics, social integration in some societal subsectors increased, which is the second process. For example, Schimank refers to the enhanced attempts to include members of lower social classes into the educational system. Constituting the third process, this dynamic results in an “erosion of the subsystemic codes” (Schimank, 2005, p. 317), leading to dysfunctional effects and resulting in losses of “qualitative justice” and autonomy. Applying this model to several societal examples, Schimank diagnoses a lack of inclusion in the majority of societal subsectors he analyses, which result in new justice-related problems (Liebig, 2007, p. 157; Schimank, 2005).

Analysing how societal “justice gaps” can lead to an increased level of inclusion or exclusion in different subsectors of society, Schimank (2005) starts his analysis with the assumption that modernity is characterised by a struggle for “life chances” (ibid., p. 314). Underlying these struggles are often experiences of injustice, which are promoted by what he calls “modern entitlement individualism” (“Anspruchsindividualismus”) (ibid., referring to Luhmann, 2018). According to the idea of entitlement individualism, individuals construct their own identity based on an arrangement of evaluative and normative expectations about themselves, which refer to claims for benefits in the different societal subsystems (Schimank, 2005, p. 311). Claims are relational and emerge in processes in which one’s agency realises unique entitlement ideas are compared to others. Because of the complexity of social inequalities in modern societies, which offer an almost “infinite source of comparison” (ibid.), a suspicion of injustice can quickly arise if someone else seems to be better off than oneself, and this might happen without there being a legitimate reason for it. Applying a three-folded model to several societal examples, Schimank argues that perceived injustices caused by justice gaps can lead to societal exclusion (ibid., p. 315ff.). Furthermore, the author contends that the increasing justice gaps are characterised by a tension between “quantitative” and “qualitative” justice that is caused and constantly intensified by the above-described dynamics of inclusion (ibid., p. 338).

On the one hand, the dynamics of inclusion promote a “quantitative” idea of justice by creating access to equality of chances for as many members of society as possible. On the other hand, as a reaction to this “quantitative” approach, those whom Schimank calls “the engaged one’s”, who see themselves as constantly making efforts and performing merits, call for more “qualitative” justice (ibid., p. 339). According to them, the possibilities for participation and decision making in the different social subsectors should be based on the degree of identification with this subsector and the effort an individual makes to contribute to the respective sector. In other words, the call for “qualitative” justice refers to the idea of resource access and benefits, in terms of the meritocratic and not of the egalitarian principle. Schimank suggests that the dynamics of inclusion led to a neglect of the meritocratic principle, which is why “the engaged one’s” call for a normative return to it, however without necessarily abandoning the egalitarian, “quantitative” idea of justice completely (ibid.).

“The engaged one’s” is a description that reflects the self-image of the interviewees of this thesis. They also experience “justice gaps” and call for a more “qualitative” account of justice. Even though Schimank’s theory is not sufficient to gain a deeper understanding for the complexity of individual injustice experiences, his approach seems suitable to embed the single-case based findings of this thesis into broader macro-level dynamics of injustice.

Additionally, a second perspective on injustice will briefly be presented in the following since it offers an alternative approach to conceptualising injustice. In the context of justice theory, there is a theoretical stream, mostly stemming from political philosophy and science, that criticises the widespread assumption that injustice is the mere absence of justice. It is claimed that in most justice theories, injustice is systematically underrepresented, often being considered as the undesired by-product or the very opposite of justice (Flügel-Martinsen & Martinsen, 2016, p. 53). Against the backdrop of this underrepresentation, theories of injustice should complement justice theories, according to Shklar (1997). Going a step further, Young (1990) suggests a re-orientation of justice theories in general, with a stronger focus on injustice.

Regarding injustice as oppression, Young (1996; 1990) accuses the liberal distributive paradigm of ignoring power structures and social hierarchies that individuals and groups are embedded in. She argues that due to society’s dominant capitalist conditions, most forms of injustice are characterised by structural oppression of groups and individuals (Young, 1996, p. 104f.). She distinguishes between “five faces of oppression” (ibid., pp. 114–132): “exploitation”, “marginalisation”, “powerlessness”, “cultural domination” and “violence”. According to Young, exploitation, as a significant characteristic of modern work processes, leads to power dynamics in which neither the basic needs nor individual merits receive recognition (ibid.). Due to dependency structures, marginalisation occurs, and individuals experience losing their autonomy and basic rights. Regarding objective circumstances, these marginalisation processes can result in a lack of substantial participation in contexts that are relevant to the respective individuals. On the other hand, on a subjective level, marginalisation is experienced as a feeling of being useless or not needed. The third form of oppression relevant for this thesis’s context is powerlessness, which is a result of lacking respect and recognition received by others. Powerlessness is usually experienced as a loss of decision-making power, not only in terms of individual matters but also regarding communication and interaction with others (Flügel-Martinsen & Martinsen, 2016, p. 57).

Against the theoretical backdrop of Young’s perspective on injustice, poverty can be understood as a form of oppression and, therefore, as injustice. This parallel between poverty and injustice is particularly relevant in the present context since all the interviewees of this thesis experience high financial precarity levels due to their long-term unemployment. Financial hardship is at least an

underlying and, in some cases, even a directly addressed grievance in the interview segments that addressed injustice and were analysed (see chapter 6. and 7.).

4.3. Justice in the context of work

At first glance, it might seem contradictory that work-related justice norms are discussed in a thesis which interviewed people who have not worked in a long time. Granted, it is not injustice experiences at the workplace that are the subject of this thesis. However, work nevertheless plays a crucial role in the narrations of the here interviewed long-term unemployed people, since their experiences revolve around either the search for work, the reason why they are not working, the conditions under which they can (or are permitted to) work, or their attempts to reconcile work with other responsibilities. Thus, also, their injustice experiences are, at least implicitly and not exclusively, related to employment and work-related norms. Therefore, the following chapters are devoted to standards that are meaningful in the context of work. Because labour and its different dimensions of meaning are highly normatively charged (as it was demonstrated in chapter 3.2.1.), the ensemble of social relations and mechanisms in the context of work creates a fruitful field for developing injustice notions (Dubet, 2008). Analysing the subjective injustice perceptions of employees in France, Dubet (2008) distinguishes between three justice principles in the context of labour: equality, merit and autonomy. Each of these principles refers to one dimension of the meaning of labour. Parity is mirrored in the sense of labour as status, and merit refers to the purpose of exchange value and autonomy to the meaning of labour as creative activity (ibid., p. 18). Each of these principles will be discussed in the following, while the respective meaning dimension of labour will simultaneously be pointed out. This subjective meaning of labour plays a significant role in my thesis since the interview partners position themselves either directly or implicitly concerning these normative meanings when they are talking about their experiences in the context of being unemployed.

4.3.1. Equality

Labour is regarded as a central mechanism of socialisation and social integration in capitalist societies (Becker-Schmidt, 2003; Dubet, 2008; Flecker, 2017). The way members of society position themselves to labour – either through the kind of work they do or through whether they have any at all – plays a significant role in their position in society and ascribes them social status (Dubet, 2008, p. 18). Simultaneously, the idea of equality, according to which every member of society is entitled to equal opportunities and equal rights, forms the normative basis for social integration in bourgeois, civil democracies (Becker-Schmidt, 2003; Dubet, 2008; Marx, 1961). However, this principle of equality contradicts the basic mechanisms of social integration in capitalist societies because the means of production are allocated unequally (Marx, 1961). Moreover, other categories of inequality, such as

gender, race or ability, lead to a systemic impossibility of realising the principle of equality in society. The process of social integration thus depends on the specific socio-historical conditions and an individual's position in society. Democratic equality introduces a new, more complex and paradoxical social hierarchy, where all members of society seem equal "by nature", whilst they are born into unequal circumstances and start from starkly different positions in society (Dubet, 2008, p. 21f.).

Despite this "cultural equality postulate of modernity" (Schimank, 2005, p. 313), in the context of the work sphere, a certain degree of inequality is socially accepted, if it can be justified. This justification is rooted in the hierarchical structures of workspaces. For instance, it is widely accepted that a firm's manager earns significantly more than the employees. Moreover, labour can be seen as the essential equality condition since inequalities between those employed and those not are often perceived as legitimate. The social legitimacy of differences between social support and wages, like the idea that the minimum wage should still be higher than the minimum social assistance (Oorschot, 2008), is an example of this norm. This emphasises the argument that the idea of equality is relative since it follows conceptions of just and unjust inequalities. According to Dubet (2008), inequality is perceived as unfair when it contradicts one's image of just social order (*ibid.*, p. 20). Therefore, equal treatment concerning one aspect can be demanded while simultaneously accepting inequalities regarding another element. Arguments like this usually point to a specific idea of a proper social order (*ibid.*). Dubet argues that in a legitimate social order, which is institutionalised in social hierarchies, everyone gets what they are entitled to, depending on their position in this order (*ibid.*, p. 21). Social criteria that position us in this social order (and specific notions of entitlement arise) can be class, age, gender, nationality, or qualification. Everything that violates these justified (in-)equalities and thereby violates the entitlements attached to certain positions in the social order can potentially be regarded as an injustice. It is often not the absence of equality that causes the feeling of injustice, and it is because the legitimate social hierarchies are disregarded. Because the normative idea of equality exists simultaneously as factual, social inequality, a hierarchical order of inequalities considered to be "just" evolves (*ibid.*, p. 22).

Regarding individual justice conceptions, the value of equality is mirrored in processes of self-constitution, which are considered as essential for forming work-related justice demands, according to Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014)⁸. In terms of labour, the employees they interviewed about their normality ideas⁹ constitute their identity by referring to being a human (*ibid.*, p. 34f.). In other words, many interviewees argued their justice claims with the right to equal, proper treatment of all, with

⁸ Processes of self-constitution and their role in shaping individual justice sentiments are explored in more detail in chapter 4.5.1. of this thesis.

⁹ A more detailed description of Hürtgen and Voswinkel's (2014) study was given in chapter 3.1.3..

attention being paid to individual vulnerability and ability. Especially respecting the subjective experience of the body and one's feelings, diseases or physical state play an essential role in work-related entitlements (ibid.). A normative figure the interviewees often referred to was the idea of human rights (ibid., p. 35) that everyone is entitled to, no matter of their merits or abilities. Related to the concept of human rights is the ideal of self-care, which Hürtgen and Voswinkel found to be represented prominently in their interviews about work-related claims and wishes (ibid., p. 37). Identifying themselves as more than just members of the workforce, their interviewees see themselves entitled to physical and emotional well-being, with the right to take care of their health (ibid.).

In contrast to analytical approaches to self-care in sociology (Flick, 2013; Foucault, 2005), Hürtgen and Voswinkel define self-care as an "observable norm that individuals refer to, to normatively justify their claims" (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 37). Even though the idea of self-care is rooted in the "autonomy ideal of the modern subject" (ibid.), it has gained normative meaning in the course of processes of cultural individualisation (a.o. Wagner, 2004). In cultural individualisation processes, individuals become normatively responsible for their success or failure (ibid.). Not only do subjects evaluate their own lives according to the norm of individualisation, but they also have to expect that others look at them from an individualistic point of view (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 38). However, against this normative framework's backdrop, being responsible for your destiny also means taking care of yourself, which implies both the right and the duty to be accountable (ibid.). Thus, the idea of cultural individualisation serves as the normative framework that individuals can refer to, therefore, justifying their right to self-care. However, the question remains what enables or prevents the ability to apply this normative frame to self-care. Flick (2013) argues that apart from the idea of individualised self-care, "relational self-care" represents an idea of self-care that takes intersubjective and personal relations into account and thus does not exclusively address care for oneself (ibid.). Against this backdrop, an analysis of self-care as a legitimising pattern for claims and entitlements has to take the respective individual's social context into account (Flick, 2013; Hürtgen, 2014, p. 38).

Before moving on, it can be summarised that the justice principle of equality is more a question of "just inequalities" than of actual equality (of opportunities and rights) for all. Regarding the analysis in this thesis, this means that special attention will be paid to such ideas of just inequalities and legitimate social hierarchies that are based on them. However, it was also demonstrated that the idea of equality as a human right is also applied for demanding the right to self-care and recognition of individual prerequisites, such as abilities and body-related conditions. In what ways the proposed entitlement to physical and emotional well-being is formulated in the justice conceptions of the interviewees in this thesis will be discussed in the conclusion. Tightly related to the equality principle and highly contested is the next justice principle that will be explored in the following.

4.3.2. Merit

The merit principle represents an essential norm of the bourgeois society because it is the only mechanism that allows the construction of just inequalities in a society that otherwise values its members' fundamental equality (Schimank, 2005). Ranking and classifying individuals in a society where everyone is supposed to be equal can only be justified by measuring the efforts and the eagerness of its members (Dubet, 2008, p. 24). Meritocracy thus serves as the legitimizing basis of the unequal distribution of life chances and resources in market-oriented industrial societies (Hadjar, 2015, p. 154). At the centre of the meritocratic principle is the idea that the distribution of goods and opportunities and access to power and resources should be linked to intellectual achievement and ability. In market-oriented, capitalist societies, characteristics such as social origin should no longer be the basis of social order. Instead, they should be replaced by exchange processes in free competition (Becker & Hadjar, 2009; Young, 1958). Merit as an immediate consequence of individual equality has already been stated in the declaration of human rights:

“All citizens, being equal in its eyes, shall be equally eligible to all high offices, public positions and employments, *according to their ability*, and without other distinction than that of their *virtues and talents*.” (*Declaration of Human and Civic Rights*, 1789, p. 6)

Merit becomes especially relevant in work relations since they entail a certain exchange between the labour and wage. Due to the British enlightenment's classical political economy (primarily Locke and Smith), the free labour contract replaced all social ties and created new criteria for justice between individuals (Dux, 2013). Equality and freedom should be guaranteed since everyone has free access and disposal over one good: their labour. Dux (2013) describes this idea as a supposed liberation of the workers, which in reality turns out to be a “liberty to submission” (ibid., p. 169). Even though the empirical, as well as the theoretical accuracy of the idea of the free labour contract, is highly doubtful (see, for instance, Marx' criticism of the political economy or Dubet 2008, Dux 2013), it still forms the basis for the idea of labour as a core principle of justice. The work relation is still often seen as “a just exchange between free and equal employers and employees” (Dubet, 2008, p. 25 f.). Even though Dubet argues that this idea is fiction, it is a construct that is hardly questioned when it comes to justice principles.

The merit principle has a moral aspect because it embodies freedom of action and fundamental human equality. But merit also becomes moral since it requires rational and controlled effort, which is part of virtuous actions like Max Weber demonstrated in his work on the “protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism” (ibid., p. 27; Weber, 2017 [1904]). Based on the merit principle, a feeling of injustice usually arises if work is not paid appropriately or if others are getting paid more for the same job. However,

this judgement is not rooted in a particular hierarchical order (like in the case of the equality principle) but refers to an idea of an outbalanced exchange ratio between input work and reward (Dubet, 2008, p. 26; Müller, 1992, p. 25).

According to Dubet (2008), only the merit principle can connect the principle of freedom with the equality principle in a world dominated by the division of labour (ibid., p. 25). However, the meritocratic principle as an institution is changing and constantly evolving since the definition of merits differ highly and are subject to constant social struggles and negotiations (Voswinkel, 2015). In times in which the market economy has become the dominating societal framework, performance is measured primarily by economic standards. Merit must lead to success on the market, while the efforts that go along with it are becoming less important. Conversely, during Fordism, work time and work intensity were considered the yardstick for meritocracy (Voswinkel, 2015, p. 7). Therefore, a shift in the understanding of merit from a factual dimension to an economic one and a shift from the input to the output side, i.e. from effort to result, can be documented. "Thus, it is no longer primarily the expended effort that is recognised, but the success of the merit - in other words, only the merit that is worthwhile." (Voswinkel and Wagner, 2013, p. 79, translation by the author of this thesis).

Moreover, the value of self-realisation in career and labour becomes more critical, especially for the younger generation and highly qualified (Neckel et al., 2005). More recent findings show that different understandings of merit are competing in society, while those relating to the market value or authenticity and self-realisation are more capable of hegemony. We are thus dealing with a *de-institutionalisation* of the hegemonic concept of merit that was predominant in Fordism while facing a simultaneous *re-institutionalisation* of a market-oriented understanding of merit and an understanding of merit aimed at authenticity and self-realisation (Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013, p. 80f.).

Regarding the subjective evaluation of merit, ideas of what merit means can differ strongly. According to Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), conceptions of merit depend not only on the type of work someone does but also on the specific "life orientation" of the respective person (ibid., p. 33). For their interviewees, it was essential to produce *meaningful* work results instead of a purely formally oriented performance. They saw themselves as hardworking and diligent employees who highly valued performing "good labour" (ibid.). The socially and content-related meaning of work proved to be relevant for the development of entitlement patterns. This result corresponds with the changes as mentioned above in meritocratic work values towards an orientation of self-realisation beyond a mere material value of labour (Neckel et al., 2005). Yet, the perception that the working world should be functioning according to the principles of meritocracy stays intact, which, on an individual level, often translates to: Those who perform (for society) should be compensated (appropriately) (Hürtgen &

Voswinkel, 2014, p. 34). Both expectations for receiving recognition and individual self-esteem are highly dependent on the category merit and the societal evaluation of it (ibid.).

It was demonstrated that merit plays an essential role in legitimising and individualising social inequality. Even though merit is a highly relative concept that has undergone multiple changes in the last decades, it still poses a solid normative frame of reference for justice conceptions. Regarding the cases analysed in this thesis, it will be shown in what ways the merit principle becomes relevant for subjective experiences of injustice. Special attention will be paid to described shifts in the merit principle as well as to different understandings of merit and how they become relevant for justice claims and individual entitlements.

4.3.3. Autonomy

Besides the purpose of social integration and its exchange value, labour entails a third important dimension, as it was already pointed out by “classical” sociological thinkers such as Hegel, Marx or Weber. Work is considered to be an essential mechanism of self-realisation and therefore has high importance for identity formation (Dubet, 2008, p. 28f.; Flecker, 2017, p. 30; Jahoda, 1986, p. 136). Among others, Marx emphasised that work serves as a means of human creativity and expression, and self-identification (Marx, 1975). Since its early beginnings, it has been an important criticism of the labour movement that the form of work in modern, industrial capitalism estranges the worker from their labour, splitting it into loose, monotone work steps which have not a lot to do with the final product (Marx, 1975, p. 148 f.).

Based on the subjective meaning of labour as a means of autonomy, injustice is experienced when the individual is reduced to their workforce and is denied humane and dignified treatment (Dubet, 2008, p. 29). Therefore, autonomy becomes a core principle of justice, enabling individuals to measure the degree of their work’s injustice in terms of the degree of freedom and self-realisation. Based on this value, situations and structures which deprive people of their creativity, their uniqueness and their dignity can become a matter of critique (ibid., p. 30). The right to respectful, equal treatment represents a critical frame of reference for expressing work-related claims (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 34f.). Connected to the expectation of being treated respectfully is the normative idea of leading a life in dignity, thus having access to “normal” possibilities of participation financially and culturally (ibid., p. 36). Mutual respect in social relations at the workplace, and thus the values of reciprocity and responsibility, play an essential role in evaluating the workplace. Closely related to this is the idea that individuals are embedded in social contexts, in which they have different responsibilities and perform different roles. They are workers and parents, spouses, have hobbies, perform volunteer work or other

jobs. Recognising and respecting this “diversity of human existence” (ibid., p. 37) represents another frame of reference for expressing work-related claims and entitlements.

In the context of autonomy as a justice principle, particularly a loss of *dignity* can be experienced as an insult and thus a violation against supposedly legitimate justice claims (Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). Andrew Sayer describes dignity as the ability to be “in control of oneself, completely and appropriately exercising one’s powers” (Sayer, 2007, p. 568). Thus, dignity is closely related to autonomy. But like autonomy, dignity is fragile and relational, as it depends strongly on how others treat us. To have dignity means to be recognised as an autonomous person, “and not merely as a means to someone else’s ends, or as substitutable for someone else” (ibid.). According to Sayer (2007), a claim for autonomy must be addressed to another agent and conceded or accepted by them. Closely related to recognition, the experience of dignity means to have one’s dignity recognised by others. Therefore, a loss of recognition can be experienced as a loss of dignity.

Possessing dignity is central to individuals because their self-esteem and well-being depend on it (Sayer, 2012, p. 558). Instrumental relationships in which people are used by others primarily as means to their ends can threaten dignity; this is inevitably the case in employment relationships since individuals automatically sacrifice their autonomy to some extent and place themselves at the disposal of the employer’s purpose when signing an employment contract (Flecker, 2017; Sayer, 2012). Also, modern work relations are often designed in a way through which individuals become replaceable (Flecker, 2017). If a person's character and individual merits are not recognized because they are reduced to a specific function, this can be accompanied by a loss of dignity and autonomy. The experience of being treated in a degrading way can trigger indignation and lead people to want to maintain their pride in the face of this treatment (Sayer, 2007). Expressing a violation of one’s legitimate justice expectations can thus be rooted in the deprivation of dignity and autonomy.

In almost all of the cases that form the empirical basis of this paper, the experience of deprivation of dignity and autonomy played a significant role in the injustice conceptions. In the analysis section and in the conclusion, it will be demonstrated that a loss of autonomy can be seen as somewhat of a common denominator of the interview partners’ injustice conceptions. This pattern will mainly be traced back to experiences with (possible) future employers at job interviews and with the social authorities, in which specific power dynamics lead to an experienced lack of agency and thus autonomy. Violations against the autonomy ideal were often the underlying, unfair contextual framework on which other injustice experiences unfolded, as the conclusion of this thesis will show.

4.3.4. Changing justice norms - erosion of the standard employment relationship

A normative framework was presented in the previous chapters for analysing work-related experiences of injustice. However, it has to be emphasised again that these norms are subject to ongoing social changes. In the last decades, relatively safe, stable working conditions established during the phase of prosperity in the second half of the 20th century have undergone tremendous changes (Castel, 2010; Flecker, 2017). These transition dynamics have not only brought changes to the ways work is performed but have also lead to a shift in work-related values and norms, which is why it is relevant to pay analytical attention to these processes of re- and de-institutionalisation (Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013) when analysing justice norms in terms of labour. As the analysis of this thesis will show, transition processes of work-related norms play an essential role for justice conceptions since a changing normative framework influences the possibilities to refer to specific principles when formulating claims for justice (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). Therefore, the standard employment relationship's erosion as a core dimension of work-related transition processes is briefly discussed in the following.

In the relevant literature, it is widely acknowledged that a specific form of working contract, namely the so-called "normal" or "standard employment relationship" (Flecker, 2017; Mückenberger, 2010), is mainly affected by the societal transition processes of the last decades. After the second world war, standard employment contracts were established all over Europe as a norm, especially for male employees (Flecker, 2017, p. 73). This contract usually implied full-time employment on rolling contracts and included social security benefits (ibid.). During that time, "normal employment" became the legal norm and was established as a societal norm regarding work and society (Flecker, 2018, p. 42). According to Mückenberger (2010, 1985), who already diagnosed the "crisis of the normal employment relationship" in the middle of the nineteen-eighties, the crisis does not only address a "quantitative" change towards an increase in unstable work relations. It also implies a significant "qualitative" change in how labour and the economy are organised (Mückenberger, 2010, p. 403). While deregulated, flexible, and more precarious work has become the new normality, the idea of the "standard employment relationship" still exists as a normative frame of reference for evaluating living and working realities (Castel, 2010; Flecker, 2018; Mückenberger, 2010).

The term "atypical" to describe these new forms of employment already shows how enormously standard employment is normatively rooted in societal conceptions of labour (Flecker, 2018, p. 47). This development, known as precarization, results in decreased social cohesion because it means both insecure working and living conditions (Castel, 2010). According to Robert Castel, the loss of importance of the "normal employment relationship" refers to a "lack of space in the social structure",

which means that there are fewer positions in society "with which social usefulness and public recognition are associated." (Flecker, 2018, p. 50, referring to Castel 2010). Therefore, the erosion of "normal" work is linked to material inequality, causing social and economic insecurity, and addresses the symbolic order and the issue of recognition (Honneth, 2010). Regarding justice perceptions, processes of re- and de-institutionalisation (Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013), like the erosion of work conditions, can lead to insecurity about the validity of norms that were the former basis for justice claims. The subjective perception of such changes can have different consequences on an individual level. On the one side, it can lead to a transition from claims to wishes (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). On the other side, it can also lead to an anomic feeling of a lack of normative orientation, experiencing a loss of recognition for the own entitlements. Voswinkel and Wagner (2013) argue that this can result in an "anomic claim increase for recognition" (ibid., p. 77) that is characterised by frustration and possibly anger.

4.4. Justice beyond labour: a feminist perspective on justice

As the literature review has shown, studies from the area of sociology of work have been mainly dealing with justice claims of employees (Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen, 2014; Kratzer et al., 2015; Walker, 2017), whereas research on distributive justice primarily focused on wages or the welfare state (Oorschot, 2008; Reeskens & van Oorschot, 2013; Sachweh, 2016; Sauer et al., 2016). However, to analyse the conceptions and experiences of injustice of unemployed people, a broader theoretical perspective becomes necessary. Even though it has been argued that work-related justice norms play an important role even for people without a job, it is an important concern of this thesis to address the issue of (in)justice beyond the context of labour. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters and the findings section of this thesis, justice claims and experiences of injustice become relevant in various life dimensions, not only in terms of work. Following this premise, feminist theories on justice offer fruitful approaches since they are not reducing justice to the labour market but instead apply a perspective that takes various aspects of life into account (Motakef, 2015; Motakef et al., 2018; Rössler, 2016). A feminist perspective on justice also reveals the implicit and systemic orientation on male norms of liberal justice theory and its implications for the struggle for social justice (Fraser, 1992; Rössler, 2016; Young, 2000). By taking a feminist perspective, some of the above-described justice principles can be deconstructed and criticised.

In the following, three theoretical concepts stemming from feminist scholars are presented, offering a theoretical perspective on justice beyond the sphere of work. After first briefly addressing the potential of the "capabilities approach" developed by Sen and adopted by Nussbaum (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1985) for analysing justice conceptions, I will discuss theoretical perspectives on justice in the context of precarity (Klenner et al., 2012) and justice in the context of life arrangements (Klenner et al., 2012;

Motakef et al., 2018). Before moving on, some of the core elements and positions of feminist justice theory are presented in the following.

Feminist theories of justice and their respective ideological positions and traditions are as heterogeneous as feminist theories themselves (Rössler, 2016, p. 92). Nevertheless, a common denominator is the relevance of structural inequality between men and women for social justice (ibid.). The gendered division of labour, in which women undertake the majority of less recognised and unpaid care work, is seen as a core obstacle for social justice (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 103f.). The feminist critique on this still predominating structure is rooted in the disregard of care work that goes along with it, and the fact that it impedes access to the labour market for women (ibid., p. 104). A feminist perspective on the principles of justice described so far reveals their implicit orientation towards male standards and is thus an important tool to criticise and broaden hegemonic ideas of justice research. The concept of equality, for instance, sets the needs and demands of men as the norm and simultaneously constructs female living situations as deviant and thus different and inferior to the male norm (Rössler, 2016, p. 93). Instead, conceptions of justice based on the idea of liberal equality and the neutrality of the liberal state have to be fundamentally criticised without essentialising or ontologising female characteristics (ibid.). Nussbaum (2003) points to the exceptional value of the capabilities approach for a gender-sensitive perspective on justice, which is explained in more detail in the following chapter. She argues that an economic or human rights-oriented measure of life quality implicitly takes on a male-centred view in formulating fundamental entitlements. To develop an adequate theory of gender justice, it is essential to establish a list of entitlements independent from the dominant claims for justice, focusing mainly on public spheres of life (Rössler, 2016, p. 94).

Analysing and critiquing the differentiation between the public and the private sphere is another essential element of feminist justice theory (Fraser, 1989; Rössler, 2016). On the one hand, associating women with the private sphere excludes them from public, political and social lives. On the other hand, romanticising the private, like liberal theory tends to do, disguises power structures, oppression and violence in families and makes it impossible to formulate justice claims in these regards (Rössler, 2016, p. 93). Simultaneously, it is a central concern of feminist justice theory to redefine the private sphere as a normative category, offering space for freedom, autonomy and recreation for people of all genders (ibid.). Starting from a relational idea of autonomy, a feminist perspective on the private sphere claims that individuals, regardless of their gender, have similar needs to protect the private sphere and private dimensions of life. Only under the premise of individual and social freedom, thus autonomy, can the living of a self-chosen life with others be enabled (ibid.).

4.4.1. Justice and the capabilities approach

Regarding the analysis of injustice experiences in this thesis, the capabilities approach serves as a theoretical frame of reference for analysing how the interview partners see their chances to realise their individual goals and values. Generally, Amartya Sen's (1985) capabilities approach is closely linked to the justice norm of autonomy and self-realisation. As it was already pointed out, the capabilities approach has exceptional potential for developing a gender-sensitive perspective on justice since it is based on entitlements that are independent of dominant, often androcentric claims for justice (Rössler, 2016, p. 94). Opposing the idea of economic growth as the central indicator for a nation's quality of life, Sen argues for the importance of capabilities, which translate to what individuals are capable of in their lives (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 33). Against the background of individual agency's significance for justice-related matters, the capability approach emphasises the ability to realise personal goals and values, independent from their motivational environment or reasoning (Sen, 1985). Capability thus describes an ensemble of functionings, which mirror an individual's freedom to live the life they want (ibid., cited in Dubet, 2008, p. 31).

While Sen does not give a specific list of capabilities, arguing that this might be paternalistic and disregarding specific living contexts, Nussbaum (2003) criticises this approach as too vague. Calling them the "central human capabilities", Nussbaum offers a list of ten capabilities (ibid., p. 41f.). The list starts with the ability to live a long *life*, followed by the ability to have *bodily health* and *body integrity*, and be able to think critically and to use one's *human senses*. Moreover, Nussbaum writes about the ability to feel *emotions*, to be able to form a *practical conception* of the kind of life one wants to live and the ability to develop *affiliation* towards others. Finally, the author refers to the ability to *play* and enjoy recreational activities and have *control over one's environment*, both on a political and material level (ibid, p. 42).

4.4.2. Justice in the context of precarity

Despite the heterogeneity of their lived realities and biographical backgrounds, all the people whose cases are presented in this thesis's analysis have one thing in common: Due to their long-term unemployment and their financial dependence on state support, they live under highly precarious economic circumstances. This makes *precarity* a relevant theoretical concept in the context of this thesis. In social sciences, it is often the already mentioned "normal employment relationship" that serves as a normative frame of reference for identifying precarious living or working situations (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 213). A precarious employment relation is usually defined in comparison to "societal standards" (Dörre et al., 2006, p. 17) and accompanied by low (or no) income from employment, a lack of social security and societal integration, as well as fewer chances of receiving recognition and doing

mentally fulfilling work (ibid.). Precarity is thus not necessarily a state of absolute poverty or complete exclusion from the labour market, total social isolation or apathy, but it is a “relational” category, and its meaning depends on “societal standards of normality” (ibid.). For the affected individuals, precarity means mostly insecurity regarding a (possible) loss of employment and unstable chances of getting reemployed. Therefore, precarity also goes along with an increase in vulnerability due to lacking possibilities for social integration and recognition (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 213).

Feminist research criticises this idea of the precarity of not taking care-work into account, even though it is equally necessary for society as paid labour (Aulenbacher, 2010; Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef, 2015). To gain a broader understanding of precarity, it is not enough to just look at employment relations. Instead, precarity has to be considered in the whole context of an individual’s life, since interconnections between employment and other dimensions of life cannot be taken into account otherwise (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 214). Klenner, Menke and Pfahl (2012) assume that instability and insecurity in one dimension of life can directly influence other dimensions and thus enforce an overall precarious living situation (ibid., p. 216). The authors define precarity in the context of life arrangements as “a situation of danger and insecurity that affects not only the fragility of the individual's life but also the family's life and entails a loss of future and capacity to act - possibly for several people.” (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 218, own translation). Klenner et al. formulate four characteristics of precarity in life arrangements. First, individuals experience insecurity in terms of *shaping and planning their life* or specific dimensions of their lives. Second, they don’t live up to common *normality standards*, and “normal burdens” are exceeded. Thirdly, affected individuals *cannot rely on legal rights* to shape their lives since they often depend on the goodwill of other individual agents, who can take back their favours at any time. And finally, the individual’s autonomy of action is massively restricted, for instance, due to contradicting calls to action, a lack of resources or the experience of powerlessness and discrimination (ibid.). These characteristics can be found in different precarious (and thus insecure, fragile or significantly burdened) living situations.

4.4.3. Justice in the context of “life arrangements”

Inspired by and partly based on feminist theories and gender sociology, theoretical perspectives which shift the attention to the life arrangements (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014; Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef et al., 2018) propose a concrete analytical tool to investigate experiences of injustice in the context of multiple dimensions of life. By taking life arrangements into account, a broadened perspective on justice can be applied, which does not exclusively outgo from the sphere of paid work. Gender sociological research on precarity often pays special attention to overall life arrangements (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 104). The theoretical basis for the approach is the concept of “everyday lifestyles” (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993), due to which individuals lead their lives depending on the social structures

surrounding them but actively engage in shaping their living conditions (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 215). Permanently performing the “work of everyday life” (Jurczyk & Rerrich, 1993), which goes way beyond employment, individuals act in different dimensions of life, for instance regarding employment, care work, social activities or health (Klenner et al., 2012, p. 215). Motakef and Wimbauer (2017) relate the concept of life arrangements to the theory of recognition (Honneth, 2010) and argue that precarious life circumstances are enforced by ambivalent structures of recognition (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 104).

Drawing on theories of recognition, as well as on findings from the area of precarity research, Wimbauer and Motakef (2017) differentiate between eight dimensions of life arrangements: 1. Employment, 2. Income, capital and financial security, 3. Legal rights and (unequal) legal recognition, 4. Recognition in terms of close, social relationships and love (based on Honneth), 5. Political and social participation, integration and belonging, 6. Housework and care-work, 7. Health, self-care and available time, 8. Living situation (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 104f., referring to Wimbauer & Motakef, 2017). Motakef et al. (2018) assume that the received recognition in the respective dimensions can mutually influence each other. Based on this assumption, it would be possible that lack of recognition in one dimension of life can be counterbalanced by sufficient recognition in other dimensions, or vice versa. Hence, recognition deficiencies in multiple dimensions of life can lead to a more severely precarious living situation (ibid., p. 105). These dynamics are highly relevant for analysing individual justice perceptions since recognition and justice are strongly connected; not least because, according to Honneth (2010), unfulfilled expectations for recognition are usually perceived as injustice, as it was explored in chapter 4.1.2. (Honneth, 2010; Motakef et al., 2018, p. 105).

Based on the focus on precarity in the context of life arrangements, Motakef, Bringmann and Wimbauer (2018) develop a research perspective that enables analysing which dimensions of life become relevant for justice issues. Interdependencies of different areas of life and resources and dependencies on the lifestyle of significant others are considered necessary influential factors (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 105). In line with Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), the basic assumption is that justice claims in terms of employment only become understandable if they are analysed in an “overall living context”, thus in the context of life arrangements. It is also assumed that conceptions of justice can become relevant in *all* dimensions of life (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 105). This hypothesis can be found in Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) and in Wimbauer (2012) as well. However, Motakef et al. (2018) suggest that the interviewees prioritise certain aspects of their lives over others when talking about justice (ibid., p. 105). Therefore, it becomes necessary to pay special analytical attention to the interdependencies between different life dimensions. Taking overall life arrangements into account, a central finding of their study was that work serves as an essential, normative point of reference for justice claims and entitlements. At the same time, it is much more unlikely that justice claims are

formulated regarding supposedly private dimensions of life, even though explicit and implicit grievances can be found in these areas as well (ibid., p. 112f.).

Moreover, focusing on the dimensions of care and self-care, Motakef et al. (2018) found that violations against legitimate justice entitlements are articulated mostly regarding care but not in terms of self-care. The authors see the reason for this dynamic rooted in the circumstance that a normative frame of reference for self-care is not available for their interview partners, which is why this dimension of life is subordinated (ibid., p. 113). Building on the findings of Motakef, Bringmann and Wimbauer, the analysis presented in this thesis will pay special attention to which dimensions of life become relevant for justice claims and which are not, even though there are perceived grievances. Doing this will demonstrate which norms are available as a frame of references for justice claims and where such a normative framework is missing.

4.5. Subjective experience of (in)justice: justice on an individual level

As demonstrated so far, justice can be described as a contested, normative concept that serves as a legitimising basis for formulating entitlements and demands. If and how injustice can be identified and subsequently expressed and criticised depends on the availability of justice norms in the respective dimension of life-arrangements, in which injustice is experienced. After dominant work-related justice norms and perspectives on justice beyond work have been addressed now, I will move on to the individual level of justice. This theoretical shift to the micro-level is necessary to reconstruct how notions of entitlement and justice develop among individuals, thus gaining a better understanding of how critique or grievances are expressed. Drawing heavily on the theoretical framework provided by Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), it will be demonstrated how processes of self-constitution and identity formation form the basis for developing notions of entitlement and justice. In the following, I will argue why two aspects of self-constitution shape entitlement and justice notions: the biographical self-constitution and the self-constitution in terms of norms and values. In the next step, I will make an analytical distinction between justice claims and justice wishes, as suggested by Hürtgen and Voswinkel.

4.5.1. Developing notions of justice and entitlement

Based on the work of Giegel and others (1988), Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) define the process of self-constitution as “the specific form of processing preconditions, resources, restrictions and possibilities of one's social situation in a certain way and thus giving them meaning” (ibid., p. 27, own translation). By relating oneself to existing and socially recognised patterns and structures, self-constitution processes are necessarily taking place by negotiating the social world's norms (Giegel et al., 1988; Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014).

For analysing the normative context of justice claims and respective violations against them, two aspects of self-constitution become relevant: the *biographical self-constitution* and the *self-constitution in terms of norms and values* (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 27). These dimensions not only shape which specific claims are developed, but also form how claims are formulated, for instance either as strongly articulated claims or rather like wishes. On the one hand, processes of biographical self-constitution depend on how we situate ourselves between societal, unchangeable structures and, on the other hand, depending on the degree of agency we ascribe to ourselves in shaping our own life. In the course biographical self-constitution processes, individuals develop a notion of how much power they have over actively influencing and shaping their living circumstances (ibid., p. 28). Against this backdrop, how individuals interpret their lives is closely related to the degree of agency they ascribe to themselves. However, these interpretations are the product of a constant negotiation process with the societal context surrounding us (ibid., p. 29). Identity forming, contextual factors like this can be class, culture, gender identity, desire, etc. The second self-constitution process refers to how individuals process norms and societal institutions. By relating to existing standards and institutions, individuals refer to recurring, dominant justification patterns, which enable them to legitimise their claims (ibid., p. 32). Regarding claims related to work, Hürtgen and Voswinkel identified four such justification patterns, which subjectively entitled their interview partners to make claims: the merit principle, human rights, self-care and diversity of societal existence (ibid.). These patterns correspond to the world of work's dominant normative conceptions, which were discussed in chapter 4.3..

Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) describe these different ways of interpreting one's life and the unique possibilities in it as "life orientations" (ibid., p. 30). The authors define life orientations as "partly unconscious, partly reflexively constructed biographical horizons of meaning that structure the social actions of subjects" (ibid.). They reflect an individual's idea of what makes a successful life, given the subjectively assessed possibilities, resources and restrictions. Even though Hürtgen and Voswinkel focus on work and work-related personal entitlements, their goal is to shift the attention towards life orientations. The authors assume that work-related claims can only be understood in the biographical context of life orientations (ibid.). The concept of life orientations shows similarities to the approach of life arrangements in terms of the active production of a living context by coordinating and combining different dimensions of life. Focusing strongly on the development of entitlements and normative orientations during identity-formation processes, the concept of life orientations is seen as a suitable theoretical supplement to life arrangements. Therefore, both concepts will be considered in the analysis of subjective justice conceptions.

4.5.2. Differences between *wishes* and *claims*

It has been demonstrated that individual justice conceptions are based on life orientations as well as life arrangements. To help analyse and understand *how* these biographical and normative processes translate into the actual *formulation* of injustice, an analytical distinction between justice wishes for and claims to justice is made (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). Serving as a theoretical tool for choosing relevant data segments from the interview transcripts for the interpretative analysis, the distinction between wishes and claims reveals differences in how personally experienced grievances are expressed.

The complex category of *claims* contains two main elements. First, claims are connected to a certain degree of agency, and second, claims entail specific self-perceptions as part of the social order, which represents the starting point from which claims are articulated (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 45). These characteristics of claims refer to what Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) call the “contextualisation and relation of claims” (ibid., p. 46, own translation). Depending on the individual’s self-image and social positioning, claims are formulated somewhat close to reality since they reflect what individuals regard as generally possible for them. By expressing a claim, individuals do not demand something impossible or unreasonable, but something reasonable in terms of their (1) biographical self-constitution, their (2) ascribed identities (as a woman, migrant, homosexual, etc.) and their (3) self-constitution in terms of labour (ibid.). These categories shape certain expectations of normality and are the basis for developing a notion for what can “legitimately” be demanded. According to Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), the categories gender, social and ethnic background are the essential contextual variables that determine ideas of normality and legitimate claims (ibid.).

While claims reflect existing norms and entitlements, *wishes* convey something that is not yet normatively legitimate or seen as an entitlement. In that sense, wishes can have a utopian character (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 43), which does however not mean that they are not pursued persistently. Especially when the wish is strongly desired, a strategic, “reflective realisation” (ibid.) can become relevant. Yet, the person formulating the wish knows that they are not entitled to its realisation. However, articulating a claim does not necessarily mean that it has to be realised under any circumstances, but it entails that the one who expresses the claim feels morally and normatively entitled to it. Implicitly underlying here is the assumption that the person or actor to whom the claim is addressed shares the same set of normative ideas. Against this background, “claims to oneself” can, for instance, be based on an understanding, where the individual sees him or herself as part of the social order (ibid., p. 44).

Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) argue that wishes and claims are two poles located on a continuum, and the transition between them can be fluent. Nonetheless, differentiating between them has essential, analytical value (ibid., p. 41). Claims, or entitlements, are considered normatively legitimate (ibid.). In articulating claims for justice, individuals refer to justification patterns and normative conceptions. Therefore, claims are linked to the social order and reflect certain ideas of normality. For instance, a “normal” work environment should usually function according to the norms of equality, merit and autonomy (see chapter 4.3.). These conceptions of normality are the basis for conveying entitlements to others. However, the premise for articulating claims is the idea of a common, shared validity of these “normative ideas of normality” (ibid.). This means that conceptions of normality also reflect certain ideas of the normative order and that the ones who articulate them simultaneously place themselves in a specific position to this order. Thus, justice claims imply where or how the interviewees position themselves in social and normative relation to others.

Additionally, formulating claims presupposes the possibility of shaping and possibly even changing the social rules and thus reflects a certain degree of agency (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 42). While a claim shows, what norm should be valid for whom, a wish does not have this normative relation and can thus not be normatively justified. That means that the fulfilment of a wish cannot be expected by existing (work-related) norms (ibid., p. 42f.). On the broad spectrum of claims and wishes, claims can develop into wishes when they lose their normative foundation, which is especially likely to happen when there is uncertainty about the common validity of personal, normative ideas. In Hürtgen and Voswinkel’s study, their interview partners were increasingly uncertain about whether *their* normative ideas of normality still reflect the *standard* ideas of normality, which was mirrored in their weakened entitlement attitudes (ibid., p. 43). This finding demonstrates that, on a structural level, the distinction between wishes and claims refers to the ways and degree in which norms are rooted in the social order.

5. Methodology and methods

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, justice is regarded as a socially constructed, normative concept conceived on the individual level in different ways, shaped by how actors interpret their lives and possibilities. This theoretical standpoint requires a methodological approach that responds to the social constructivist character of justice. In the literature review as well as in the theory section, it was shown that justice conceptions are subject to interpretative processes, which already implicitly refers to the methodological approach of interpretative sociology.

The basic assumption of the interpretative paradigm in qualitative social science research is that social reality, and thus the subject of sociology is constituted by acts of interpretation. All social phenomena result from interpretative processes of interaction between members of society (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, p. 46). Interpretative methods enable us to “understand the *subjective* meaning and reconstruct *latent* meaning” in the concrete individual case (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 18). As already mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, *subjective* does not refer to something completely private or individualistic. Instead, the term addresses the process in which individual actors ascribe meaning to their actions and the social world. However, these socialising processes are not individual, but they are collective since they are determined by social reality rules (ibid.). Conversely, the latent or “objective” meaning of a text is considered implicit knowledge, inscribed in social reality in the form of ideologies and norms, specific to the historical and social context (ibid., p. 19). Thus, the social worlds rules are manifested in the actions and views of individual actors (Lueger, 2010, p. 24). Only the interpretative analysis allows the reconstruction of social phenomena based on interpreting the subjective and objective dimensions of meaning documented in single cases (ibid.).

The interpretative paradigm is tightly connected with the qualitative approach to social science, which is why the basic principles of qualitative methods also apply to interpretative analysis: *openness, communication, processivity and reflexivity* (Hoffmann-Riem, 1980; Lamnek & Krell, 2016; Lueger, 2010). All the principles serve the overall purpose of qualitative social sciences to *understand* social phenomena and generate hypotheses grounded in protocols from the social world (Lamnek & Krell, 2016). Against this background, it is necessary to openly explore a research topic instead of investigating certain presumptions and to engaging in a *communication* process with the subject. It is essential to acknowledge that the interactions between researcher and subject are a constitutive part of the research process. Furthermore, qualitative research regards both the research subject and the research itself as a *process*, which documents only processual features of the construction and reproduction of social reality. And finally, the scholar should have a *reflexive* attitude towards the research and constantly critically reflect on the process to flexibly adapt perspectives, methods or theories (Lamnek & Krell, 2016, pp. 34–36). The following chapters will demonstrate how these

principles were practically realised in the context of this thesis. In chronological order, the empirical, processual steps of first entering the field, conducting the data and then analysing and reflecting it will be presented.

I will start by reflecting on the first steps in the field. Here, I will describe how the process of data collection presented itself to me and how challenges and obstacles were handled, both in the Austrian and the Swedish context. In the next step, I will argue which method of data collection was chosen and how its procedures were adapted to my research interest. Then, the methodological background, and the practical implementation of the chosen method of analysis, will be addressed. Finally, I will extensively reflect on the problem of performing an interpretative research project alone and the pitfalls and obstacles of conducting empirical research in times of a global pandemic.

5.1. Data collection and access to the field

The process of data collection and the access to the field varied significantly in the two national contexts of this thesis, which was mainly due to my networks and contacts in the respective countries. While in Austria, access to the interview partners was provided by gatekeepers working as social workers in two different Austrian social organisations; in Sweden, no such gatekeepers were available, making the field access significantly more challenging.

This thesis's empirical process was divided into two phases, in which the first contact to the field was established, and then the interviews were conducted. The first empirical phase took place in Austria, where personal contacts to social workers were used to receive access to people in long-term unemployment. With the help of these contacts, I presented myself and my research interest in two nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that are active in the area of labour market re-integration and qualification in Lower Austria. Given these circumstances, especially regarding the support of the respective gatekeepers, it was not difficult to find people willing to talk to me. Conversely, the interest in participating in the project was so significant that not all the friendly interview offers could be accepted. Since the gatekeepers working at the organisations had been informed about my research interest in advance, they also helped me get in touch with specific people whom they regarded as particularly suitable for my purposes. They knew their clients very well, both in terms of their employment biography and their willingness to talk about their situations, which was why the pre-selection by the gatekeepers facilitated the data collection even more. Although this sampling process was undoubtedly biased, a more targeted selection of the interviewees is not considered as problematic, since the data collection in interpretative research is based on theoretical sampling (see for instance Froschauer & Lueger, 2009; Glaser et al., 2008) rather than on random sampling.

Another significant advantage in conducting the interviews in an organisational context was that suitable, private, and calm rooms were available to carry out the interviews. That way, it was possible to create a secured and confidential conversational atmosphere, which had a significant positive influence on the quality of the narrations regarding the content and the quality of the audio file. In the Swedish context, no such private spaces were available to conduct the interviews, so the meetings had to be done in public areas such as cafes. Also, collecting the data in an organisational context made it significantly easier to meet for personal conversations during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Austrian cases, the rooms in which the interviews were carried out were already equipped with tables divided by plexiglass shields to prevent contamination. Besides that, the obstacle to meeting in person for an interview during the pandemic was much lower given the institutional context since the participants were already in place. Therefore, no extra efforts to adapt to the ongoing pandemic had to be made.

While data collection in Austria was crucially facilitated by the support of the gatekeepers in the organisational context, the empirical process in Sweden presented itself much more challenging. In contrast to Austria, the possibility of using personal relations to NGOs was not given in the Swedish context. Nevertheless, by using the snowball technique, it was possible to organise one interview with the help of a personal contact who knew someone who was long-term unemployed. However, this interview was not included in the final selection of the analysis due to specific, deviating characteristics from the other cases¹⁰. Besides the snowball tactic, multiple attempts were made to get in touch with local employment organisations and programmes and the national Swedish employment service Arbetsförmedlingen. Unfortunately, however, none of these attempts proved to be successful. Even though most of the email answers I received emphasised their general interest in supporting research, it was mostly argued that the necessary support could not be provided at the moment due to resource cutbacks given the pandemic. Thus, since the institutional access did not work out as hoped, alternative strategies had to be found to get in touch with potential interview partners.

Finally, social media turned out to be the most effective means to create access to the field. After doing some research, I found a broad variety of groups on Facebook, serving the purpose of job search and offers in Stockholm or general exchange between long-term unemployed individuals in the region. I became a member of some of these groups and designed an information sheet about my research project in Swedish, including a call for interview participants, and posted it online. Shortly after I released the posting, I had received private messages from two women offering me to meet them for an interview. They suggested cafes close to where they lived, in which the interviews took place only a few days after the initial contact via Facebook had been established. Unfortunately, the audio files' quality was heavily compromised by noises from other customers and loud background music. Luckily,

¹⁰ For a more detailed description of the case selection see chapter 6..

however, the interview situation's external conditions did not seem to negatively influence the interviewee's willingness to talk about their living situations and biographies openly. Besides the two women, there were no further reactions to my Facebook post. But since the data collected seemed sufficient in terms of quality and quantity, the data collection phase was therefore ended.

5.2. Method for data collection: the narrative interview

An important hypothesis guiding this thesis is that injustice can be experienced in all dimensions of life arrangements (Motakef et al., 2018). However, how injustice is formulated in terms of life arrangements depends mainly on two factors: on the priority that is subjectively ascribed to the respective dimension of life and the availability of norms in the respective dimension that injustice can be referred to (ibid.). It was also shown that claims for justice depend on the respective biographical self-constitution and the self-constitution in terms of norms and values (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 27). Therefore, to analyse subjective experiences of injustice in terms of life arrangements, and thus to answer the research question guiding this thesis, a suitable data collection method had to be found. Applying an interview technique was necessary, which gives the interview partners room to talk about their biographies and their present living situations. Simultaneously, the method had to enable the inclusion of certain pre-determined topics to address this thesis's sub-questions, such as wishes and claims for justice. The biographical-narrative interview allows a reconstruction of biographical experiences and life-course patterns while respecting the subjective structures of relevance of the conversational partners at the same time (Rosenthal, 1995; Rosenthal & Loch, 2002; Schütze, 1983). The method is based on the narrative interview, which was developed and introduced into the German-speaking context of social science by Fritz Schütze (1977) in the nineteen seventies (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 3). Schütze (1977) argues that the best way of analysing personal experiences is by basing them on narrations. In the narrative interview, the interviewees are encouraged to generate detailed narrations while autonomously deciding which aspects of the narration they want to prioritise (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 133). Due to three "constraints of storytelling" proposed by Schütze (1976), interviewees are compelled to follow certain social expectations when they tell a story.

On the one hand, these social constraints motivate the storyteller to go into deeper detail, and on the other hand, helps them to set limits to their stories (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 137). According to Schütze (1976), the first "constraints of storytelling" is the *constraint to close the form* or *gestalt* ("Gestaltschließungszwang") is based on the expectation that a story has to be finished once it has been started. Secondly, the *constraint to go into detail* ("Detaillierungszwang") tempts storytellers to mention all important contextual information so that the listener can understand the narration. And third, the *constraint to condense* ("Kondensierungszwang") motivates the narrator to focus on those details necessary to understand the story. This third constraint is particularly interesting in terms of

the analysis since it is based on the narrator's subjective relevances and reveals what they consider important for the narration (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 137f.).

Following the principle of *openness* in interpretative social research, data collection is not oriented on pre-defined hypothesis or theoretical assumptions, but "on the relevances of the interviewees and their everyday constructions" (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 134). Thus, the narrative interviews method allows the reconstruction of individual action sequences (ibid.). Particularly in biographical research, the narrative interview is established as a widespread method (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 3). In this area, the initial narrative question usually refers to the interviewee's personal life story. Given the theoretical relevance of biographical self-constitution for the development of justice claims, the initial question in this thesis's interviews also referred to life stories. However, strictly speaking, the present interviews do not classify as biographical-narrative-interviews in the classical sense. According to Rosenthal (2018), a biographical-narrative interview should last for several hours, possibly spreading over two meetings (ibid., p. 135). With an average duration of about two hours, and given the analytical focus on justice perceptions, instead of full, biographical reconstruction, the present cases can be described as *narrative interviews with a biographical initial narrative question*.

5.2.1. Phases of the narrative interview

How the conducted interviews were structured was based on the five phases of the narrative interview distinguished by Rosenthal (2018). Before the first phase of the interview began, the **preparation phase** took place, in which the framework conditions of the interview were clarified. Setting the tone for the interview's entire course, this clarification phase is of central importance and was given sufficient time. Mainly, it was conveyed to the interviewees that this was not a "typical" interview in question-and-answer style, but an open conversation with little intervention on the part of the interviewer. Moreover, it was made clear that there are no right or wrong answers, emphasising that everything the interviewees wanted to share is regarded as relevant and interesting. Furthermore, anonymity was highlighted once more, and it was ensured that the interviewees agreed to the recording of the interview on tape. This was also when the interviewees were given a chance to ask any remaining questions or make comments themselves.

After this clarifying pre-phase, the actual interview starts by asking the **initial narrative question**. This initial phase of the narrative interview should give interviewees maximum freedom to present their experiences regarding a specific topic in a self-determined way (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 134). Introducing the subject of the narration, the openly formulated initial question in the manner of a "narrative-generating-question" (Hopf, 2004, p. 206), represents a crucial element of narrative interviews and serves the purpose of stimulating a narration. The initial narrative question's most open form asks the

interviewee to tell their entire life story, without any restrictions or limitations. Other initial questions can refer to specific periods or events in the person's life, depending on the research topic. However, even if interviewee's biography is not at the centre of the research interest, Rosenthal (2018) recommends formulating the initial question in this most open way and asking about the whole life story (ibid., p. 141). By doing this, it can be analysed in what way the respective person relates the specific topic of interest to their biographies. Given this recommendation and the biographical focus of this thesis, the following life-history-related, narrative-generating-question was prepared and asked in German or Swedish at the beginning of every interview.

"At first, I would like to ask you to tell me your life history as detailed as possible. You can tell me anything you like. For example, you could start by telling me how you grew up, what you did later during your youth and how your situation developed until today. Take as much time as you like. For now, I won't ask you any questions and will just make some notes."

By mentioning the persons upbringing, a possible starting point of the narration was offered. The idea behind this was that it should help the interviewees, who already knew that I was interested in unemployment from the initial contact, to shift the attention away from their unemployment and start the narration at an earlier time in their lives. This proved to be a successful strategy and evoked detailed narrations in all interviews.

The initial narrative question is followed by the **main narration**, which includes a self-structured presentation of the interviewee's biography. During this phase, the interviewer does not interrupt and plays the role of an active listener who merely takes notes, which later serve as a guide for asking narrative follow up questions (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 9). In this phase, the interviewer's central task is to create a pleasant, trusting atmosphere for the conversation through attentive listening and appropriate body language, such as making confirming sounds and eye contact (ibid.). If the main narration comes to a halt, motivating questions can be asked to help the interviewee continue narrating. Finally, the main narration is usually concluded by a "more or less explicit hint from the narrator" (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 10, own translation).

The notes taken during the main narration serve as a guideline for asking questions in the next phase of the interview, the **questioning period**. This period consists of asking two different kinds of questions, first the *internal narrative questions* and then the *external narrative questions*. The **internal narrative questions** that are asked first follow the notes that have been taken during the main narration in chronological order. By posing follow-up questions about the main narration, interviewees are usually asked to speak in more detail about something they already mentioned. The questions should be asked in the order in which they have been taken up by the interviewee, which enables to address topics concerning the experiences and relevances of the interviewees (Rosenthal, 2018, p. 142). For instance,

special attention can be paid to issues that have only been mentioned superficially or were not entirely understandable for the interviewer (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 10). After all the topics from the notes have been addressed to generate other narrations, the interviewer can proceed to the second part of the questioning period by asking the **external narrative questions**. Usually, these questions are based on the study's specific research interest. In project's case, the external questions were prepared in the form of a guideline prior to the interviews. Only if the interviewees had not already taken up these topics in the main narration would the external narrative questions be asked. Again, formulating the questions openly to generate further narrations, the external questions concerned previous experiences in terms of education and work, the everyday life of the interviewees, and their current financial situation. Also, some questions were prepared that were more specific to the research interest at hand, for instance, regarding previous experiences with social benefits and welfare state support. That way, the external narrative questions served the purpose of a "check-list" of topics that should be addressed in the interviews.

The last phase of the narrative interview consists of **closing the interview**, which should happen in the interviewee and the interviewer's mutual consent. In this case, the interviewees were asked what they would wish for if they had one wish for their future or their lives in general. The question seemed suitable for covering the wish-related part of the research interest. Besides that, posing this finishing question enabled the interview to end on a more positive, optimistic note, as it is recommended by Loch and Rosenthal (2002, p. 11f.).

My general impression from the interviews was that the interviewees had a strong need for an outlet about their living realities. The interviewees talked openly about their living conditions and biographies which was especially true for the Austrian cases. Concerning the Swedish interviews, the interviewees were slightly more reserved regarding their biographies, but quickly started addressing grievances and criticism about the social system and their living situation. It seems likely that this pattern was connected mainly to the interview location, considering that the Swedish interviews took place at public places, while the Austrian cases were conducted in a closed, more private surrounding. Thanks to the spatial segregation from the NGO's employees, the fact that the Austrian interviews took place in an institutional setting did not seem to affect the narrations of the interviewees. Besides that, there is a possibility that cultural factors contributed to the fact that the Swedish interviewees hesitated to discuss their backgrounds. In Sweden, it is often regarded as particularly socially taboo to talk very openly about one's private life in a non-private context. This assumption, however, is merely based on my everyday observations and has, therefore, no claim for general validity.

Interestingly, the role and particularly the image of Sweden and the Swedish welfare state were mentioned more often by the two Swedish interviewees than Austrian state's references in the

Austrian cases. It seems likely that this was because I am not a Swedish citizen. I had the impression that the Swedish interviewees anticipated my lacking knowledge about the national situation and tried to convey to me, as a foreigner, how it “really” is to live in Sweden. In their narrations, they often compared the “actual” situation to what they believed to be Sweden’s widely positive image abroad. In the Austrian cases, the interviewees did not regard it necessary to clarify, given they shared a national background. Generally, the Swedish interviewees were very thoughtful regarding the fact that I do not speak perfect Swedish. At several points during the interviews, they made sure if I understood the words they were using or asked if I was familiar with certain welfare state or governmental regulations. The interviewee’s considerateness made me feel more comfortable in my role as an interviewer and foreign researcher. Simultaneously, considering my language limitations perhaps caused the interviewees not to focus entirely on themselves and their own narrations. This could be an alternative explanation for the more restrained narrations in the Swedish cases, which also resulted in a shorter interview duration than the Austrian cases¹¹.

It was also surprising that, even though the interviews took place in the middle of the pandemic, COVID-19 was not addressed frequently by the interviewees. Even though almost all interviewees mentioned it at some point in the interview, the pandemic restrictions did not take a prominent role in the interviews; this could be due to various reasons, although it seems possible that realities of the interviewee’s lives did not change significantly due to the pandemic. Not having children at school age (except for one Swedish case, but in Sweden, the schools did not shut down) and not being employed, the pandemic might not have had a significant impact on the interviewees’ everyday lives compared to other people.

5.3. Method for analysis: multi-level-hermeneutical analysis

A subject-oriented perspective on justice requires a method of analysis that takes individual views and interpretations into account while at the same time also enabling the identification of collective normative patterns that shape these views. By applying an interpretative method called “fine-structure-analysis” (Feinstrukturanalyse) developed by Austrian sociologists Froschauer and Lueger (2003) and originally based on objective hermeneutics by Oevermann (1979), theoretical generalisations based on single cases can be made. These single-case-based generalisations allow conclusions to the normative frame that justice claims are referred to. According to Froschauer and Lueger (2003), one of the main advantages of the multi-level-hermeneutical process of the fine-structure-analysis is that it is a straightforward method that enables generating innovative hypothesis and new knowledge about social phenomena (ibid.; Lueger, 2010). At the same time, however, this

¹¹ An overview over the duration of the interviews can be found at the beginning of the analysis in chapter 6..

also means that it is very time-consuming. Originally, it was planned to combine the fine-structure-analysis with another method developed by Froschauer and Lueger called “topic-analysis” (2003). While with fine-structure-analysis, only small text segments of an interview can be analysed, the topic-analysis allows a topic-related summary of interviews as a whole, which is why Froschauer and Lueger recommend a combination of the methods (ibid.). However, after having started with the hermeneutical interpretative process, it quickly became clear that the analysis was responding to my research interest so well that additionally applying a text reducing method would have made no further contribution to the research.

Moreover, by exclusively focusing on the fine-structure-analysis, all the time resources could be spent on the interpretation, which increased the analysis's quality. However, Froschauer and Lueger (2003) point out that it is problematic to use the fine-structure-analysis if the person who performs the study is already familiar with the data, given that this would compromise the principle of openness in interpretative research (ibid., p. 113). Unfortunately, this quality limitation could not have been bypassed, given that this master thesis project was carried out alone. However, multiple strategies were developed and applied to minimise the disadvantages and quality restrictions derived from performing an interpretative research project by oneself. The whole next chapter is devoted to reflecting on these disadvantages and to presenting the alternative strategies that were applied. Prior, the steps of the analysis and the basic assumptions of objective hermeneutics, which form the methodological basis for the fine-structure-analysis, are explored in the following.

By approaching the data openly and without any theoretical bias, objective hermeneutics can generate new findings instead of reproducing existing theoretical knowledge (Kleemann et al., 2013; Lueger, 2010). Objective hermeneutics is considered a theoretical, methodological and operational concept, mainly deriving from the work of Oevermann (1979; Reichertz, 2004, p. 290). The analytical procedures based on the “art” (“Kunstlehre”) of objective hermeneutics generally consist of “first conceiving and fixing the social action in question as a text, in order subsequently to interpret it hermeneutically concerning action-generating latent meaning structures” (Reichertz, 2004, p. 290). Objective hermeneutics which is particularly suitable for analysing single cases that are protocolised as texts, enables an explorative investigation of the research interest (Kleemann et al., 2013). In conducting single-case analyses, objective hermeneutics proceeds by applying the principle of *falsification*. While reconstructing the structure of a single case, hypotheses and assumptions about different underlying patterns of meaning are permanently critically examined until a general statement can be made, and thus the structure of the case can be generalised (Reichertz, 2004, p. 292). Against this background, findings based on objective hermeneutics go beyond single cases and have general validity. One of the core assumptions in this context is that the single case always reflects societal structures, which can

be reconstructed by applying the methodology of objective hermeneutics. Therefore, every protocol of social reality, in this case, the interview transcripts, represents elements of the general *and* the specific (Wernet, 2009, p. 19). Based on this methodological assumption, objective hermeneutics enables the production of findings both on a single case level and on a general, societal level (ibid.). Against this background, the term *objectivity* in objective hermeneutics refers to two dimensions: on the one hand, the approach strives to reconstruct objective meaning structures of texts, in terms of their linguistic and interactive community, and on the other hand, the findings of the process are considered to have reached objectivity. However, to achieve this “objective reconstruction of objective structures”, the hermeneutical procedure’s strict application has to be ensured (Reichertz, 2004, p. 290).

Originally, Oevermann (1979) suggested three variants of applying the methodology of objective hermeneutics to data: the detailed analysis, the sequential analysis and the complete interpretation of the objective social data (Reichertz, 2004, p. 291f.). In current social science research, sequential analysis, consisting of a strict step by step interpretation of small sequences of a case, is the most common variant of objective hermeneutics (ibid.). Even though today, the procedures of objective hermeneutics are widespread, especially in the German-speaking context of social sciences, there is no “school” of objective hermeneutics (ibid., p. 292). However, multiple scholars, such as Froschauer and Lueger (2003), integrated objective hermeneutics in their research and translated its principles into concrete, interpretative methods, such as the already mentioned *fine-structure analysis*. Based on Oevermann’s sequence analysis (1979), Froschauer and Lueger (2003) suggest a five-step interpretative scheme to analyse small text sequences of interview protocols. Going beyond the focus on objective hermeneutics’ objective level, the authors base their method on a distinction between subjective and objective meaning (ibid., p. 108). Both dimensions refer to the already mentioned subjective and latent meanings in interpretative research and contribute to the specific way in which a text is produced. While the subjective meaning relates to the motives and intentions the speaking person follows when they say something¹², the objective meaning is independent of subjective intentions or motives. Like the concept of objectivity in objective hermeneutics, the objective meaning reflects the structural conditions which shape the act of speaking (ibid.). This conceptual differentiation between subjective and objective meaning underpins the five-step-analytical scheme that Froschauer and Lueger propose, which was applied in this thesis and is shortly presented in the following.

¹² At this point, Froschauer and Lueger (2003) emphasise that the “communicative context” and thus the specific social situation of the interview has to be taken into account when interpreting the subjective meaning (ibid., p. 108).

5.3.1. Steps of the „fine-structure-analysis“

The first step towards conducting a fine-structure-analysis is to choose text segments from the interview transcript, which Froschauer and Lueger (2003) recommend to be between four and eight rows long (ibid., p. 112). Since the procedures of this multi-level-hermeneutical analysis are very time consuming¹³, only a limited number of text passages from each interview can be chosen in the context of this thesis. In the present case, between three and four such text passages were analysed from each of the five cases. Regarding the selection of text segments from the interview transcript, Froschauer and Lueger (ibid.) argue that a random passage could theoretically be chosen since action patterns and social structures are mirrored in every statement in the entire interview. However, given the excessive amount of time that is usually spent on interpreting one text segment, a more pragmatic selection of passages from the transcript is recommended. In line with Froschauer and Lueger's suggestion (ibid., p. 113), parts from the interview have been chosen for the analysis that were regarded as particularly meaningful for the research interest. In this case, passages documenting personally experienced injustice or violations of subjective claims for justice have been selected.

To guarantee the quality of the analysis, Froschauer and Lueger (2003) suggest adding at least one passage in the analysis, which stands out from the other ones and is supposedly unimportant for the research interest (ibid., p. 167). I tried to meet this criterion in this thesis by including one passage of every interview in the analysis, in which, conversely to violated entitlements and justice claims, the interviewees addressed a wish. However, since wishes are also part of my research interest and therefore strictly speaking *not* considered as “unimportant”, I could not fully live up to this quality criterion of taking “trivialities” into account (ibid.). Having selected highly differing interview passages enabled me to contrast claims and wishes, which helped to examine and strengthen respective hypotheses critically and thus increased the quality of the analysis.

Initially, the chosen text passage must be divided into different text units or sequences, usually marked by a syntactic rule or a pause¹⁴. In a strictly sequential procedure, in which the original order of both the text units and the whole text segments is maintained, the five-step analytical scheme proposed by Froschauer and Lueger (2003, p. 112f.) is applied to each text unit after the other.

¹³ Froschauer and Lueger (2003) recommend spending about four hours on interpreting every single text passage (ibid., p. 113).

¹⁴ Froschauer and Lueger (2003) suggest choosing parts of a sentence or a maximum of one whole sentence as the basis for the analysis (ibid., p. 114). Especially at the beginning of each case analysis, narrower segregations between text units were applied, sometimes analysing only two or three words at once to deepen the interpretation.

Starting by **paraphrasing** the respective text unit, the interpreter gets an idea of the salient information conveyed on a manifest level. This initial step serves as an entry phase into the analysis and consists of a summary of the text sequence, referring to its everyday understanding (ibid., p. 115).

In the next step, the analysis moves on to the level of subjective meaning by interpreting the function that the text might have had for its producer. In hypothesising about the statement's subjective meaning, the goal is to collect a number of assumptions about the speaker's possible **intention** when having said those words. At this point, the interpreter is challenged to put themselves in the interviewee's situation and, by taking over their role, only document those hypotheses that seem most likely from the interviewee's perspective. What is the interviewee trying to achieve by saying this? What might they try to justify or convey here? These are questions proposed by Froschauer and Lueger (2003, p. 115) that should guide the analysis at this point.

Moving on to the **latent meaning** level, the third step of the analysis consists of investigating the underlying, structural conditions of the statement. Conversely to the subjective meaning in the previous step, the interpret leaves the individual level and proceeds to the societal level to hypothesise about the objective conditions for actions and thinking patterns. Froschauer and Lueger regard this step as the core element of the analysis (ibid., p. 116), which is why most time resources should be invested here. By adopting a scholar's role, the interpret is encouraged to take contextual and theoretical knowledge into account to develop as many hypotheses about structural conditions and different alternatives of meaning as possible. Regardless if they seem likely or not, possible assumptions about the material are listed and, in the later course of the analysis, falsified or further elaborated. Only by extensively interpreting different meaning variants of a text unit, the interpret can detach themselves from supposably likely meanings of the subjective level and shift the analytical attention to the level of the structural, objective meaning. A common means for supporting this extensive interpretation, suggested by Oevermann (1979) and Froschauer and Lueger (2003), is to come up with different *stories* in which this same text unit could be found. What could this exact statement mean in another social context? What are the characteristics of a social system, which would suggest such a statement? These questions are proposed by Froschauer and Lueger (ibid., p. 117) to enable and deepen the extensive interpretation of the text sequences. Besides that, the authors recommend paying particular attention to the meaning of grammatical constructs and linguistic peculiarities (ibid.). Because of this reason, a highly accurate transcription of the interview is necessary, documenting all pauses and verbal as well as nonverbal sounds on the audio file. The transcription of the interviews in this thesis was based on the transcription rules suggested by Froschauer and Lueger (ibid., p. 223). A list of the transcription rules and an example of how the interviews were transcribed, can be found in the appendix (see chapter 10.4. and 10.5.).

The fourth step of the analysis consists of taking the **distribution of roles** into account, which occurs in the text unit. Here, it is crucial to think about which roles influence the respective statement, either explicitly or implicitly. Roles can be embodied by all kinds of different actors, such as organisations, groups, institutions or individuals. According to Froschauer and Lueger (2003, p. 117), special analytical attention should be paid to role attributions and mechanisms of demarcations from roles, which can be found in the sequence. Also, the interviewer's role and their influence on the situation should be considered at this point (ibid.).

The final step of the analysis consists of thinking about different **options for continuation**. Here, a hypothesis about how the text passage could continue should be developed, both in terms of possible actions and likely statements. Which argument would usually be expected to follow now? And which statements are unlikely, due to which social limitations and restrictions? This final step of analysing a single text unit is vital for the whole interpretation's quality since it enables a periodic, critical examination of the ongoing interpretative process (ibid., p. 118).

Based on Froschauer and Lueger's (2003) suggestion regarding the practical implementation of the five analytical steps, a table was created in which each of the five steps was ascribed one column. That way, it was possible to list each text unit's hypothesis and interpretations, which helped maintain an overview of the vast possibilities of different readings accumulated within a short time. For the respective text unit, which the analysis referred to, a horizontal line was created above the columns, which were listed vertically underneath it. To provide an insight into the analysis, one page of the analytical scheme is attached in the appendix (see chapter 10.6.).

After analysing multiple text units, intermediate phases of reflection are implemented in the analytical process, in which the so far conducted interpretation is critically reflected, summarised, and revised. At this point, a first selection occurs, in which dominant, or in other words, recurring, hypotheses are identified, and first assumptions about structures can be documented. As general guidelines for these reflections between the analytical steps, it is recommended to shift the attention to action patterns, similarities and differences between text units (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 120). The summarising interpretation of the text segment's whole structure is mainly based on the critical reflections, reformulations, and modifications in these intermediate phases of reflection and are therefore of vital importance.

Finally, the text segment's interpretation should consist of a condensed and coherent presentation of the overall structure of the text against the background of the "social construction of reality" (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003, p. 120); this requires a reconstruction of the rules that actors relate their actions to, and the social conditions, which produce such action rules. Chapter 6., in which the analysis

is presented, will give an insight into this process of reconstructing meaning patterns based on the chosen text segments. Ultimately, building on these reconstructed structures and action patterns, single case reconstructions of each of the five cases were developed, presenting dominant interpretations and case-specific, as well as structural, “objective” findings regarding the research interest.

5.4. Interpreting alone? Strategies to meet the quality criteria of interpretative methods

To perform an analysis based on objective hermeneutics successfully, potential obstacles to an unhindered reconstruction of meaning have to be overcome or at least minimised *before* the actual interpretation begins (Oevermann et al., 1979). Therefore, it is vital for the quality of the analysis to free oneself from time restrictions, not let presumptions or ideological standpoints influence one’s perspective, and have sufficient language skills to perform a hermeneutical interpretation (Reichert, 2004, p. 291). While preparing for the analysis, I tried to live up to these quality-ensuring aspects as good as possible, given my contextual framework. To ensure not to be under time pressure during the analysis, I dedicated three whole months to the multi-level process of analysing and reconstructing the five individual cases. That way, I could make sure to have sufficient time to analyse deeply and thoroughly every single of the five cases included in the analysis. Furthermore, to control my presumptions about the material and the overall topic, I explicated my thoughts and experiences in the form of a research diary. This gave me the chance to reflect on my political and ideological standpoints regarding the topic, and on my experiences from the data collection process. Because I both conducted the interviews and analysed them myself, these written reflections proved to be of vital importance. Since I had spent multiple hours with the interviewees and had the chance to get to know them and their life stories personally, it was crucial not to let the impressions from this personal contact influence the analysis. Looking back on these initial reflections during the analysis enabled a critical reflection on the analysis’s similarity to the first impressions I had from the interviews. This way, I could make sure that my analysis did not just confirm my initial assumptions and reproduced my prior knowledge. Besides explicating my thoughts in the research diary, the factor time helped create greater distance to the experiences from the phase of data collection. I anticipated the potential difficulties of performing interpretative research by myself already in the thesis’ planning phase. Therefore, a more extended period between the phase of data collection and analysis was implemented in the research process. Several months after I collected and transcribed the interviews, I started with the analysis, which allowed me to distance myself sufficiently from my personal experience of the data collection process. Finally, I was aware that analysing the Swedish interviews could be challenging regarding my language skills, given the fact that Swedish is not my first language

(even though it is my mother tongue in the literal sense of the word). To reduce any potential language-related errors, I sought the consultation of native speakers in my surroundings, some of them even with a sociological background, who double-checked my interpretations on multiple occasions during the analysis.

Similar to Oevermann (1979), also Froschauer and Lueger (2003) list several quality criteria, which are vital to ensure the validity of findings generated using interpretative, sociological methods, such as the fine-structure-analysis performed in this thesis. Regarding the level of methodology and applied methods, Froschauer and Lueger (2003) emphasise the necessity of not letting any theoretical, empirical or everyday-life prior knowledge compromise the analysis (ibid., p. 167). The interpretative scheme that they provide enables the interpret to live up to this standard by offering methodical structures to “deconstruct and systematise doubts” (ibid.) to overcome any prior knowledge. Strictly abiding by the rules and procedures of the method ensured this quality criterion. However, there are several other quality criteria proposed by Froschauer and Lueger, which could not be realised due to the contextual framework of this master thesis.

According to Froschauer and Lueger (2003), one of the most vital quality criteria for applying interpretative methods in social sciences is to work in a team (ibid.). Mainly the analysis should be performed in a group, since this way, a wider variety of alternative readings is produced, and a more vital discussion of different opinions about the data is enabled. Because this master thesis was written alone, and due to the pandemic circumstances almost exclusively by working from home, it was pretty challenging to live up to this quality criterion – but not impossible. Instead of meeting fellow sociology students in person for analysing the interview material together, these interpretation sessions had to be held online. In regular meetings with two colleagues who were also writing their master thesis, it was possible to analyse at least one text passage of every interview in the group. Still, most of the analysis was performed alone, but the vast majority of the reconstructions and interpretations were peer-reviewed by my colleagues, who paid particular attention to the analysis’s transparency and plausibility. Even though these attempts to outbalance disadvantages, the fact that this interpretative research project was performed alone poses a limitation of this thesis, especially regarding the use of the fine-structure-analysis.

For instance, Froschauer and Lueger (2003) recommend that the person analysing the interview passages should, if possible, not be the same person who chooses the interview segments (ibid., p. 113). Only by doing this it can be guaranteed that no case-specific prior knowledge compromises the analysis and thus the principle of openness in interpretative research. However, in the context of this master thesis, there was no possibility to let someone else choose suitable interview segments for the analysis. Therefore, unfortunately, this quality criterion could not be fully met, yet there were

strategies applied to minimise the risk of familiarity with the interview material. Already in the beginning, when the research process of the thesis was planned, the potential quality limitation of performing an interpretative, hermeneutical method all alone was anticipated. This reflection allowed the integration of specific mechanisms in the research process to minimise these potential quality losses. Against this background, the selection process of text segments for the analysis already took place when the interviews were transcribed. Afterwards, a couple of months passed by, in which the theory section and the literature review were written until I returned to the interviews and started the actual analysis. That way, the memories from the interviews and the selected text passages had already faded, which enabled a less biased analysis.

In summary, it was mainly the precious and dedicated online support of my colleagues, which increased the quality of the analysis significantly and ensured that the basic criteria of interpretative social science research could partly be met, given the context of this master thesis. Moreover, several additional strategies were implied to outbalance the disadvantages to work alone and to reflect and control prior knowledge from the data collection phase in the analytical one. However, it seems evident that even despite these attempts to strive for high quality in this thesis, carrying out this research project in a team would have increased the quality of this project, even more, enabling more profound and more extensive analyses.

6. Analysis

In the course of the empirical process, a total of nine interviews with long-term unemployed people were conducted. Six of them were carried out in Austria and three in Sweden. However, due to this thesis' resource limitations and the specific characteristics and quality of some of the interviews, only *five* of them were chosen for a deeper analysis. As selection criteria, both the similarity of the cases and the quality of the narrations regarding experienced injustices were taken into account. Especially in the Austrian cases, not all of the interviewees talked openly or in more detail about their biographies and experiences, which had a major influence on the quality of the narrations¹⁵. The cases that were finally chosen for the analysis were characterised by a vast number of in-depth narrative passages and multiple direct or indirect references to justice-related topics and injustice experiences. Subsequently, the chosen interviews exceeded a length of at least one and a half hours. To provide an initial overview of the five cases presented in this analysis, some basic background information about the interviews and the interviewees, including the pseudonym chosen for them, is summarised here.

Pseudonym	Country	Age	Occupation or (last) employment	Duration of unemployment	Duration of interview
Manfred Moser	Austria	59	Machinist, used to be self-employed	More than two years, exact duration unclear	1 h 53 min
Elisabeth Erhart	Austria	Late fifties ¹⁶	Business and tax consultant	Since 2015	2 h 58 min
Jakob Janisch	Austria	45	Janitor at an elderly home	More than three years	1 h 58 min
Birgitta Blomberg	Sweden	61	Middle school teacher	More than four years, exact duration unclear	1 h 45 min
Linda Landgren	Sweden	53	Gardener	About two years	1 h 40 min

Generally, the interviewees had several characteristics in common. Besides being in a similar age group, as the table shows, they were all single at the time of the interview and had been unemployed for at least two years, which qualifies them as long term unemployed according to the national definitions (see chapter 3.3.2. for the Austrian and chapter 3.3.3. for the Swedish definition of long-

¹⁵ In one of the cases, the interview's superficiality was due to language barriers since the interviewee had moved from the Czech Republic to Austria only a few years earlier and was therefore not speaking German fluently. In the other case, the interviewee was persuaded by one of the gatekeepers to participate in the interview. During the conversation, I had the impression that she was feeling uncomfortable and restless. It seems likely to me that she did not want to participate.

¹⁶ The interviewee did not state her exact age.

term-unemployment). These common characteristics led to the exclusion of some of the other conducted interviews. For instance, the third Swedish interview was carried out with a university graduate in his early thirties who received both unemployment benefits and financial support from his family and worked voluntarily on different IT development projects. This case was not included in the analysis because the interviewee's living reality differed significantly from the other cases.

Regarding the other Austrian cases not included the decisive factor for their exclusion was, as already mentioned above, either their superficial character and, therefore, short-duration or their excessive length¹⁷. Nevertheless, it would also have been interesting to analyse even those cases in which the interviewees were not openly talking about grievances and injustices in their lives or which live under different circumstances. However, more remarkable differences between the cases would have made it more difficult to summarise the findings and relate them to a common body of theory. Therefore, a pragmatic decision was made to meet this thesis's time and resource framework, which is why the above-stated cases were chosen.

Based on the examples of five single cases, experiences and conceptions of injustice in the context of long-term unemployment are explored in the following chapters. As an introduction of each case, a brief characterisation of the person's biographical background and their current living situation is given, followed by a detailed interpretation of their injustice experiences and conceptions. The interpretations are based on two to three selected quotes from each interview transcript. In the quotes, the interviewees talk about subjectively experienced grievances in different dimensions of their lives, either in the form of strong violations against entitlements or as cautiously formulated wishes for justice. Generally, most of the chosen interview segments related to the respective person's unemployment situation.

Before presenting the cases, it is essential to clarify that the following single case reconstructions should not be seen as analyses of the interviewees' entire biographies or living realities. Instead, the case reconstructions represent how patterns of injustice are expressed on an individual level and how they are rooted in norms and social structures on the collective level; this is possible since the analysis builds on interview passages that mirror the societal, normative conditions under which notions of injustice and entitlement arise. It was necessary to analyse each of the text segments in detail to live up to the principles of the fine-structure-analysis. Only by doing this, the "objective" conditions under which the text was produced could be reconstructed (Froschauer & Lueger, 2003). To make this

¹⁷ The first interview conducted in Austria exceeded over four hours since the interviewee talked about her family relations and current interests in great detail. Some injustice experiences were mentioned, yet the decision was made not to include the case, considering the additional amount of time it would have taken to transcribe it and choose suitable passages for the analysis.

excessive analysis process and the hypothesis derived from it transparent for the reader, the interpretation of each text segment is described in great detail. That way, the reader can follow the reconstruction's operation and understand the conclusions drawn from it. When reading through the analysis, the reader might have first associations with theories responding to the described patterns. However, it was a deliberate decision not to reference theory in the case reconstructions to stay entirely focused on the specific cases themselves. First, in the final step of the analysis, namely the conclusion, core findings will be connected to the literature and theory explored in the first sections of this thesis.

The chosen text segments were translated into English for the purpose of presenting the analysis. However, the interpretation and reconstruction process were carried out in the interviews' original language, thus in German or Swedish. This was necessary given the exceptional meaning of language in objective hermeneutic, which considers texts as social reality protocols (Wernet, 2009). In case the reader is interested in gaining insight in the initial wording, a list of the original quotes is provided in the appendix (see chapter 10.3.). For a better overview, each text segment was given an acronym, stated in parenthesis next to the quote. The acronym consists of the first letter of the pre and surname of the pseudonym and the abbreviation TS (for text segment) in combination with a number from one to three. For those readers familiar with German or Swedish, I would strongly recommend looking at the original quotes before reading the respective analysis. Even though much time was spent finding a good translation for each quote, the sentiment of the statement is better conveyed in the original language. Perhaps, the reader will also notice that many of the quotes are characterised by incomprehensible cursing or mumbling. Given that the interview passages document great personal grievances and experiences of injustice, this is not surprising. As the analysis will show, injustice experiences are often accompanied by a loss of autonomy, frustration and anger, which the interviewees relieve by talking about them. Even though this thesis is not located in the area of sociology of emotions or even social psychology, some sociological explanations for the strong emotions mirrored in the text passages will be provided in the analysis.

6.1. Manfred Moser: the right to be independent

Manfred Moser is 59 years old and lives with his dog in a rural area of lower Austria. He has no children and divorced his wife several years ago. After having finished compulsory schooling, he completed his skilled worker examination as a machinist, which he describes as his occupation. Later in his life, after having received the necessary degrees, Manfred started his own company. He used to be self-employed, owning a car firm with about ten employees, until he had to close due to the increasing amount of debts resulting from his alcoholism. After the debts were paid off, he decided to “start from the beginning” and worked as a machinist for different companies at construction sites all over Austria. However, due to his health problems caused by the alcohol and multiple operations that followed, it became impossible for him to continue physically demanding work. After not having worked for a year, due to his operation, he lost his insurance and subsequently received social assistance, which he lives from now. Currently, Manfred is trying to bridge the time until he can retire at the age of sixty-two with various short time jobs. He emphasises that he would like to work fully again and start an education to become stage manager at a theatre, where he had already worked before. However, with the little money he receives from social assistance, he cannot afford the education costs and the bank won't lend him money either, which causes him great resentment. At the time of the interview, Manfred is still suffering from the aftermath of his last operation, causing him serious pains in his stomach.

Diagnosing a general negative development of politics, economy and society, Manfred believes that politicians do not care about the increasing exploitation of “the working man”. In this regard, he is especially disappointed by the social democratic party. He experiences companies leaving Austria for low-wage countries, sending workers away to Rumania or China. Rising unemployment numbers, illegitimate use of the social system, and an increase in government control over their citizens cause him to be highly concerned about the future of the next generation. Compared to the freedom and wealth when he grew up, everything seems to have become constantly worse today. Throughout the interview, Manfred Moser points both directly and implicitly to a vast number of injustices and grievances, both in his private life and on a societal level. Regarding self-experienced injustice in his own life, Manfred expresses a lot of criticism about his current living situation given his long-term unemployment. The first text segment chosen for the analysis illustrates an ambivalent situation between institutional requirements on the one hand, and Manfred's self-image, including his prerequisites. A series of perceived injustices arise from his unemployment, which he describes as follows:

„You just need to take a look at the labour market. I have (/) my job would have a chance. Because I would be in demand. But I cannot do this anymore physically. This is my problem. And with that I also

flunked. Because otherwise I only get such (--) real bullshit jobs. (-) Yeah (-) well why don't you just [mumbling an incomprehensible curse] what did I go to school for? For what did I learn? So that I can in (/) shortly before I retire run around with a cleaning rag? That can't be it, right? Well but this is what they want from me." (MM, TS1)

Although his profession is in demand on the labour market, Manfred Moser does not (or no longer) meet his job's physical requirements and is therefore unable to practice it. Initially, he sees the cause of this contradictory situation in himself, expressed linguistically by the formulation "my problem". The subjunctives "would have" and "would be in demand" illustrate that, in Manfred's perception, there is a possibility ("chance") to practice the profession, since the necessary demand exists in the labour market. However, his physical conditions and, thus, an individual reason make it impossible to seize this opportunity. According to my interpretation, the interview partner's perspective reflects an individualization of social disadvantages, in this case in the labour market. Normatively, such an individualized framing of inequality has the consequence that the cause, handling and coping with the consequences of the disadvantage lie with the individual.

Manfred Moser perceives his physical conditions as deficient and thus the direct reason for "flunking" on the labour market. By extensively interpreting the latent meanings of this formulation, it was possible to reconstruct what flunking implies on the level of individual action. Like flunking in school, an attempt is made to pass specific barriers, but the efforts do not meet the (externally determined) requirements. The school metaphor corresponds to falling back into a lower class in the present context interpreted as a subjectively perceived failure on the labour market, resulting in unemployment. On the level of the latent meaning, however, the formulation also symbolically stands for a feeling of being left behind, in which one's efforts and individual prerequisites are not recognized. Like a safety net, the specific nature and design of the net determines whether individuals are protected by it or fall through it. For instance, if the net's meshes are fairly big, certain individuals will fall through it, regardless of their efforts and thus with no control over what is happening to them. This hypothesis suggests that Manfred experiences a serious loss of agency and control over his life, due to his physical condition.

However, at this point, an ambivalent interpretative pattern could be reconstructed. While on a manifest level he perceives his body as an individual deficit, he subjectively experiences a lack of agency over this deficit's negative effects on a latent level. Manfred initially blames himself for his dilemma, but at the same time linguistically expresses a feeling of powerlessness with formulation "flunking". Overall, he finds himself in a contradicting situation between social, internalized patterns of interpretation (individualization of physical disadvantages) on the one hand, and the perception of his physical ability and a feeling of powerlessness on the other.

Another aspect occurs, which makes Manfred's ambivalent situation even more challenging. There is a way to avoid "flunking" and thus becoming unemployed. However, this alternative course of action consists of accepting work that stands in strong contrast to Manfred's identity and his self-positioning in the social order. This interpretative pattern is based on the idea of a hierarchically structured labour market in which one's occupation stands above the activities described as "bullshit jobs," which are specified as cleaning services in the further course of the passage. On a latent level, a clear demarcation and devaluation of these jobs, which have female connotations and are usually perceived as low-skilled, could be reconstructed here. The indignation about having to do such work as the only way to remain in the labour market is reinforced by the reference to Manfred's current phase of life. Feeling *forced* by the institutional requirements to perform cleaning work shortly before retirement is experienced as a serious violation of his self-ascribed entitlements and ideas of normality. The idea of performing such work makes Manfred furious, which leads him to discharging his anger in an incomprehensible curse.

Finally, the contradictory situation in which he feels trapped leads Manfred to question his entire path of life. The experience of unemployment caused a series of violations of legitimate expectations of recognition and entitlements and triggered a crisis of his own identity. Manfred finds himself in a "dead end" of his subjective meaning of life, since suddenly, all of the investments made in the course of his life so far seem to have been in vain. Moreover, the text segment mirrors a serious disappointment: the social promise that education and training would lead to independence and legitimacy and status in society were not kept.

In summary, based on the analyses, two levels could be identified, on which violations of legitimate expectations of recognition occur. First, Manfred experiences a devaluation of his own identity and second, he feels that he receives no recognition for his performance. These painful experiences are perceived as a massive violation of his ideas on justice. On the level of his identity, logics of entitlement developed in the course of his biography, to which Manfred Moser implicitly refers at several points: the education, the profession and carrying out the profession until shortly before retirement. The work he now feels compelled to do (cleaning) contradicts these logics on a symbolic and normative level. Also, he experiences a lack of recognition on the level of his performance, which he has achieved in his life up to now, since his school education and his professional training no longer seem to make a difference. The cause of this dilemma reinforces the experience of injustice. Although the responsibility for the physical condition is framed individually (my body is "my problem"), there is nevertheless clear signs of awareness that structural factors make it impossible to reintegrate in the labour market (institutional requirements - the "flunking"). In addition to the devaluation of his performance and identity, Manfred Moser experiences a feeling of powerlessness and being at others' mercy. After he

denounces the prevailing system's pointlessness through the formulated questions, Manfred makes a summarising judgment at the end of the passage: "that can't be it, right?". The criticism of his prevailing situation becomes clear through the rhetorical character of the question, but at the same time, it mirrors an actual insecurity. The question implies a certain degree of uncertainty about the validity of his ideas and normative positions, and reveals a desire for reassurance by the interviewer¹⁸. Manfred seems to be unsure whether his concepts of normality are reflected by common ideas of normality, following an uncertainty about his own claims' legitimacy. Thus, despite his self-confidently seeming criticism, he still shows a considerable degree of uncertainty.

Finally, it remains open to *whom* Manfred Moser feels powerless to and at the mercy of. This question leads to the distribution of roles in the text segment. It is striking, that Manfred only addresses anonymous actors in the passage. "They" are looking for him in the labour market, "they" want him to take a job as a cleaner. Although these are different actors, presumably potential employers as well as the employment agency AMS, "they" nevertheless have in common that they, as anonymous actors, have a great deal of power over Manfred's life. They decide whether he gets a job, which job he has to accept, and the conditions for not falling behind ("flunking"). Manfred Moser therefore experiences a strong dependency on external, powerful and anonymous-seeming actors on the subjective level. Because of that, addressing his criticism to a concrete institution, actor or person becomes significantly more difficult, if not impossible.

In the second text sequence chosen for the analysis, a gradual experience of injustice is documented, characterized by two central elements. On the one hand, Manfred Moser experiences a loss of autonomy, and on the other hand, his subjective logic of entitlement is violated in two ways: first, groups of people without legitimate entitlement receive benefits, and second, his performance is not recognized. This interpretation is based on the analysis of the following text segment:

"I was there at this organisation¹⁹ (--) at the very end right. They stuck me in there and I must (/) for the young ones (/) they are twenty-five years old (/) of course [mumbling] do they have

¹⁸Following the narrative interview principles, as the interviewer, I took an attentive listener's role during the interviews, as it was already pointed out in chapter 5.2.1.. However, maintaining a certain professional distance throughout the interviews turned out to be challenging, given the trustful, private atmosphere of the conversations and the openness of the interviewees. From a conversation partner's perspective, I often felt the urge to convey my understanding and empathy more clearly and openly, which would *not* have been compatible with my role as an interviewer and researcher. Nevertheless, I tried to signalise my understanding by making short confirmative comments such as "mhm" or "I see" or by sending nonverbal signs such as nodding. This strategy became especially important when the interviewees addressed me personally by asking (rhetorical) questions, such as Manfred Moser did in the present quote. In these situations, sending affirmative signals enabled me to show signs of recognition for the interviewee's perspectives and experiences without validating them or commenting on them.

¹⁹ At this point, Manfred mentions the name of the organisation in the original quote. For reasons of anonymity the name of the organisation is not stated.

immigration background. But I must carry everything up for him to the fourth floor. He (-) does not even open up because he sleeps at two o'clock in the afternoon. (--) Well, how can such a thing be possible right?" (MM, TS2)

At the beginning of the passage, a stay in a social institution in a small-town area in lower Austria is described, from which Manfred Moser indirectly distances himself, since he expresses, that he was not always there, but only "at the very end". In the biographical course's self-representation, the reference to the social institution is thus isolated from previous phases of life and placed at the end. A justification for the stay in the mentioned institution is given in the next sequence. With the formulation "stuck me in" it is indicated linguistically that an anonymous actor forced the reference to the institution with obviously sufficient power over Manfred and his actions. He sees himself in a passive role, leaving only limited room for shaping his life in a self-determined manner. This loss of agency is accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness and could be reconstructed as a central interpretative pattern of the whole text passage.

In the following, the demarcation continues, as the experiences and activities in the social institution are described in more detail. At the beginning of the description, the recurring loss of autonomy and self-determination expressed by "I have to" is striking. The linguistic construction of "the young ones" in addition to the naming of the concrete age refers to a demarcation from this group. On this basis, it was possible to reconstruct Manfred's ideas regarding generational relations. "The young ones" as a normative category goes hand in hand with certain expectations and demands towards them. Just like the complementary category of "the old ones," to which Manfred Moser counts himself through the linguistic demarcation, certain characteristics are commonly attributed to the "young" on a societal level (for example efficiency and health but also ignorance and naivety). According to these attributions, ideas of age hierarchies arise, which are expressed as follows: Manfred *must* do something "for" the young ones. A similar pattern emerges in the following sequence, in which the process of demarcation is continued.

In contrast to the previous statement, the "immigration background" is now linguistically emphasized as the decisive distinctive feature. The formulation as a self-fulfilling prophecy ("of course") can be read as an effort to confirm one's own prior knowledge and thus to seize the interpretive authority in the situation. Through the formulation, Manfred Moser's presupposition that groups of people with a "immigration background" will be encountered in the context of the social institution is linguistically presented as self-evident and thus normatively consolidated. By emphasizing a distinctive feature based on ethnic attributions, another identity component of Manfred's can be reconstructed. In contrast to the constructed group, he sees himself as a person *without* a "immigration background" and belongs to the autochthonous Austrian majority population.

Now, the introductory formulation of the next sentence with "but" seems remarkable, since at first glance there is little consistency with that said before. Manfred Moser identifies a contradiction here. In his perception, the act of "carrying everything up for him", which can be seen on a manifest level as fulfilling a need or providing help, cannot be reconciled with Manfred's self-image. What this self-image consists of was marked by the previously made demarcations: advanced age and Austrian origin. This act of "carrying up", which contradicts Manfred's subjective interpretative logics and structures of meaning, culminates in an act of non-recognition of his achievement through the failure to open the door. The background of this subjectively experienced disrespect provides further clues to Manfred's ways of thinking and self-image. Afternoon naps do not correspond with his ideas of a legitimate lifestyle, and can be read as a demarcation of such behaviour. This implicit critique of laziness is based on notions of the standard employment relation, in which there is no sleeping at this time of day. For Manfred Moser, the notions of a legitimate lifestyles are thus centred around the norm of regular employment.

In describing what happened, Manfred Moser refers to several social categories from which he distances himself. It seems by doing that, an attempt is made to compensate for the loss of autonomy and agency he experiences in his overall situation. Against this background, the assumption could be made that a desire arises to reclaim some of the interpretative power over the situation by categorising such as young/old, immigration background/autochthonous, lazy/active, the interpretative power lies with him. Based on these social categorizations, he can moreover position himself in a certain, self-chosen way. By distancing himself from what he observes, Manfred provides essential indications of his identity on a latent level. The narration can therefore on the one hand be an attempt to reclaim interpretative authority over the experienced situation and on the other hand to position himself according to his self-image.

At the end of the text passage, Manfred criticizes the whole situation he just described through a rhetorical question: "how can such a thing be possible, right?". Here, the rhetorically formulated question serves as a linguistic means to make an assertion: something like this should not be possible. Thereby, it is expressed that the structures ("how"), which make the described patterns of action ("such a thing") possible, are not considered legitimate. Thus, the criticism refers to the enabling structures behind them than to the described actions themselves. However, what is remarkable is the word "right" that is placed at the end of the assertion. Like the rhetorical question in the first text segment, the formulation also weakens the rhetorical character and makes it sound more like an actual question. Once again, on a latent level, this reveals uncertainty about whether one's perceptions are shared by the outside world and, as a result, cause a desire for external validation of one's interpretive patterns.

Finally, the interpretation can be summarized as follows: First, Manfred Moser experiences a severe loss of agency and autonomy in his current situation. The reason for the contact with the social institution is described as being determined by others ("They stuck me in there"), and the activities there are perceived as coercion ("I have to"). Based on implicit demarcations that Manfred makes in the narration, the identity categories old, autochthonous Austrian and active could be reconstructed. This self-image goes hand in hand with a certain logic of entitlement, which is violated in multiple ways in the experienced situation: Manfred has to perform a service (carrying up) for someone who is not entitled to receive this kind of help because of their specific classification characteristics (young, immigration background, lazy). On top of that, his demand to at least receive recognition for his performance is denied by the refusal of opening the door. Given Manfred's subjective logic of thinking, in addition to his bad physical health, it becomes clear why he perceives being forced to carry many things up to the fourth floor for someone who, in his mind, does not even deserve it, as unjust.

To contrast the now analysed logics of entitlement and subsequent experiences of injustice, an interview passage was included in the analysis, in which a wish is expressed. The following was Manfred's answer to the question, what he would wish for if he had one wish or could change one thing about his life.

"Well if anything honestly I would wanna (/) I would wanna have my complaints be gone. Nothing else. Because the other stuff I can all work for and and if this is gone I have my peace and quiet. Then I don't even need this guy from AMS. Exactly (-) this I would want because then I can just like (/) because the (/) I'm not (/) I'm not so old that I can't do anything anymore you know. I just want it (-) exactly without complaints." (MM, TS3)

Before Manfred says what his wish is, the introductory phrase "honestly" suggests that an unadjusted and potentially controversial answer will follow now. It seems like he wants to make the best possible use of this hypothetical scenario and therefore tries to answer the question as genuinely as possible. Framing it almost like a confession, Manfred expresses that his honest wish is to have no more complaints. This indirect admission that his physical complaints bother him on a latent level conveys vulnerability. According to my interpretation, it is the disclosure of this vulnerability that does not correspond to Manfred's self-image and therefore requires an "honest" framing. This thinking pattern could be based on the general structure of hegemonic ideas of masculinity, which make positioning under a particular image of masculinity necessary.

The following sequence, "nothing else", gives the formulated wish a unique feature and thus gains subjective significance: the disappearance of my complaints is the only thing I wish for. Two conditions could be reconstructed as prerequisites for this way of thinking. First, the burden of the complaints could be subjectively experienced as so severe that all other concerns become secondary. Second, this

concern, of all things, could have been formulated as the only wish because Manfred feels that he has no power over it. The fulfilment of the desire remains in the realm of the imagination and cannot be brought about by his actions. This thinking logic leads to the question whether the formulation "nothing else" implicitly refers to the fact that more agency is experienced in other areas of life. The following sequence sheds light on this hypothesis. Manfred Moser conveys that he can "work for" everything else and at the level of intention, thus implicitly refers to his capability (self-positioning as "capable"/"able", see interpretation above). At the same time, however, it is implicitly conveyed that other concerns exist. The difference is that these can be achieved ("worked for") through Manfred's actions and therefore do not require the framing as a wish. Manfred thus experiences a greater degree of agency in life areas connected with what he defines as work. In this subjective interpretive logic, physical health cannot be worked for and is therefore framed as a desire.

Subsequently, it is documented what the hoped-for result of the wish would be. The formulation "my peace and quiet" provides information about the consequences of eliminating the complaints for Manfred Moser. In combination with "my", "peace and quiet" can be interpreted as an unimpaired, untroubled and "normal" state of physical balance and serenity. Due to the complaints, it is impossible to make these experiences in his current life situation. Thus, Manfred Moser desires the restoration of an already experienced physical normality and liberation from a physical restriction. This wish for independence could be reconstructed as a central interpretative pattern of the text passage and documented in the following sequence. Interestingly, now another dimension of the wish scenario unfolds. The disappearance of the complaints would also result in independence from the employment agency AMS, which is not yet the case. Thus, the formulation implies that the physical complaints prevent Manfred from acting independently on the labour market and, therefore, severely limit his room for action. What seems to be a slightly derogatory formulation, "this guy from AMS", suggests that the dependence on an institution, possibly in particular on an individual who works there, is experienced as unfavourable. Overall, this leads to the hypothesis that, according to Manfred's subjective interpretation, the wish to be relieved from his complaints reflects not only the desire for freedom from physical but also from institutional dependencies.

However, against marked self-positioning background as capable of working, a supposed contradiction now seems to emerge. On the one hand, Manfred positions himself as capable of acting in work-related areas of life ("I can all work for"), but he is depending on support in finding these jobs (needs the AMS). Here, a tension between experienced dependence on the one hand and marked independence on the other hand emerges. Although he strives for an independent, capable positioning, Manfred shares a reliance on physical ailments and social institutions. According to my interpretation, this ambivalent pattern is based on different levels of perception: first, the subjective level of self-positioning (I am

capable) and the objective level of dependencies (I need the AMS to find a job that corresponds to my physical prerequisites). The weight given to each of these two levels in the narrative must be carefully balanced. This outbalancing is documented in the final sequence. First, there is a self-validation of what was said earlier by the statement "exactly", whereby the meaning of the wish and its consequences reflexively gain weight during the narration.

Manfred Moser then proceeds to elaborate on the wish scenario and address another aspect. The enabling element of the wish is emphasized once again ("this I would want because then I can..."), whereby the action is related to a reference value ("just like"). However, before this reference can be expressed, there is an interruption and a reformulation. After struggling to find the right words, Manfred finally makes a statement, which again can be read as a self-positioning as capable of action: "I'm not so old that I can't do anything anymore, you know". At the level of intention, this formulation can be interpreted as a correction of external perception. Instead of further detailing what exactly is prevented by the physical complaints, Manfred decides to clarify what he *is* currently *able* to do. In the light of this hypothesis, the repeated interruptions and reformulations appear as reflections of the previous self-portrayal in the course of describing his wish. This moment of introspection resulted in the decision to once again focus more attention on his potentials, rather than his deficits, to maintain his self-image and not be perceived as "old and fragile." The concluding expression "you know" supports this hypothesis, as Manfred wants the interviewer to know something about him. This clarification makes it possible to return to the desire finally and once again emphasize the condition under which he wants to live. Against the previous interpretation background, the concluding sequence "I just want it (-) exactly without complaints" can thus be read as a need for independent, autonomous action.

In his situation as long-term unemployed because of his physical condition, Manfred Moser experiences multiple forms of injustice. First, supposedly systemic necessities lead to a devaluation of his identity and performance. He finds himself in a situation where neither his education nor his professional experience seems to have value anymore. On top of this value deprivation, the only course of action presented to him would mean to do something that is symbolically even *under* his self-ascribed value (performing cleaning work). The reason for his dilemma enforces the feeling of injustice. While it is structural conditions that lead to his situation (“flunking” because of his health condition), he still has to deal with the perception that he is responsible for his situation (my health is “my problem”). Finally, both the first and the second interview segment that was analysed showed clear signs of a loss of autonomy and agency, which Manfred Moser experiences in his current situation. Anonymously seeming, powerful external actors force him to do certain things and take certain jobs that degrade him and lead to violations of his self-value. Regarding the level of wishes, Manfred Moser expresses a clear wish for independence, not only from physical suffering but also from institutional dependencies. The structural background for the fact that this desire is communicated as the only wish is a lack of experienced agency regarding the dimension of health. However, this wish’s linguistic formulation turns out to be a challenging act of balancing the expression of an inner, unadulterated need on the one hand and the maintenance of the self-image in the anticipated external perception on the other. Manfred finds himself in an ambivalent relationship of dependence, which becomes effective on two different levels of perception. While on the subjective level, he strives to position himself as capable of acting, he is subject to institutional and physical dependencies from which he would like to free himself on the subjective level. Conversely, expressing criticism about his experiences because of his unemployment does not seem to be such a challenge for Manfred Moser. There are multiple norms, which he can refer to in formulating his subjective perception of injustice. He identifies violations against *age hierarchies* (being old and physically ill but still having to perform work for someone young and fit). Violations against *ethnic hierarchies* (being an autochthonous Austrian having to do something for someone with an “immigration background”) and offences against *merit hierarchies* (the person who receives the help does not deserve it because they are lazy and sleep in the afternoon). What makes these violations even more severe is that they seem systematically legitimised since Manfred expresses that the social system structures force him to do these things. Despite this supposed systemic legitimacy, he can still express his criticism quite clearly, because he seems confident about the validity of the norms that he can refer his complaint to. However, Manfred also shows signs of insecurity about the validity of those norms in how he formulates his criticism (demonstrated by the rhetorical questions that became actual questions).

6.2. Elisabeth Erhart: the right to take care of her children

Elisabeth Erhart is in her mid-fifties and lives together with her grown-up son in a lower Austrian town. Besides her son, she has two grown daughters who live in different cities and have children for themselves. After finishing gymnasium, Elisabeth completed an education in tourism when she was 21, which was also when her first daughter was born. Until she was 25, she had two more children with her husband, whom she divorced a few years after their third child was born. With her ex-husband, Elisabeth owned a restaurant and started an education in business consulting after the divorce, which she completed in 2007. Besides that, she has an education in tax consulting, which she, however, aborted shortly before receiving the diploma. Regarding her professional experience, Elisabeth summarises that she completed three educations but only received a title from two of them. She worked in tax and business consulting until she had a burn out in 2005, which was connected to health problems she had been experiencing ever since her childhood. After a short break, Elisabeth started working again before having another breakdown five years later. In 2015, she finally decided to terminate her job and prioritise her health. Since then, Elisabeth has been “at home”, paying much attention to her mental and physical well-being. However, she clarifies that she is still very busy with the house and garden and with her children and grandchildren, who visit her regularly.

Providing financial support for her children had been the primary reason for working, as Elisabeth states. Only the fact that all her kids had grown up and become financially independent enabled her to stop working in 2015. At the very beginning of the interview, Elisabeth emphasises that she was a single parent in a double way: both in terms of raising and financially supporting her children. Her ex-husband, who had a drinking problem and physically abused her in the marriage, left to live abroad and hardly showed support for the family. Most of the injustice experiences Elisabeth Erhart talks about refer to her role as a single mother in a mainly conservative, core-family oriented surrounding, receiving little support from the social authorities. Besides the grievances she identified in terms of the social system, she had exceptionally negative experiences with the legal system. Being involved in a mentally exhausting and highly stressful fight for their children’s legal visiting right with her former husband, Elisabeth experienced the judge as being against her. Most of the injustice Elisabeth Erhart addresses concerns her past, especially regarding the time when she was the only caretaker for her children. The following sequence was chosen for the analysis since it captures an experience of injustice regarding the social system and her role as a single parent. The narration in the following documents how Elisabeth defends several claims she makes on her role as a mother and as an employee in a situation at the employment service AMS:

„Anyway, the guy had explained to me that I have to take the alimony that father state has advanced for me for the care of my children. And then I said no. I said it can’t be it that when I go and work the

alimony that father state ad (/) advanced me I have to give away to someone else for my children (/)
I say the money is for my children personally. For food, drinks, clothes, education but not for that I
have to take action. Let someone else take care. Pay someone else." (EE, TS1)

In this text, Elisabeth Erhart refers a conversation in which her counsellor at the AMS, who confronted her with the necessity of using the alimony payments she receives in the form of state support for childcare. Beyond this manifest content, several latent dimensions of meaning could be reconstructed based on the first sequences.

After Elisabeth draws attention to what she has to say next by using the introductory phrase "anyway", the word "explains" reveals something about the social system in which the interaction partners find themselves. The communication content is perceived as an explanation, which implies a certain knowledge hierarchy and constructs a power imbalance between the roles involved. According to my interpretation, the availability of objective appearing knowledge in the prevailing social system entitles presenting it as a rule and passing it on to the supposedly uninformed role. In the present situation, there is an overlap of two social systems, a patriarchal (see "mansplaining") and an organizational (see AMS) order. These two hierarchically structured ordering systems form the framework of interaction and assign Elisabeth Erhart a subordinate role because of her gender and her position in the organization. Her counterpart ("he") represents these two systems' embodiment and assumes the role of mediator of the system logic. This logic consists of the following rule: Elisabeth Erhart "must" do something with the benefit payments she receives from the state.

To describe the welfare state support, Elisabeth draws to a somewhat old-fashioned political metaphor, the so-called "father state." In the formulation, the state, which is genderless in itself, is constructed as male and takes on a paternal role. Regardless of the various political interpretations of the metaphor²⁰, on a hermeneutic level, "father state" symbolizes strictness and authority as well as law and justice. The use of this phrase linguistically reproduces a patriarchal order in which the father, as the embodiment of the state, holds the highest position of power in society. In terms of the patriarchal metaphor, Elisabeth implicitly positions herself to him as the inferior daughter, who here is a supplicant at the mercy of his authority and dependent on his kindness. The formulation "advanced" implies that the money is only temporarily paid out by the welfare state since the biological father, whose legal obligation would be to pay the alimony, apparently does not fulfil his responsibility.

²⁰Depending on the political views, the metaphor's use has positive or negative connotations. While "father state" embodies the welfare state in left-wing circles and stands for law and order in the right-wing spectrum, the expression tends to have negative connotations in the liberal camp, since "father state" limits the responsibility of individuals (on "father state" see for instance Schimank, 2009). Because nothing else is known about Elisabeth's political views, and it is a somewhat outdated expression, it seems possible that she is using the term ironically. In this way, the state's paternal role is ridiculed, and its power weakened.

The repeated recourse to this formulation in the further course of the passage indicates that Elisabeth does not want to relieve her ex-husband of his duty. By using “advanced” instead of, for instance, “paid”, she expresses her expectations of him several times, implicitly pointing to the fact that he does not live up to his legal obligations. Overall, Elisabeth Erhart finds herself in a situation in which she is surrounded by male roles whose actions influence her. First, her opposite in the conversation described (“he”), who conveys a particular rule over her, then the biological father, who does not fulfil his obligation and her children, and the “father state” as a metaphorical man, who has power and influence over her and her children by providing financial resources.

Now there is a change of perspective, and Elisabeth describes her reaction to the initial situation. With her clear “no,” she positions herself oppositional. Two conditions could be reconstructed as prerequisites for formulating resistance like that. First, such a reaction requires a normatively certain point of view. This normative certainty is expressed on several occasions in the text protocol, among others in the sequence “it can’t be”. Here, we can see how Elisabeth is confronted with something that contradicts her ideas of what is allowed to be and what considers proper and just. However, given such a firm, normatively stabilised conviction, the communicative resources to express it are required as well. In the present situation, Elisabeth was created space for herself to speak, despite her inferior position in the prevailing hierarchies. Also, she can draw on a communicative skill that she has learned in her biography, which enables her to articulate her claims. Thus, based on this text segment, it could be reconstructed that, regarding the sphere of family and children, Elisabeth Erhart is not only sufficiently normatively proficient but also communicatively skilled enough to convey confidently, demand and, if necessary, also defend her claims. Against the background of the male roles that surround her, and her embedding in the patriarchal context described above, her opposition can thus also be seen as resistance to patriarchal power structures that affect her.

However, at this point, Elisabeth Erhart adds another decisive condition to the situation by introducing the fact that she has a job (“when I go and work”) as the starting point for her argument. The following rule is conveyed to her: If she goes to work and cannot take care of her children at certain times, she must pay for the childcare with the alimony the state “advances” her. To “give away” the alimony payments for this cause seems to her as a misuse. Conversely, she believes that the money “belongs” to her children. In the original German version²¹ this formulation reflects the statement’s normative force. From Elisabeth’s point of view, her children are not only entitled to free disposal of the money legally, but they also *should* receive the alimony from a normative perspective. Next, she lists three

²¹ In the original, Elisabeth Erhart states that „des Göd *ghört* ja für meine Kinder persönlich“, which emphasises the normative dimension underlying the wording, because in German, “gehört” hermeneutically implies that something *should* be in a certain way.

things that she subjectively thinks will be implied in paying for childcare like it is asked from her. First, she would be forced to actively look for childcare options herself ("have to take action"). Second, she would have to hire another person instead of placing the children in a childcare institution ("let someone else take care"), and third, she would also have to finance this private care out of her pocket ("pay someone else"). All three dimensions become the subject of criticism, based on Elisabeth's claim to the provision of public childcare and thus the conflict-free possibility for the employment of mothers. However, in the interview situation, this claim is disappointment and replaced by a system logic that contradicts another subjective entitlement of Elisabeth, namely spending the alimony to which she and her family are entitled to on childcare.

Elisabeth Erhart is thus confronted with a system that makes it impossible for her to live up to her self-image as a caring mother and working mother. To provide financial support for her children and live up to her role as a caretaker, she needs to perform both functions. In essence, Elisabeth finds herself in a reconciliation conflict constructed by the given institutional framework. In her perception, she has to pay the price of alimony misappropriation for her occupation, thus sacrificing one freedom (self-determination over financial resources) for the other freedom (occupation). Erhart experiences this conflict as unjust against the background of her subjective logic of entitlement. However, due to her normative solid frame of reference and her communicative resources, she can voice to her experience of injustice and defend herself accordingly.

The subsequent analysis is based on the continuation of the previous narration. Elisabeth is still referring to the above-described situation at the employment service when she moves on to describe the following interaction between her and her counsellor:

„And I took a look at him and then I said and how many children do you have? I just would have liked to [incomprehensible mumbling] you know himself he is just sitting there on his great seat and to me (/) and I say to him how many children do you have? Well, none. (-) And I'm like, well, that's just fantastic then.”

The text protocol documents how an experience of injustice causes Elisabeth to seize her agency in the situation with rhetorical means to claim interpretive authority over her own experience ultimately. Describing her strategy of action is interrupted by a change of perspective in which Elisabeth presents her counterpart's role. On this basis, her perception of the general situation could be reconstructed. Next, Elisabeth returns to her strategy of action in the second half of the text protocol before finally criticizing the entire interaction pattern with a sarcastic judgement.

In the beginning, Elisabeth Erhart describes a course of action in which she first directs her attention to her to ask how many children he has subsequently. Upon my interpretation, she observed

something in the external appearance of the person sitting across from her that led her to subsequently ask how many children he has. Interestingly, the wording already presupposes that he has children. This assumption could be the result of her critical observation earlier. At the same time, it could also be the counterpart's actions that led her to assume that he has at least one child. Possibly, from her point of view, he behaves as if he had children.

When Elisabeth takes up her question again in the second part of the interview protocol, it becomes increasingly clear that it is a rhetorical question, used to confirm an assumption that she had deduced from her observation. Her counterpart's critical examination led to the firm belief that he had no children in contrast to her. To bring this fact to light, she asks her counsellor a question and thus actively reverses the role distribution of the social situation in which she finds herself. Instead of her AMS supervisor, she is now the one who critically observes her counterpart, draws conclusions based on appearances, and asks questions that only serve the purpose of confirming her presuppositions. By actively seizing this influential role, Elisabeth can put herself in a self-empowering position and thus gain interpretative power over the situation and her role in it.

Now there is a shift from the description of her actions to the subjective level of her perception. Elisabeth starts by describing her preferred course of action. However, this statement cannot be made because it turns into an incomprehensible mumbling, for which there are two possible reasons. Either the action is not to be heard in the retelling because it would contradict the normative notions of socially desirable action. For example, it could be acts of verbal or physical violence, and the unintelligible passage could thus be interpreted as intentional mumbling. The alternative option would be that the mumbling is unintentional and spontaneous in the situation, as the memory evokes such strong emotions that retelling the story becomes impossible. Regardless of which of the two options is true (it could also be a mixture of both), it can be stated that the situation provoked the desired action that Elisabeth is unable to act upon. The preferred alternative, possibly a response that implied verbal or physical violence, must be suppressed, both in the present interview and in the situation, she is retelling. This interpretation suggests that the actual or anticipated answer to the question Elisabeth asked her counsellor (how many children he has) triggers a strong emotion in her.

In the next sequence, Elisabeth finds more precise words again and can express what has affected her so emotionally. First, in the retelling, she reflexively places herself in her counterpart's role and anticipates his self-image. With the formulation "great seat," she chooses an ironic description of her counterpart's self-image, which refers to his superior position in the social order. The adjective "great" does not reflect her evaluation but rather refers to her counsellor's image. On a latent level, an implicit demarcation, as well as a self-positioning on Elisabeth's part, could be identified here. While her

counterpart "himself" only passively sits on his high position in the social order, she sees herself in an active role as a single mother (see text protocol above), who holds a lower position in the social order.

Even before it is possible to finish saying what the "great seat" of her counterpart entitles him to do ("and to me"), an interruption and a reformulation occurred. Instead of describing how she was treated, Elisabeth chooses to shift the attention to her perspective once more. Now, the rhetorical character of the question she asks, already mentioned above, becomes more apparent. Here, an interesting formulation takes place because the sequence is introduced as a statement ("and I say to him") but concludes in a question ("how many children do you have?"). The answer "well none", presented as normalised and entirely self-evident, suggests the interpretation that for Elisabeth, this was a self-fulfilling prophecy and, in other words, evident from the very beginning. Now, the assumption that she had already had initially was confirmed, and her strategy to dismantle her counsellor's childlessness has shown to be successful.

Finally, Elisabeth sarcastically assesses the fact that her counterpart does not have any children, saying, "well, that's just fantastic then". In her perception, this circumstance is not at all fantastic. It bothers her that her supervisor, who has a certain power over her, does not share her experience and has no insight into her living reality. Thus, in the eyes of Elisabeth, he has no legitimate basis for making a judgment about her and her life. She attempts to demonstrate this illegitimacy through the formulation of the rhetorical question. Simultaneously, she criticizes the logic of entitlement based on the social order position that entitles the supervisor to overrule her despite his childlessness. Her expertise and subjective experiences as a mother seem comparably worthless and are not considered. This lack of recognition in combination with what she sees as an illegitimate attitude of entitlement on her counsellor's part is experienced as a massive experience of injustice. However, like the previous interview passage's identified pattern, Elisabeth does not let this subjectively experienced injustice pass her by. Instead, it causes her to use rhetorical means to dismantle her counterpart by confronting him and criticizing his latent logic of entitlement.

The final text protocol analysed from the interview with Elisabeth Erhart illustrates the reflexive process of formulating a desired state and its step-by-step justification. She expresses her wish to be independent of financial worries and constraints. This somewhat more extended text passage has been divided into two parts. The following first part of the passage documents the mental burden of financial precarity. Instead of claiming to abolish this burden, an unrealistically seeming wish, impossible to realise by own actions, is formulated:

"And simply this that I know (/) I really already have (/) I mean I really wished for that that just sometime the day comes when I know that I can pay everything there is to pay. With (-) just good (/) on the contrary, I know I can even pay more than what I would have to pay." (EE, TS3a)

Based on the introductory sequence "this, that I know," it was possible to reconstruct a hypothesis about the nature of the wish, which would turn out to be a central interpretive pattern in the further course of the analysis. The formulation refers to a state of reflexive knowledge and points out that Elisabeth wishes for a certain consolidated, i.e., secured state of mind. According to my interpretation, framing the wish as "simple" has the function of signal modesty. Elisabeth repeatedly conveys that she does not wish for anything complicated or far-fetched but something simple. This modest or humble formulation's underlying motive will be interpreted more deeply further along. Before Elisabeth moves on to exploring the exact content of this reflexive knowledge that her wish is referring to, she breaks off and formulates a reference to an unspecified, earlier time in her life. The interview activates her memory. Through the insertion, she points out that the wish did not occur to her spontaneously in the interview situation but that the thought had already come up in the past. In this way, she can validate the wish through her own experience and give it more weight, which suggests the interpretation that, in her subjective perception, a desire only counts as "real" when it proves to be recurring.

It is striking that Elisabeth frames an anticipated future perspective with the words "that sometime the day comes". This phrase describes that a scenario is expected, hoped for or even feared, but it is entirely unclear *when* it will occur or *what* will trigger it. In any case, it is an abrupt change instead of a processual shift that specific, individual actions could cause. Based on this formulation, the first indication of Elisabeth's sense of entitlement could be reconstructed. In her perception, the desired change is apparently beyond her power and must be left to chance or external influencing factors. The following sequence reveals that the hoped-for future scenario consists of being in a conscious financial security state. This formulation implies that Elisabeth experiences a lack of this security in her current life situation and apparently cannot pay for everything that necessarily has to be paid. She is confronted with a subjectively experienced obligation to act, which can, however, not be met. Thus, Elisabeth finds herself in a dilemma. It seems apparent that she implicitly refers to her and her family's basic needs, whose coverage is or was not always guaranteed. However, her wish is aimed at something immaterial instead of sufficient financial means, namely a cognitive state. Elisabeth does not wish for more money but for a *feeling* of security, which reflects the mental burden of living in economic precarity.

Now there is a moment of reflection in the narration, and Elisabeth changes her desired scenario. In her ideal world, she would be able to pay for the bare necessities and be able to afford things that go beyond that. As before, the phrase "I know I can" shows that Elisabeth refers to the cognitive dimension, i.e., secure knowledge, instead of the material aspects themselves. Interestingly, she frames this ability to afford things beyond basic needs as the "opposite" of the previously addressed ability to pay for necessities. According to my interpretation, this wording is based on an underlying

thinking pattern, referring to a dichotomous distinction between coercion and possibility. In the category of coercion, the available financial resources must be spent to meet basic needs, while in the category of possibility, there are so many resources available that there is the freedom to choose the purpose of spending. Based on this reading, it was possible to generate the hypothesis that the processual shift in Elisabeth's wish mirrors a desired social advancement. Essentially, she desires the privilege of freedom of choice and deciding for herself how to spend financial resources, rather than having the purpose dictated by the circumstances.

In the second part of the text segment, Elisabeth attempts to formulate her wish in an alternative way before aborting the sentence and reformulating it. When expressing the following, she leaves the hypothetical level of the wish and switches to the level of her life reality:

"Or I had more money at my disposal than I (/) just this where you always (-) (/) I mean that's just how it is with three children. Financially it is of course always this (/) there is always something somewhere. Can I really pay everything again all the bills (-) I mean just once have so much of a financial cushion that I can simply sleep good and wake up good [laughs loudly]" (EE, TS3b)

Now Elisabeth pursues the intention to justify the previously formulated wish by clearly contrasting the desired scenario with her living conditions. After this insertion of the perspective on her reality, she finally returns to the desired, hypothetical scenario and describes the positive effects it would have on her mental well-being.

Remarkable in this text segment are the frequent references to existing structures by the words "this", "that's how it is", "always," and "of course." From these formulations, recurring events are described, which are presented as normal and unchanging due to their consistent character. With this wording, Elisabeth normalizes her financially precarious situation by referring to her living circumstances. With resignation in her tone, she conveys that "that's just how it is with three children." An alternative interpretation of the precarious circumstances does not seem to be available. Her life reality's presented unchangeability strengthens the hypothesis that Elisabeth subjectively does not ascribe any claim to financial independence to herself but merely formulates a seemingly unrealistic wish. Moreover, the mental burden resulting from her insecure life situation is reflected in this text segment. "Always" and "somewhere", i.e. recurrently and without any predictability, financial shortages can occur. As an example, Elisabeth mentions the worry of not paying bills.

After a brief pause, she finally returns to her desired scenario and uses the metaphor of a "financial cushion" to vividly express what an improvement in her economic situation would subjectively mean for her. A cushion not only serves as a soft surface on which to rest and relax comfortably but can also serve as protection in the event of a fall. Such a cushion would help Elisabeth not only to sleep well

but also to wake up well. Implicitly, this formulation refers to the fact that Elisabeth Erhart is accompanied by constant financial worries in her current life situation and gets neither at night nor during the day relief from them. At this point, once more, the extent of the mental burden that a highly precarious economic situation brings for a single mother of three children becomes strongly visible again. The loud laughter at the end of the passage gives Elisabeth's expressed wish scenario an ironic, almost amusing character. Of course, this could be a peculiarity of her communicative style²². However, against the background of the so far presented analysis, it cannot be ruled out that humour could serve as a mechanism for dealing with the enormous mental stress to which Elisabeth is exposed due to her precarious economic situation. Simultaneously, the laughter could have the function to play down the now spread out wish to implicitly emphasise that she has no claim to it and that it is merely a fantasy ("sometime the day will come...").

²² It was striking how much Elisabeth laughed throughout the entire interview, even at points that sometimes seemed quite surprising.

The analysis of Elisabeth Erhart's case showed that she feels strongly entitled to perform her role as a caretaker of her three children. Thus, in terms of her life arrangement, the dimension of care becomes the central point of reference for formulating experiences of injustice. Strong normative support and sufficient communicative skills to express her criticism enable her to resist the institutionalised, patriarchal structures surrounding her and fight for her entitlements. In the first text segment that was analysed, these entitlements mainly referred to the provision of public childcare to reconcile employment and single parenthood. Regarding her dealing with violations against her legitimate claims, she draws on rhetorical means to dismantle illegitimate entitlements of others, as analysed in the second text segment from the interview. Here, Elisabeth experienced a lack of recognition of her living reality and expertise as a single parent while at the same time being confronted with an, in her view, inexperienced and hence illegitimate attitude of entitlement (of her counsellor at the AMS). This experience of injustice is enforced because the prevailing structures of the organisational context seem to enable and support the illegitimate claims of her counsellor. Here, we saw that Elisabeth feels strongly entitled to receive recognition for her experience and specific life situation, enabling her to draw to rhetorical means to criticise her counterpart's actions in the situation and hence the system that he embodies. In contrast to the self-confident way Elisabeth defends her claims for justice, she applies a very different tone regarding her financially precarious living situation. It seems that there is no such robust normative framework, which could be used to criticise the financial hardship she experiences. Instead of demanding financial independence, Elisabeth carefully expresses a wish for a secured state of mind, free from sorrows and worries, that almost seems like an amusing fantasy. Even though their poverty causes her enormous mental distress, her wording suggests that she regards financial insecurity as a regular part of being a single parent. An alternative way to interpret her precarious living situation, which would enable her to claim liberation from it, does not seem available.

6.3. Jakob Janisch: the right to receive recognition for his mental health situation

Jakob Janisch lives alone in an apartment in a small town in lower Austria. He is 45 years old and has a 19-year-old son who lives in another apartment in the same building. After having finished compulsory school, Jakob worked in different short-time jobs in which he always felt like an inferior, “unskilled worker”. For the last three years, Jakob has been unemployed, experiencing that “the longer you are at home, the more difficult it gets”. Before his unemployment, Jakob worked as a janitor for more than ten years in an elderly home run by the city of Vienna, which closed due to budget consolidations in 2016. Since then, he has difficulties finding a job again, which he roots in his mental health condition. Jakob suffers from bipolar disease and anxiety, has been under psychological treatment for the past ten years and takes strong medication. When his father died, and shortly afterwards, his previous life partner and mother of his son passed away, Jakob had an emotional breakdown and went into psychiatry in 2010. Luckily, as he regards it, his former employers at the elderly home understood and tolerated his health condition, accepting it when he was on sick leave, sometimes even for multiple weeks. Being very thankful for the treatment he received from the employers at the elderly home, he says that it would never be possible to find an employer who accepts his health condition in the private sector.

Jakob Janisch does not like to look back at his childhood. Until today, he suffers from the trauma caused by the way his alcoholic father treated him. Jakob is trained as a tiler and kiln builder but states that he still feels like an unskilled worker, no matter what he does. Not receiving recognition for who he is and what he can do is a recurring topic throughout the interview. At the same time, Janisch feels that he has very low self-esteem, which he roots in his childhood trauma, and therefore tends to be taking jobs beneath his actual level of skills. Generally, he describes himself as a very social and sensitive person. Jakob identifies multiple grievances and problems, both in society but mostly in his private life. He experiences injustice in different dimensions of life arrangements, for instance, regarding his family or previous relationships. Jakob primarily identifies severe grievances regarding the health care system and the labour market, which, at some points during the interview, causes him intense emotional outbursts. In the first sequence chosen for the analysis, Jakob Janisch describes a conflicting situation that he typically finds himself in when being at a job interview.

„Or at a job interview (--) you already notice that they have a problem with something. For example, because my resume (/) because I’ve already been at home for a longer time. These are all such discussions they (-) they should talk to me about it. Why and how. But then I cannot say why and how. Because if I start talking about the psyche, then I don’t even have to come there anymore.” (JJ, TS1)

By addressing a job interview’s social situation, Jakob determines the context for the rest of the narration. Implicitly, two roles are already distinguished here since a job interview consists of a

meeting between an employer and an employee. The distribution of roles is characterized by an imbalance of power in favour of the employer because both the initiation and the course and outcome of the situation are up to them. In the following, Jakob describes his experiences from job interviews and thus takes the employee's perspective. He is confronted with a group whose expectations have been disappointed because he suggests that "they have a problem with something". On a latent level, Jakob Janisch already senses the disappointment. What the subject of the criticism is, however, remains unclear. He finds himself in an uncomfortable position because he violated rules that served as a shared standard for the rest of those present, without knowing what exactly he did wrong.

Then Jakob gives an example of what led to the rule violation by first referring to his resume. The wording suggests that different reasonings for the disappointed expectations have been experienced prior, and now an example is given for better illustration. One or more unemployment phases are evident from his curriculum vitae (CV), which is colloquially formulated as being "at home for a longer time"²³. Thus, it is not just the formality of the CV, but his whole life course, which does not fit the employer's expectations. These characteristics of Jakob's life reality are put up for debate in the job interview situation, as the following sequence illustrates. A discussion, in this case several ("all such") discussions, implies at least two roles that negotiate different points of view, although, in the specific situation, it is unclear whether Jakob takes on one of these roles himself. It could either be that he must justify or defend his life (course) during the debate or is excluded from the discussions and has no say in them. Regardless of which of the two possible options applies, Jakob Janisch himself has a low degree of agency and autonomy in the situation.

After describing his perception of the job interview, Jakob switches to the level of entitlement and formulates an alternative scenario. He demands that employers address him about the background of his unemployment. In contrast to discussions, whose participation is regulated by certain inclusion and exclusion criteria and in which different positions are negotiated, simply talking to someone about something seems more neutral and implies more room for the person being addressed. In his preferred action scenario, the interviewee is given space to express his position in a self-determined way. He wants to be asked questions about the "why and how" to talk about the background of the formalized and merely roughly summarized biographical facts in the resume. In this way, Jakob has a chance to portray his biography and life course self-determinedly and in all its complexity. According to my extensive interpretation, this subjective thinking pattern is based on a claim to a self-determined

²³ The comparative form "longer", which raises the question "longer than who or what?" implies the temporal dimensions of unemployment and refers here to a norm by which it can be measured how long "being at home" is socially accepted.

presentation of aspects of his biography, with the goal of recognition of his perspective. Not someone else, but himself, should have the interpretative authority over his life.

Now, after the formulation of his claim and the implied criticism of the treatment he received from the employers, disappointment follows. Jakob Janisch's narrative perspective shifts to the reflexive level and introduces the anticipated contradiction to his desired scenario with "but". Something makes it impossible for him to answer the questions he wants to be asked, which puts him in a highly ambivalent position. He cannot talk about his biographical background, the "why and how" of his long-term unemployment, but at the same time formulates a claim to be asked about it. The following sequence provides information about the reason for the limitation of action. A detailed narration ("talking about") of his mental health is relevant for explaining his biographical background. Talking about one's psyche, however, is presuppositional. Appropriate vocabulary and self-reflection tools must first be learned, and access to these resources is not the same for all societal groups. In this sequence, Jakob Janisch positions himself as a person who is not only willing but also *able* to talk about his mental health.

However, a performative presentation of one's subjectivity also requires a certain spatial context that gives the required space for this form of subjectivity. The world of work, for example, is a rationalized place where, instead of subjectivity, objectivity and measurability are central norms. From this, the hypothesis can be derived that showing subjectivity in an objectively oriented space, such as the job interview, leads to irritation. As Jakob describes, the following sequence seems to confirm this hypothesis that even starting to talk (rather than telling the whole story) about his mental health would lead to exclusion. In this case, the colloquial phrase "I don't even have to come there anymore" means more than the mere absence of a necessity. It signals undesirability, possibly even a prohibition. Thus, this reflexive representation of Jakob's experience points to a structural dimension. Jakob Janisch has already experienced the described action sequences so often that he can identify patterns and derive a regularity. He knows: if I begin to talk about my mental health, then I am no longer wanted there. Formulations from the text passage such as "for example" or "all such" indicate these condensed experiences.

All in all, Jakob Janisch finds himself in an externally determined and externally structured situation during the job interview, in which the employers evaluate his biographical characteristics as a violation of the existing, context-related norms. In the discussions that arise from this norm violation, Jakob has a low degree of agency. As a counter alternative to this uncomfortable situation, he formulates a claim to be given space to present his perspective. Based on this claim, a need to recognise his own subjectivity and his biography's complexity could be reconstructed. However, the structural conditions make this representation of his subjectivity impossible, which Jakob is reflexively aware of since he has

already had multiple experiences with this. He finds himself in a dilemma: on the one hand, he formulates a claim to be asked about the background of his life course, and thus to receive recognition for the complexity of his humanity. At the same time, due to his experiences, he is reflexively aware that the self-representation of his life reality (in this case of his mental preconditions) leads to exclusion and cannot be seized as an option for action. Here, the structural contradiction between the individual need for recognition of one's subjectivity on the one hand, and the normative conditions of the working world on the other, manifests itself in the individual case.

In the next segment from the interview transcript that was chosen for the analysis, Jakob Janisch describes an experience of structural humiliation in the institutional context of the employment service AMS. He experiences a systematic deprivation of his dignity, which could be reconstructed based on of three central dimensions of meaning: Loss of agency, loss of the power to define one's role in the situation, and the deprivation of recognition and respect. For a better overview of the whole interpretation, the passage from the interview transcript has been divided into individual parts, of which the first one is formulated in the following way:

"I can't find the words during these (/) during the [bangs his fist loudly on the table] (/) I can't find. I just can't find them. Then I'm like a (--) like a little child. Who is underneath a higher position" (JJ, TS2a)

First, Jakob Janisch subjectively experiences a severe loss of agency. He is confronted with a situation in which he feels compelled to react but cannot act as desired. There could be various reasons why the intensive efforts to respond still failed. Jakob was possibly in a state of shock due to an unforeseen, unfamiliar action. At the same time, it could be the situation's contextual conditions that made a reaction impossible since they structurally gave him little to no room for manoeuvre. This feeling of powerlessness leads to a physical outburst in the form of banging his fist on the table. The use of the present tense ("find") suggests that the experience is not completed but impacts the present, possibly happening again in the future; this indicates the interpretation that the described situation is a structural experience that has already occurred several times.

To generate a deeper understanding of his perspective on the situation, Jakob now draws on collective knowledge by comparing his experience to a familiar role: the little child. The detailing of the role's characteristics in the follow-up sequence ("that is beneath a higher position") points to the fact that in the situation, he is assigned a subordinate position in the social hierarchy. Reconstructing the sequence, "I am like a little child", led to the hypothesis that what Jakob feels is the external perception ascribed to him also becomes his self-perception. He thus experiences a loss over the interpretative power to define his role in the situation. This external attribution of a subordinate position,

accompanied by a loss of self-determination, can be interpreted as the second dimension of the structural experience of humiliation.

As the narration continues, Jakob Janisch draws a reflexive summary and validates his account of the events when he says, "That's exactly how it seems. Complete nonsense." Now step-wise, a reflexive processing and classification of the experience begins. At first, it seems remarkable that Jakob emphasises his *subjective* perspective in the formulation by saying how it "seems", thus leaving room for alternative interpretations. On the one hand, he presents himself as self-confident with his perception of the situation, but at the same time, the formulation implies a central, context-related moment of reflection, which expresses the following latent pattern of interpretation: I am not an inferior child - it just seems that way to me. Thus, on a latent level, an implicit demarcation from the role attributed to him in the situation takes place.

In the following sequence, Jakob takes the next step in the reflection process. Now, he evaluates the entire interpretation pattern and devalues it with the words "complete nonsense". In contrast to the previous phrasing, which was linguistically framed as an interpretation, Jakob now renounces the subjective perspective and instead switches to an objective statement: this is "nonsense". This change of narrative is based on an effort to regain interpretive authority over the experience, not to be retrospectively perceived as inferior. Thus, the passage documents how the self's role is constructed retrospectively in the narrative.

Jakob Janisch contextualizes the previously described pattern of action in the next text segment and establishes a reference to the AMS institution. He states:

"And this is how it seems to me at AMS. There I am, like a (/) there (/) I don't think that's funny.
(-) Just because he has a master's degree (--) well, I am not that, or I don't have this
[incomprehensible mumbling], but with them, I have that. But I don't wanna have that. Because
it makes me small." (JJ, TS2b)

At first, Jakob attempts to compare his role again ("There I am like a"), but then two interruptions and reformulations take place before a clear demarcation of something supposedly "funny" occurs. The phrase "I don't think that's funny" can either be seen as a general criticism of a situation or action in the sense of the Austrian idiom²⁴, or it can express an actual violation of one's subjective notions of humour. Giving a reason for what triggered his judgement that something was *not* "funny", Jakob now introduces a condition ("Only because...") and thus refers to a pattern of justification. He reflexively places himself in his counterpart's position and anticipates the latter's logic of thinking, according to which an academic title entitles one to specific actions. In the present case, this action is to make fun

²⁴ „Des find i ned lustig.“

of him, which can be confirmed by contextual knowledge from the interview²⁵. Now a moment of uncertainty sets in about how legitimate this degrading treatment is due to the status differences of the two participants of the situation. Jakob mumbles that he has not acquired the title ("I don't have this"), which shows that on the latent level, there is a certain degree of awareness over the possibility of achieving academic titles and higher education. Thus, Jakob Janisch is implicitly referring to the norm of equality of chances and the individualisation of social inequality that goes along with it.

However, this moment of uncertainty about the legitimacy of his demeaning treatment is countered by a clear "but" in the following sequence: "but with them (AMS) I have that". At first, it does not seem quite clear what exactly is meant by "that." According to my reconstruction, Jakob expresses that the educational inequalities between him and his counterpart become noticeable and effective in the institutional framework of the AMS. In the continuation, he opposes the power structures that have now been named: "But I don't wanna have that". This leads to the hypothesis that Jakob Janisch initially recognises the existing social structures and does not place himself on the same level as his counterpart *but* does not find degrading treatment justified because of this. This interpretation is confirmed in the concluding sequence, in which the degradation is symbolically expressed in a hierarchical system. The described interaction patterns in the hierarchically organised social system of the employment service "make" him small. He thus experiences an *active*, structural humiliation and a systematic deprivation of his dignity.

In summary, three central dimensions of meaning were reconstructed, through which the described experience of structural humiliation at the AMS becomes painfully apparent for Jakob Janisch: The loss of agency (inability to speak), the loss of the power to define one's role in the situation (the subordinate, little child), and the deprivation of recognition and respect (being the one that is made fun of). What makes these experiences, already hurtful in themselves, an experience of injustice, is the institutional framework that not only makes them possible but also makes them seem legitimate. Jakob Janisch perceives the AMS as a system in which social structuring occurs based on academic titles and supposedly legitimizes his degrading treatment. This subjectively perceived institutional legitimization of one's humiliation is perceived as a profound injustice experience. Moreover, the passage documents the gradual, reflexive processing of a humiliation experience. The narrative is characterized by a reconquest of the interpretative authority over the events, which can be interpreted as compensation for the described speechlessness in the beginning. First, in describing the experience, power structures are named and contextualized. Then a gradual demarcation (for instance, through

²⁵ At another point in the interview, Jakob talks about a memorable encounter with his counsellor at the employment service, who made a sarcastic comment about his resume, saying that he would probably not start a career as a writer since his CV had so many "gaps". Jakob experienced this comment as highly inappropriate and disrespectful.

the formulation "I don't wanna have that") from the role attributed to him, as well as a devaluation ("complete nonsense") of the entire interaction pattern takes place. These reconstructed patterns can be seen as exemplary for the effectiveness of inequality structures in institutions, which become apparent in individual actions (of Jakob Janisch and those of the AMS counsellor) and reproduce social hierarchies.

Finally, to contrast Jakob's claims for justice and entitlement with grievances that are not formulated as critique, a segment of the interview was analysed, where he talks about his greatest wish for the future. This wish is to have a girlfriend who "suits him". During a longer narration about his expectations from his desired partner and how he imagines living together with her, the following statement occurs:

"This would actually be nice. This calmness yeah. Towards everything I think. Calmness towards everything. Towards my life itself. Towards the work. Towards what I am. To what I am able to do. (-) Just accept. And actually be happy that I can do this. (-) Because it's true." (JJ, TS3)

The passage starts with an anticipated, positively evaluated state in an alternative, desired scenario. Here, a cautiously formulated unspecific wish is expressed, weakened by "actually", and therefore almost seems like a confession. The desire for calmness, or serenity, is formulated in the following sequence; it indicates a lack of this quality in the life of Jakob. Serenity is a human and socially constructed quality that either serves as a self-description or is attributed to a person. Perceiving it is interpretive and subjective in two ways: both how calmness is expressed and how it is evaluated (here as a desirable and therefore positive feature) are depending on the subject. A calm person is not easily upset and responds to certain triggers with understanding instead of intense emotion. Calmness is thus mostly reactive and relational, related to something and rarely alone, which is confirmed in the following sequence.

Jakob Janisch initially desires calmness to everything. However, this category, which first seems all-encompassing and unspecific on the manifest level, very much implies limitations on the subjective level. When he says "everything", he means everything *relevant* to him. Against this assumption's background, there follows a list of living dimensions, which Jakob subjectively considers important. However, the sequence "I think" is remarkable here, which can be read as a cautious formulation in which Jakob Janisch implicitly expresses his subjectivity. So far, there is little demand for the desire for more calmness in his life, but this attitude changes during the narration, which is already apparent in the following sequence. Jakob repeats the wish literally but abandons the "I think." Slowly it becomes visible how the desire gains weight during the narration. Simultaneously, the text segment provides information on a latent level that Jakob experiences a lack of understanding in several life dimensions.

Three aspects follow, which are assigned to "life itself" and thus to Jakob's biography and his entire living context. First, he mentions work, which seems interesting considering his unemployment. This circumstance suggests the hypothesis that Jakob wishes for a calm handling of the topic of work, i.e., his unemployment. On a latent level, the symbolic significance of employment for one's position in the social order is implicitly addressed here, which thus raises the issue of the social status of Jakob Janisch. According to my interpretation, the desire for an understanding, relaxed handling of this unemployment, and his social position resulting from his unemployment become apparent here.

The next dimension concerns the identity of Jakob. The formulation indicates that he is solid in his self-image and would like to have this mirrored by the external perception. Subsequently, another dimension of Jakob Janisch's self-image becomes clear, as he sees himself as *capable*. He also wishes to experience calmness concerning this aspect of his self-perception, his abilities. But in the following summary, Jakob changes his wording, and instead of calmness, he now speaks of acceptance. The introduction with "just" suggests modesty and implies an effort to be perceived as reasonable in the formulation of his wishes; this is a dominant interpretive pattern reproduced in the rest of the text segment. The narrative now changes from a carefully formulated desire to an attitude of entitlement, in which Jakob strives to convey that he does not wish for anything impossible - simply acceptance. Like serenity, acceptance is also a relational concept, which implies the absence of a positive or negative reaction. Acceptance becomes a relevant category when an external evaluation of a deviation from societal or personal normality occurs. For the present context, this means that there are deviations in certain areas of Jakob Janisch's life that have been reacted to with a lack of acceptance.

Now, there occurs a reflexive expansion of the wish. Because "actually", i.e., when Jakob thinks about it, he wants a neutral and appreciative company. The contribution he makes through his abilities should be recognized and honoured. In the final wish's justification, which is formulated more as a claim, the mentioned effort to be perceived as reasonable is reflected. From this intention, the hypothesis can be derived that the formulation of a reasonable demand becomes necessary because it enables drawing to an already existing, normative framework, which serves as the legitimate basis of a claim. In this case, Jakob Janisch refers to what is "true" because truth must be taken seriously and considered in the logic of an enlightened, rational society. Since he finds that his abilities (and personality) are valuable, this corresponds to the truth for him, and the desire arises for this subjective truth to be recognized.

In summary, the passage documents the reflexive process from a wish to claim reconstructed step by step in the narration. An initially cautiously formulated desire for understanding develops into a need for acceptance and is finally expressed as a claim for recognition and appreciation. The areas in which

the interviewee experiences a lack of appreciation are his performance (skills), his identity (biography), and his social position (work).

Jakob Janisch's subjective perception of injustice in terms of his unemployment is strongly characterised by a violation of his claim for recognising his specific mental health situation and thus his subjectivity. He experiences a contradiction between his need for recognition of his subjectivity and the working world's normative conditions, which give him no space for expressing the complexity of his biography and life reality. He makes a claim to a self-determined presentation of his own life, maintaining the interpretative authority over his life, which can be read as an entitlement to autonomy. In the context of the hierarchically structured employment service, he experiences this loss of interpretative power over his position (being ascribed to the subordinate role of a "small child") as a structural humiliation. Losing agency in the situation (inability to speak) and being deprived of recognition and respect (being the victim of a joke) are subjectively perceived as injustice because these actions seem to be enabled by the prevailing structures of the employment social system service, therefore, seem legitimised. Thus, in a more generalised sense, Jakob's experience points to the fact that it is the *institutionalised legitimation* of one's deprivation of recognition, which makes experiences of humiliation and degradation turn into experiences of injustice. While the first two analysed text segments document substantial violations against Jakob's logic of entitlement, the wish for more understanding company in his life he is expressing does not seem to be connected to a normative framework. However, in a reflexive process during the narration, Jakob Janisch reframes the character of his wish by pointing out that he "just" wants something *reasonable*. This reference makes the desire seem normatively legitimate. It could be demonstrated that what is first formulated as a cautiously expressed wish for understanding shifts to a need for acceptance during the narration and finally takes on the character of a claim for recognition and appreciation.

6.4. Birgitta Blomberg: the right to receive recognition for her precarious financial situation

Birgitta Blomberg is in her fifties and lives with her 25-year-old daughter in an apartment in central Stockholm. After graduating from high school in a small town outside of Stockholm, she moved to the capital and worked temporarily in different schools before starting an education to become a teacher. Birgitta emphasises that it was tough to get into the teaching programme at the university back then because being a teacher was still considered a job with high status. Conversely, today, she feels there is no respect for the profession anymore. After graduating from university in 1985, Birgitta started teaching in different middle schools until the early nineteen nineties, when the Swedish educational system became partly privatised. The subsequent financial cutbacks, leading to less social security, lower wages and changes in the curriculum, had a significant negative influence on Birgitta's professional experience. She started working in specialised schools, teaching children with disabilities and Swedish as a foreign language, but, in her words, it was simply not "fun" any more to work as a teacher due to the systemic changes. After her daughter was born in 1995, they moved together to Spain, where she worked, among other things, as a pedagogue in the Swedish school or as a Spanish tutor to children from Swedish families. They lived in Spain for about five years before moving back to Stockholm. Being in Sweden again, she did not want to continue working as a teacher and could not accept a full-time job due to care-responsibilities for her daughter, whom she raised alone. Under these circumstances, she experienced it as "impossible" to find a job. Since then, phases of unemployment alternated with smaller, casual jobs involving, for instance, administrative activities in a cleaning firm or event catering.

Birgitta Blomberg is heavily criticising the political and societal changes in Sweden during the last decades. While in the time when she grew up in the nineteen sixties and seventies, the Swedish government was striving for social justice and equality of chances, today, Swedish society is marked by what she identifies as enormous social inequalities. From her perspective, migration has influenced the situation negatively as well. Multiple times in the interview, Birgitta emphasises her and her daughter's countless unsuccessful attempts to find a job. Regardless of what she feels politicians are trying to convey, equality of chances does not exist in Swedish society. According to her, you need to have money and contacts to survive, especially in Stockholm. The fact that she and her daughter do not know the "right" people is identified as the main reason why neither of them can find a job. Birgitta perceives this as a great injustice.

Due to her long-term unemployment, she had been in contact with the Swedish social system a lot, criticising it heavily for the way it is working today. In the following text segment, Birgitta Blomberg addresses one of these subjectively perceived dysfunctionalities of the social system. She says:

„If I get a-kassa²⁶ and work extra then I got to subtract the a-kassa (/) then I got to subtract this extra money that I worked for so it doesn't pay off to work extra so then you got to work undeclared in order to pay the rent" (BB, TS1a)

In this interview segment, Birgitta describes a scenario in which she has a job in addition to receiving unemployment benefits (a-kassa). As a result, the additional employment's income is subtracted from her social security benefit. Therefore, it is not worth it to work "extra"; nevertheless, going without the additional income does not seem to be an option for her either. The only possibility left for her to cover her basic needs, such as rent, is undeclared work. Thus, the ambivalence of the situation Birgitta finds herself in, becomes quite clear on the manifest level of meaning and could be further differentiated by the in-depth analysis at the latent level.

The initial scenario described is characterized by an alleged contradiction since Birgitta states that she is unemployed and employed at the same time. Two hypotheses could be derived from this circumstance. On the one hand, she obviously cannot afford to be only unemployed since the amount of "a-kassa" is too low for that. But at the same time, the salary of the paid employment she can perform is also insufficient. Combining the two income sources seems to be prohibited by the social system's rules, which Birgitta feels compelled to follow ("I got to"). After it first looks as if the social benefits must be deducted ("I got to subtract the a-kassa "), she breaks off the sentence midway, and the content takes a different direction. Not the unemployment benefits, but the money she has worked for ("I got to subtract this extra money that I worked for ") must be subtracted. It becomes visible that her work performance is systematically not recognized due to the system logic in which she is embedded, and therefore seems not worthwhile ("doesn't pay off") in her eyes. This systemic lack of recognition of their performance can be interpreted as an experience of injustice.

In addition, it was possible to reconstruct several constraints on Birgitta's agency that reinforce the ambivalence of her situation. On the one hand, there are the social system's constraints to which Birgitta is subjected because she is registered as unemployed. These rules prevent her from taking the "extra job" option. At the same time, the housing market's financial constraints have an effect on her, to which she must subordinate herself to cover the basic need of housing. However, state support alone is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the housing market, i.e., paying her rent. Birgitta, therefore, experiences these two system logics (social system and housing market system) as highly conflicting. This conflict becomes even more severe since the structures surrounding her leave her with only one option for action, which would mean both a violation of norms and a violation of the law: undeclared employment, which is usually precarious and poorly socially secured due to its

²⁶ The unemployment benefit in Sweden is called a-kassa, as explained in chapter 3.3.3..

illegality. All in all, Birgitta has the disturbing impression that there are no structures in place to enable her to act "correctly," i.e., under the rules. She thus finds herself in a tense situation between the functioning of the different systems in which she is embedded. Because of the series of contradictions, a profound *dysfunctionality of social structures* is experienced here.

The following text segment presents the direct continuation of the passage from above and shows the system's proposed solution to the conflictual situation in which Birgitta Blomberg finds herself. Again, the mentioned pattern of contradictory structures can be found since acting in line with the proposed solution seems impossible. Birgitta knows that the alternative presented to her cannot be taken due to how the system works. She describes this as follows:

"And the only thing they say is that you may seek for social aid²⁷ and with that, they mean that you should go to the social authorities and say that I need money. And we don't get that as you know. None of us gets that because we (/) we own maybe a car (/), or you cannot own a car you cannot own anything. And you cannot have had a normal income sooner during the year. Did you have a (/) I am not able to tell any exact numbers, but they don't look at what you have now. You get nothing. It's only the ones on the street who get something, and we others get nothing" (BB, TS1b)

As the only potential solution to the financial hardship in which Birgitta Blomberg finds herself (see previous text passage), it is suggested that she apply to the responsible authority for social assistance. However, she anticipates that this application would be rejected because she does not meet the formal requirements. According to her, these requirements consist of neither owning property nor exceeding a certain income limit. Unlike what she supposedly regards as homeless people ("the ones on the street"), Birgitta herself receives "nothing at all".

On a latent level, this somewhat more extended text passage contains a series of meanings that refer to an experienced *systematically unfair treatment* of Birgitta Blomberg and the entire group to which she feels she belongs. By analysing the characteristics of this group, she creates ("we"), it was possible to reconstruct both subjectively experienced conditions and functioning of the social system, as well as indications of the identity of Birgitta and her sense of entitlement. Both her identity and her sense of entitlement point to her perceived position in the social order. Dominant contexts of meaning and interpretative patterns that this hypothesis is based on are explored in the following.

At the beginning of the passage, Birgitta describes that applying for social assistance would imply two successive actions for her: going to the authorities and asking for money. While the first step is still expressed in the generalised form ("you"), the subject changes in the second step. Regarding the act

²⁷ Birgitta Blomberg refers to the social assistance benefits consisting of subsistence allowance and financial support, described in more detail in chapter 3.3.3..

of asking for money, Birgitta refers to herself ("I"). According to my interpretation, this change of perspective's background is the specific effect that the request for social assistance would have for her, making an individual rather than a general formulation necessary. However, when the reaction to the request is described, a third change of perspective occurs, from which the entire rest of the narrative is described. Instead of speaking of herself, Birgitta now constructs a *group* to which she belongs: "we don't get that". This rejection has already been expected, indicated by the following formulation "as you know"²⁸. In that way, she linguistically confirms her expectation and thus reproduces the normative idea that her group members do not receive social assistance. Recognising this structural dimension allows Birgitta to extend her own experience to an entire group. Possibly, she knows other, similar cases and thus identifies a pattern. By referring to the collective experience, Birgitta can legitimise her perspective and ascribe more significant weight to her experience.

Based on the characteristics of the group she is creating, it was possible to identify revealing contexts of meaning and relevant interpretative patterns of Birgitta Blomberg. It can be assumed that Birgitta chose characteristics that she views as relevant and applicable for the group definition. On the one hand, the common group-characteristics are (1) the shared experience of the refusal of social assistance and the accompanying partial exclusion from the social system and, on the other hand, (2) specific shared, ascribed attributes. Since these properties are, according to Birgitta, the cause of exclusion, they simultaneously reflect the conditions for receiving social assistance. From her perspective, eligible persons are not allowed to own property (the ownership of a car is given as an example) and are not allowed to have a "normal" income. The latter condition is linked to the normative notion of the regular employment relationship, although it remains somewhat unclear whether Birgitta is merely reflecting system's norm or whether she has internalised this norm herself.

In the social system's logic, the two categories of property and income symbolise an economically secure life that does not require financial support. Based on this logic, there is a systemic exclusion of people who end up in financial precarity despite formally fulfilling the above criteria. Birgitta finds herself in such a situation. From her perspective, her individual life situation is not structurally taken into account. This lack of recognition can be interpreted as an experience of injustice and is subsequently reproduced when she says, "they don't look at what you have now". In other words, Birgitta feels that the social system does not take changes in the financial situation of citizens into account and therefore does not allow people to be seen in their current living realities.

²⁸ In the original quote, Birgitta Blomberg uses the colloquial Swedish expression "ju", which is somewhat difficult to translate since there is no English equivalent. "Ju" is often used in everyday language to indicate that something is perceived as widely known, typical or expected (similar to the German "ja").

However, the group characteristics not only provide information about the subjectively experienced preconditions of the social system but also reflect the identity and affiliation of Birgitta Blomberg. Owning a car and doing "normal" work can be interpreted as traditional characteristics of the middle class, and are thus regarded as meaningful variables of the social group to which Birgitta counts herself. Seemingly, she feels that she belongs to the middle class, showing a certain class consciousness, which is expressed in particular by the demarcation from other, poorer classes in the following text sequence: "those who are on the street." Since she is herself in a financially precarious situation and therefore runs the risk of being classified in the same group as "those on the street", a clear demarcation becomes necessary; this generalising and somewhat pejorative formulation reflects an undifferentiated perception of homelessness and reproduces poverty stereotypes.

From Birgitta's point of view, only these supposed extreme poverty cases are eligible for social assistance. She, on the other hand, receives "nothing at all," which she perceives as discrimination from her position as a self-identified member of the middle class. It is unclear to her why her financial needs are not recognised, while individuals who she subjectively perceives as lower down in the social order receive help. Like others in her group, Birgitta also performed work in a standard employment relationship and earned property (owns a car), entirely in the sense of a socially desirable life plan of the capitalist society. But these achievements led neither to the promised social status nor to financial security. Nevertheless, Birgitta finds herself in a precarious, needy position. However, the social system, is built on a logic in which property and regular income embody stability and financial independence, which is why Birgitta's class characteristics now paradoxically lead to welfare-state exclusion and rob her of her entitlement to receive support. Thus, Birgitta experiences the welfare state mechanism as a violation of her subjective logic of entitlement, which she developed in the course of her biography in her specific social position.

In summary, Birgitta Blomberg experiences a lack of structural recognition on two levels. On the one hand, she feels that her current financially precarious situation is not adequately recognized by the social system, while on the other hand, she experiences a lack of systemic recognition as part of the social class she subjectively belongs to. This two-dimensional lack of recognition (both on the level of her living reality and regarding her class entitlements) can be interpreted as an experience of injustice. In addition to that, the feeling of being systemically mistreated is reinforced by the notion of discrimination that she experiences towards social groups that seem subordinate to her class in the social order.

The following text segment chosen for the analyses captures the fundamental lack of understanding Birgitta Blomberg has for her unemployment. Moreover, the passage documents a severe insult of her

dignity caused by the social system. In the course of an “activation” measure²⁹ of the employment service, Birgitta attends training that should help her to re-integrate into the labour market. She describes the following:

„Then you should sit with a damn thirty-year-old and being job coach for me and tell what I should do. I mean do you understand it is so damn sick. I have (/) I have an amazing education and all the people that know me they say but why don't you work with this why don't you work with that?“ (BB, TS2)

The text protocol expresses Birgitta's heavy resentment about the fact that she is obligated to see a job coach who is younger than she is and gives her orders on what to do. She perceives this pattern as "sick", or in other words outrageous, subsequently justifying her judgment by presenting her self-image. In her eyes, she has an excellent education and signals that it is unclear to people in her environment *why* she does not have a job. This passage's central element is Birgitta Blomberg's clearly expressed criticism of the role she finds herself in. The cause of this role conflict is the social system's demands, which lead to a threefold violation of her normative conceptions. After these normative violations are reconstructed, Birgitta's criticism and subsequent pattern of justification are analysed in more detail.

In the beginning, Birgitta describes how she is confronted with an instruction to act, which she expresses with the word "should". The wording suggests that she is embedded in a system whose rules impose a certain constraint on her, leaving her with no alternative actions. First, the instruction consists of being in a certain place ("to sit"), followed by a reference to the person's age who is also in that place. Birgitta frames the age statement with the highly pejorative term "damn." Relative to her age, it seems that she experiences that of her counterpart as something negative, condemnable. While exploring possible reasons for this pattern, it becomes clear that the social dimension of age often includes an ascribed measure of life experience, and in the present context, especially of experience in the labour market. This advantage in experience often forms the basis for age hierarchies, which constitute a relevant interpretive pattern for Birgitta Blomberg.

Beyond age, the person Birgitta is referring to has a specific role. His or her function as a job trainer ("job coach") implies a certain distribution of roles characterised by a hierarchy of knowledge. In this interaction pattern, Birgitta finds herself in the subordinate position of the person to whom knowledge about the labour market is passed on. The assumption underlying this pattern is that she does not have this specialised knowledge and lacks the skills necessary for the labour market. Thus, Birgitta's role in

²⁹ At this point, Birgitta's situation reflects current labour market policies towards “activating” individuals who are unemployed (e.g. Daly, 2011, p. 3; Klenner et al., 2012, p. 214), which have been characterised in chapter 3.3.1..

the present situation is in strong contrast to her self-perception. This circumstance that external attribution and self-perception are far apart from each other is expressed by emphasising her role in her narration ("me"). The job trainer also gives instructions on what to do and thus actively performs the superiority of their role. By doing this, the inferiority of Birgitta's role becomes particularly noticeable for herself.

She then moves on to what could be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim some agency and self-definition of her role, which she lost in the experienced situation. By judging the whole interactional pattern as "sick", she evaluates it as clearly negative. In a social context, where health is the norm, the complementary category of illness appears undesirable and deviant. Birgitta's critique addresses the entire structure of action and implicitly the social system that prescribes these structures. It becomes evident that by judging the social system's mechanisms as "sick", she experiences them as deviant from her norms. The subjectively experienced dysfunctionality of the system degrades her into a role in which she does not recognize herself. This kind of *structural estrangement* is experienced as highly irritating and makes her angry, which is why Birgitta, once again, draws to the curse "damn".

Furthermore, based on her clear and self-confident appearing positioning, a reference to Birgitta's sense of entitlement could be reconstructed. She assumes the interviewer shares her negative perception of the scenario at hand, and thus by an outside perspective. This hypothesis stems from the assumption that otherwise, she would not feel legitimized in expressing her position that strongly (see the curses). At the same time, she does not seem entirely sure of this shared assessment, which is expressed by the question "do you understand?". According to my analysis, only her latent assumption that her normative conceptions are also valid on a broader, external or even societal level makes it possible to express her resentment with this high degree of entitlement. This interpretation enables Birgitta to refer her criticism to a normative framework.

Now that she has strongly criticised what happened to her, Birgitta Blomberg feels compelled to justify her judgment. Therefore, she proceeds to position herself in contrast to her role. This positioning is necessary because it is only through the construction of the differences in the role's images that the judgment as "sick" becomes understandable.

First, she describes herself as very well educated, which is fundamentally contradictory to the educational training she has to attend and her unemployment in general. Then she expands the justification pattern and states that significant others also share her self-perception. These are said to be united in their perception, marked by the phrase "all". Presumably, she refers to people from her immediate environment who become significant because they "know" her. Therefore, these informed people's perception is given a weight. Here, "know" implies a reference to empirical observation and

the recognition of truth. In this case, the knowledge in question is about Birgitta herself, including her biography, abilities, and personality traits. Thus, Birgitta seems to be speaking of people who recognise her as she sees herself, making it clear that "to know" also means recognising. Implicitly, she thus constructs a contrast to others who do not know - and remember - her. Because of their ignorance, these others ascribe a role to her that she subjectively perceives as false because it denies her recognition of her identity. The questions raised by these significant others at the end of the text passage signal a lack of understanding about why Birgitta is unemployed. Their perception is taken up by Birgitta to support her argument, which is that she perceives it as unjustified to be unemployed and hence not legitimate to be forced to see a job coach. This subjective perception is confirmed by the assessment of informed others and thus legitimised by their observation.

Finally, to complement the analysis of Birgitta Blomberg's subjective logic of entitlement and perceptions of injustice, a short section of the interview was interpreted, which addresses a wish that she has. The following represents the answer to what Birgitta would wish for in terms of her future. After she first takes up the wording of the question again and gives herself a short pause for reflection, she expresses a wish for health in the following way:

„For my future (-) oh (--) well it's probably that I will get to be healthy, I think. That's probably most important for me. Get to be healthy so that I (---) manage (--) yeah but that's probably the very most important yes" (BB, TS3)

For about three seconds, Birgitta Blomberg considers what purpose health has for her before finally stating that she needs to be healthy to "manage." However, she does not give a more detailed explanation of what she means by managing, as she breaks off the sentence after a two-second pause and concludes by repeating the subjective meaning of health for her.

Answering the question about the wish for the future does not seem easy for Birgitta, which is suggested both by the pauses in the first sequences and by the sighing sound "oh". She is possibly not used to thinking about her future in this way. Because of this, a routine recourse to already existing patterns of interpretation might seem more difficult. The wish for health conveyed afterwards is framed by the term "well", which implicitly describes the process of reflection that led to the formulation of the desire. Birgitta then shares that she has now given her answer plenty of thought and has mentally weighed up various options. Conversely, however, the statement seems significantly weaker and more cautious than without the "well" or the "probably". Thus, both consideration and caution are expressed in the formulation of her wish for health.

According to my analysis, this relatively short text passage's central interpretative pattern is the linguistic framing of health as a *privilege*, which is indicated by the phrase "get to be." To get to be, or

in other words, to be allowed to be healthy means to be given the permission by an unknown authority or higher power. Therefore, this leaves Birgitta in a position where she has no agency regarding her health. Nevertheless, health has the highest priority for her ("that's probably most important for me"), which is why her only remaining option is to address the desire for health to a higher power. By doing so, she makes herself dependent on an unknown agent, referring her wish to something over which she has no agency, according to her interpretation.

On a latent level, her positioning can be interpreted as humble or undemanding, which is also expressed in the cautious formulations "probably" and finally by the "I think". A synonym for modesty is undemandingness, while a possible motive for modesty can be social desirability. This tends to be valued positively in the social world and often signals politeness and cultural capital. The corresponding normative framework for the social desirability of modesty can be ethical or religious values. While the former is usually connected to an orientation towards immaterial values (as well as a conscious dissociation from material, capitalist values), it is a reverence before God that is fundamental for religious modesty. From a perspective of the social system, the internalization of modesty as a core value seems to take away any normative base for the formulation of entitlements and criticism. However, this also shows the necessity to formulate a wish in a certain, socially acceptable way. After Birgitta describes health as the most important area in her life, a justification for this high prioritization is given. In her eyes, health fulfils a certain function. It is seen as a coping strategy and serves to physically and mentally cope ("manage") with daily life. The case of Birgitta Blomberg thus demonstrates how in a system in which its members depend on physical and psychological functioning, health becomes a necessary means. This interpretation points to a functionalist understanding of health. Birgitta Blomberg finds herself dependent on her health, which gives reason for her high prioritization, repeated and emphasized again at the end of the quote.

Generally, Birgitta does not seem to ascribe any form of entitlement to herself in being healthy, which is striking, considering that health has the highest priority for her. Because she does not have any agency over staying healthy, she has no other choice than to refer the wish to a higher force. Her cautious wording suggests that it is necessary to formulate a desire in a humble, modest way for it to be legitimate. In summary, while it is not possible to demand health, due to its uncontrollability, the only option remaining, namely wishing for it, is also restricted by certain social constraints.

In contrast to the careful tone, Birgitta Blomberg applies for formulating her wish for health, her experiences regarding her situation as being long-term unemployed are expressed in a furious, outraged way. She finds herself in a situation, created by the social system, which she experiences as highly contradictory. First, multiple contradictions regarding her normative ideas occur, which result in a perceived degradation of her as a person. In a process that can be interpreted as a form of *structural estrangement*, Birgitta experiences a loss of power to define her role. She experiences a fundamentally different treatment to how she expects to be treated according to her self-image. Because of her self-perception as well-educated, she feels that the role she now finds herself in is unjustified. In addition to this strong notion of injustice, a moment of incomprehension is evident. For Birgitta, it makes no sense that she is unemployed because she has a good education. This interpretative pattern is confirmed and thus legitimized by the perception of people from her environment. In addition to the unfair treatment she experiences, Birgitta Blomberg finds herself in a crisis of her subjective sense and therefore in a highly unsettling situation. She also experiences a serious, structural lack of recognition regarding her financially precarious situation and the entitlements of her social class. While comparing herself to other social groups, she feels that her misery is less worth than others'. This feeling is a strong violation of her subjective notions of entitlement, given the identity characteristics she developed in her biography. The fact that other groups, which, from her perspective, are lower down in the social order than she is, receive assistance, while she is left feeling empty-handed, is perceived as a violation of her logic of entitlement and thus as unjust.

6.5. Linda Landgren: the right to have “small considerations” about the future

Linda Landgren is in her early fifties and lives with her sixteen-year-old daughter and two dogs in an apartment in Stockholm's outskirts. Besides her daughter, she has a 35-year-old son and divorced her husband about a year before the interview. Linda is on long term sick leave because she suffers from heavy rheumatism and arthrosis, which forces her to take pain killers daily. She has a professional education as a gardener, a job she still is passionate about, but has not been able to work for the last one and a half years. Experiencing her body as an obstacle, she emphasises that she would like to work outside in the nature again, but her physical condition does not allow it. Besides gardening, Linda's passion is singing, which enables her to earn a little money on the side by performing at small events. Additionally, she works at restaurants from time to time, but her financial situation is still very precarious. She lost her last job one and a half years ago because she frequently had to call in sick due to the heavy physical abuse her ex-husband exposed her to. Shortly after she was terminated from her job, they got a divorce. Linda describes this period as the most difficult time in her life, both mentally and financially. Due to miscommunication of the social authorities, she did not receive any financial support for over four months and therefore had to borrow money from friends. According to Linda, she was “a total mess” back then. With yoga and meditation, she slowly managed to build her self-worth and self-confidence up again.

In Linda's opinion, Sweden's social system is not as great as everyone always seems to think. Even though she is still happy to live here, she feels that Swedish society and politics have developed negatively, referring mainly to her diagnosis that Sweden “took in too many migrants”. Drawing to her experience working with unaccompanied underage refugees from Afghanistan, she argues that many of them take advantage of the Swedish social authorities. Against this background, she criticises that Swedish politics fail to take care of “their own” before handling “foreigners' problems”. Besides these grievances she identifies in politics and society in general, Linda has made multiple negative experiences with the social system and the social authorities in Sweden. Throughout the interview, she emphasises her wish to start working again. However, she perceives her body as an obstacle for doing that and also feels that the multiple rules and regulations of the social system are standing in her way. Subjectively seeing herself as being at the mercy of the authorities, she feels trapped between the restrictions and guidelines of the insurance company and the employment service.

In the first passage that was chosen for the analysis, Linda describes the far-reaching consequences of a formal mistake that she made according to the social system's logic. These effects are accompanied by several, successive experiences of injustice, which could be reconstructed on a latent level and are presented below. Linda expresses the following:

"When I started were you allowed to work extra without reporting it. You were allowed to work nights but then in the middle of everything you were not allowed to anymore. The rules were changed, and I missed filling it in (---). It was a matter of twenty days altogether (--) therefore I got cut off for seven months [7 second pause]. So of course, I like didn't have any other choice. They were simply forced to sell. And this is the money I live on now." (LL, TS1)

The narration is divided into three different phases on the manifest level, marked by Linda's pauses. First, she describes the initial situation and refers to a past point in time when the beginning of something was, that is however not detailed any further. It was allowed to perform "extra" work during the night, meaning receiving unemployment benefits, without reporting the "extra" work. However, this rule was abruptly changed, which led to Linda working undeclared for twenty days. The consequences of this omission were severe: for seven months she stopped receiving financial support. After a seven second speaking pause, she sums up having had no other choice. "They" had been forced to sell their vacation home³⁰, adding in conclusion that she currently lives off the money from this sale.

When the narration begins, Linda Landgren was unemployed and "allowed" to work part-time at night to earn additional income. On a latent level, the wording "was allowed" suggests that this rule in the social system appeared to Linda as a certain degree of freedom. The characteristics of this supposed freedom of action, namely, to be able to work within a certain framework without notification, implicitly refers to the prevailing logic of entitlement of the social system. This logic consists of being informed about certain activities subordinate to the system and exerting power on them and structuring their actions. However, there is a withdrawal of this suggested piece of freedom of action, whereby it is particularly remarkable how Linda characterises this process: abruptly, thus surprisingly and without warning. This formulation is a crucial element of the narration, since Linda builds a justification pattern.

"In the middle of everything", i.e. while the previous rule was still valid from her subjective perspective, there was a surprising systemic shift, which made it impossible for her to immediately adapt to the changed conditions. An institution or an actor who changed the rules is unclear, and appears in the formulation as an unknown, abstract role that does not seem tangible or nameable. However, her role is emphasised in the scenario: "I missed filling it in" which conveys that Linda herself failed to report her work. While on the one hand, the formulation implicitly refers to her fault, the expression "missed" emphasises that the violation of the rules was not intentional or deliberate. Against this background, the hypothesis arises that Linda is being held responsible for her mistake, while simultaneously, does

³⁰ In this passage, Linda refers to the sale of her countryside vacation home, which she addresses in more detail at another point in the interview.

not blame herself. Instead, she refers to the abruptly changing circumstances that made it impossible for her to abide by the rules.

Now that the initial situation has been described, Linda Landgren presents the drastic consequences of her mistake and switches to a reflexive description. Here, the numbers that she mentions become especially meaningful. By contrasting the period, she worked without reporting it (twenty days) and the time she was excluded from social benefits because of it (seven months), she relates the two quantities to each other in the narration. The central question is how she assesses the relationship between these two figures. Due to my reading, Linda's motive in comparing the two figures is to implicitly point out their disproportionality and thus the disproportionality of the consequences she is facing. The period during which her financial support was withdrawn seems to her to be unproportionally long compared to the period during which she worked undeclared.

This interpretation is supported by the seven-second-long interruption of the narration, which occurs next. Although a longer pause in speech like this could have different meanings and backgrounds, such as reflections on continuing the narration, it seems obvious in the present context that it is a rhetorical pause. In this case, the motive would be to give the other person in the conversation an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the two figures mentioned to finally come to the same assessment as Linda did. At the same time, however, it also seems plausible that the experience of "being cut off" evoked a strong memory, which demanded her to take a longer pause in her narration to process her emotions. The formulation "being cut off" furthermore suggests that Linda herself has no agency over what happens to her. Because of her mistake, the money flow was stopped by a powerful, external actor. This proved to have drastic effects on different aspects of her life, as the further course of the narration shows.

In the last part of the interview segment, Linda describes the further effects of the withdrawal from financial support on her. Her far-reaching violation of the social system's rules put her in a situation that she perceived as having "no other choice". This subjective perception of alternative lessness is framed linguistically due to objective conditions, which is expressed by the phrase "of course". By drawing to this normalising formulation ("of course"), Linda's situation, i.e. the compulsion to act in a certain way due to the lack of alternative options, is presented as externally determined and self-evident. This normative framing of her alternative lessness thus makes it possible to justify the loss of her agency. However, there is an interesting change of the subject from "I" to an anonymous "they". While Linda herself had no other choice, "they", the others, were forced to sell her house. This change of subject linguistically illustrates how the financial distress of Linda Landgren led to an external intervention on her private property and thus to a serious loss of autonomy. Moreover, Linda expresses

this external intervention as a coercion ("they were forced to sell"), which shows that the sale resulted from a systemic necessity, exactly as in the case of the money withdrawal.

The last sequence of this passage provides information about the purpose of selling the house from the social system's perspective. Since no other financial means are made available, the only option left in the system's logic is to sell the private property of the respective person to provide for their livelihood. Even if Linda does not criticise this as unfair clearly, it is nevertheless a violation of the common, bourgeois idea of the right to own private property. In summary, the violation of the rules, which Linda regards as having committed through no fault of her own, ultimately led to her being deprived of her private property and her autonomy.

In summary, the overall text passage documents a step-by-step series of injustice experiences. The first experience of injustice is that Linda is held responsible for a breaking the rules, which, from her point of view, she committed unintentionally, and therefore does not ascribe any guilt to herself. Second, she sees the consequence of this breach of the rules as unjust, as she assesses the extent of the financial restrictions as disproportionate. And finally, the third experienced injustice arises from the financial distress resulting from the original rule violation and consists of a loss of self-determination and autonomy over her private property.

Despite these multiple experiences of injustice, which could be reconstructed on a latent level, little clear criticism is expressed on a manifest level. In a way, Linda Landgren describes personally experienced injustices without denouncing them as strong violations of her entitlement logic. This pattern's cause lies in the role ascribed to Linda by the social system in the scenario described. Obviously, due to the system's rules, Linda has not been treated unfairly since she has broken the rules and must bear the responsibility for the (far-reaching) consequences. A normative frame of reference to which claims and injustice could be addressed is missing, making it more difficult to denounce individually experienced injustice. However, this lack of available normative patterns that injustice could be referred to, does not change the fact that entitlement violations are experienced subjectively.

Regarding her wishes and visions for the future, Linda Landgren talks about her dream of working as a gardener in Spain when she retires. A few lines later she describes her general attitude towards wishes and plans for the future as follows:

"You have these small considerations about what you want to do (--). Who knows maybe one day they will come true (---). You must have something to look forward to like these small goals. Even if they are not directly so that you can get a hold on them now, but you maybe can take small steps forward" (LL, TS2)

This paragraph from the interview transcript shows which strategy Linda has adapted regarding the formulating of her wishes and an appropriate way of dealing with them. Three aspects of wishes could be reconstructed based on the text segment. While the first sequence contains information about *how* a wish arises and is subsequently formulated, the next sequence, after the first pause, addresses the question of *who* ensures that the wish is put into practice. In the longer sequence at the end, a *justification* pattern for Linda's wish-strategy could be reconstructed. Overall, the text passage contains interpretative patterns of Linda Landgren regarding the emergence, realisation and justification of wishes, which will now be explored in more detail.

On a latent level, the opening sequence already gives a central indication of Linda's subjective basic understanding of what a wish for the future is. She refers to what she wants to do, i.e. to a wish for the future, as "small considerations". A consideration involves a reflective weighing of different scenarios and alternatives to finally arrive at a realistic option. This process requires awareness of possible obstacles and limitations that could stand in the way of realising an option. Considerations are thus the reflexive basis for a future perspective that subjectively appears to be realistic. So, instead of a free and unlimited formulation when thinking about what she would like to do in her future, Linda already considers possible limitations and restrictions to formulate realistic and at the same time humble, "small considerations".

The characterisation of the considerations as "small" reinforces the impression that it seems important to Linda not to express wild fantasies, but to present realistic and appropriate interpretations. What seems appropriate in this context depends on various factors. On the one hand, it depends on what Linda feels she is entitled to due to her position in the social order, i.e. on what she can legitimately expect. In addition to these claims, reasonable wishes also depend on objective, structural limitations that represent obstacles. Such "objective" obstacles could be physical abilities and health restrictions or financial limitations. Finally, the formulation of a wish is influenced by the interview's social situation. Linda expresses what seems to be socially desirable in the situation and therefore positions herself in a reflected, modest way by formulating her "small considerations". She shows that she is aware of her social position, both in terms of legitimate expectations and objective limitations and formulates her ideas about the future accordingly. This demonstrates that various influence factors shape a wish's formulation.

With the words "who knows" in the next sequence, it becomes clear that Linda has no certainty over *who* realises her ideas or *when* they will become true. It seems to depend on unpredictable external circumstances whether the reflections "might" come to pass at an unspecified point in time. Linda thus positions herself as patiently waiting for the luck to come by itself, instead of emphasising her active role in pursuing her goals. However, this narrative is shifting in the further course of the text. All in all,

this sequence conveys a lot of uncertainty about the realisation of future perspectives, since it is neither clear when the wish will come true nor who will implement it. However, and this is the crucial point: the *possibility* of realisation only exists if the future wishes are formulated *realistically and modestly*. According to this interpretation, a certain strategy is pursued to formulate a realistic future perspective. This strategy consists of two elements. First, formulating a wish reflectively and realistically, to increase the chances for it to become true and decrease the possibility of disappointment. And second, formulating a wish in a modest, humble way ("small"), to meet the socially appropriate claims, that can legitimately be expected from a certain position in the social order. These two hypotheses regarding a *strategic wish for the future* could be strengthened in the further analysis.

In the end, Linda refers to a certain regularity with the words "you must". Having a realistic plan for the future serves a certain purpose. This purpose then becomes clear: looking forward to something, i.e. have a positive anticipation of the future. Apparently, by formulating a certain future scenario, it becomes possible to consciously create a positive state of mind. However, for the anticipation not to be disappointed, a strategy of "small steps" must be used to remain in control. In this way, a self-determined, processual realisation of a wish becomes possible. The reason, why developing a wish strategy like that becomes necessary in the first place, only becomes understandable if the individual is seen in the social context. While on a societal level, it is widely suggested that everything is possible and that everyone can hence wish for anything (see the postulate of equal opportunities), Linda is at the same time subjectively aware of the obstacles that limit her prospects. The strategy of "small steps" towards "small considerations" thus embodies a compromise between post-modern ideas of "unlimited possibilities" on a normative level and structural limitations and restrictions that have been experienced and therefore internalised in the course of her biography on a subjective level.

The interpretation of Linda Landgren's case demonstrated that the formulation of claims and wishes, thus the expression of injustice, depends on various structural factors. First, it could be shown that Linda experienced multiple injustices regarding her autonomy and the right to be treated fairly and appropriately. The unproportionally high consequences of a rule-violation she did not even do on purpose, are perceived as unjust. However, despite Linda experienced these injustices on a latent level, her possibilities to express her criticism clearly and openly are limited. There is no normative framework available that injustice experiences could be referred to, because from the logic of the social system, there was no injustice. This lack of normative, interpretative patterns makes it more difficult to denounce subjectively experienced injustice. Similarly, Linda's case showed that specific social conditions restrict the formulation of wishes. Linda is planning her ideas for the future so that (1) the chances of their realisation are as great as possible (realistic formulation), and (2) a normative basis for the wish can be maintained (humble formulation). To retain control and not be fully at the mercy of fate, coincidence or a higher power, wishes are formulated in the form of *reflexive considerations* pursued in a process-like manner employing the strategy of "small steps". Most importantly, this strategy serves to prevent disappointment. Linda knows from her biographical experience that the often-suggested endless possibilities of modern society are not available to everyone, and therefore her possibilities for realising her wishes are limited. Does Linda think she is entitled to fulfil her vision of the future? To an extent yes, because a *modest attitude of entitlement* accompanies the formulation of a realistic future perspective. According to this attitude, there is only a right to realising wishes and plans if they are formulated modestly and realistically and correspond to what is perceived as socially and subjectively appropriate. Only under these conditions, there is a moral and normative right that the constructed anticipation will come true.

7. Conclusion

The theoretical starting point for *understanding* conceptions and experiences of injustice was that justice is a social construct inherently connected to the individuals' perspective (Kazemi & Törnblom, 2008). It is assumed that conceptions of justice are both related to collective justice principles and norms and to processes of self-constitution, which are developed in the biographical course and shape individual identities (Dubet, 2008; Hürtgen, 2014). Moreover, injustice experiences were framed to be expressed through everyday life grievances (Motakef et al., 2018). Finally, it was suggested that injustice could be experienced in all dimensions of life arrangements, whereas perceived grievances are only criticised as injustice in some of these dimensions (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef et al., 2018). Whether injustice can be expressed as a violation against a legitimate entitlement or only as an unfulfilled wish depends on the availability of justice norms in the respective dimension of life (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). The findings of single case reconstructions generally support these basic theoretical assumptions since all of them proved to be meaningful for understanding subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice.

Based on this thesis's theoretical starting points, the following three research questions were developed in the empirical process.

- Which grievances in different dimensions of life are expressed as unjust and why?
- How are justice claims formulated in contrast to wishes?
- What are the norms and notions of entitlement that experiences of injustice are based on?

These openly formulated questions guided the analysis without restricting the openness required by the methodological paradigm of interpretative research (Froschauer & Lueger, 2009). After experiences and conceptions of injustice have been extensively analysed based on the five single cases in the previous section of this thesis, each case's main findings will be summarised and related to each other, as well as to existing theory in this final chapter. In order to simultaneously address the three research questions, the findings will be grouped into three aspects: (1) violations against entitlements and claims for justice, (2) wishes for justice and (3) grievances in terms of life arrangements. While in the first two chapters, the focus will lie more on a general cross-case summary of the findings, especially in the course of the third chapter – grievances in terms of life arrangements - insights into the overall research question of this thesis will be provided, which was:

How are the subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice of long-term unemployed people in Austria and Sweden shaped in terms of "life arrangements"?

In an attempt to answer the research questions, the following conclusion consists of *first* presenting three violations against legitimate entitlements and justice claims that are characteristic of the experience of long-term unemployment. *Second*, the most important findings regarding the content and the formulation of wishes will be summarised. In a *third* step, the findings will be discussed from a perspective of life arrangements, which allows drawing some general conclusions for the constitution and experience of injustice in the context of long-term unemployment.

7.1. Violations against entitlements and justice claims

In the context of long-term unemployment, the interviewees experience multiple violations against legitimate entitlements, which only become understandable if they are related to the individuals' self-constitution (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014). To investigate subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice, both the biographical self-constitution and the self-constitution in terms of norms and values become meaningful (ibid., p. 27). The hermeneutical analysis revealed that the critique of injustice in the present cases could generally be traced back to *three basic violations* against justice norms and legitimate entitlements. The interviewees experience violations against (1) ideas of equality and just inequalities (Dubet, 2008), (2) legitimate expectations of recognition and (3) the right to independence and autonomy. By drawing on examples from the single case reconstructions, these three elements of injustice experiences are briefly addressed in the following.

7.1.1. Violations against ideas of equality and just inequalities

Generally, the case reconstructions demonstrated that situations are experienced as unjust when an individual is treated differently from how they legitimately expect to be treated. This finding supports the theoretically proposed *relationality* of justice (Honneth, 2003, 2010). In the context of long-term unemployment, an essential expectation for how to be treated is based on the justice principle of equality. More precisely, the analysis provides evidence that both ideas of *just inequalities* (Dubet, 2008), which refer to a legitimate social order, and *equality in the sense of the human right* (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014) become the basis for criticising injustice.

For instance, Manfred Moser's case shows that violations against legitimate social hierarchies and the individual expectations and entitlements based on them are experienced as injustice. He refers to three types of social hierarchies relevant to him in the context of his self-constitution as a soon to be retired "Austrian" worker. In the context of his unemployment, he perceives violations against age hierarchies, ethnic hierarchies and hierarchies based on merits as highly irritating given his self-constitution. In his narrations, it becomes clear that it is utterly incomprehensible for him how "such a thing", meaning such a multitude of norm violations, can be possible. Similarly, Birgitta Blomberg also experiences violations against age hierarchies in her unemployment. Additionally, she strongly

criticises violations against educational hierarchies since the Swedish employment agency compels her to attend employment training despite her own “amazing” education. Describing this requirement as “sick”, Birgitta perceives the social system’s logic as highly dysfunctional and opposes it therefore heavily. Both Manfred’s and Birgitta’s reactions to the fundamental violations of their ideas of legitimate social hierarchies can be seen as an *anomic* (É. Durkheim, 1964). They experience actions and structures that surround them as entirely decoupled from their ideas of how the social world should be structured, which triggers a loss of normative orientation.

Besides violations against ideas of a legitimate social order, equality in the sense of *equal treatment* also becomes a relevant norm for denouncing injustice. Staying with Birgitta’s case, she feels that her need for social support is not treated equally to others’ needs and subsequently criticises what she perceives as unequal treatment. In Jakob Janisch’s case, equality as a human right is a strong motive for denouncing injustice. Regardless of differences in academic titles or power positions in the employment service, he demands to be treated equally and with respect to his vulnerability and ability (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 47). Also, Elisabeth Erhart criticises her AMS counsellor’s demeaning treatment based on the idea of equality. Linda Landgren implicitly refers to the idea of equal treatment when she feels that she is not treated appropriately by the social authorities.

Overall, the analysis shows that the experience of long-term unemployment is often accompanied by a perceived loss of *equal* or *appropriate* treatment. Both the idea of equal treatment and the idea of treatment based on certain legitimate social hierarchies are strongly normatively rooted, making it possible to criticise and denounce violations against them.

7.1.2. Violations against legitimate expectations of recognition

Secondly, the case reconstructions suggest that a withdrawal of legitimate recognition expectations is criticised as injustice. This finding responds to the theoretical assumption that disappointed expectations of recognition are experienced as morally unfair (Honneth, 2010; Motakef et al., 2018). Almost all narrations about experienced grievances in terms of being unemployed were characterised by a lack of recognition regarding different, subjectively relevant aspects of life.

For instance, Manfred Moser’s case demonstrates that long-term unemployment is accompanied by a loss of recognition for achievements from previous life phases. This withdrawal of recognition leads Manfred to question his entire previous life course. He feels that neither his education nor his professional experience alters his current life situation because the social system does not recognise them. On top of the disregard of his professional experience, and thus his whole identity, he feels that his physical condition is also not structurally recognised because there are no suitable social system

mechanisms to provide appropriate support for him. This lack of structural recognition leads to the feeling of “flunking” through the social system’s net. Similarly, Elisabeth Erhart criticises that she does not get recognition since the employment service does not consider her experiences from her everyday life as a single mother of three. Instead, the social authorities make a seemingly uninformed decision about Elisabeth, which appears illegitimate and therefore highly infuriates her. Jakob Janisch also experienced a severe lack of recognition in being long-term unemployed. In his case, it is mainly his mental health, and his specific biographical preconditions that he feels are systematically not recognised in the context of the labour market. Specifically, he expresses a tremendous amount of grievances in the social situation of applying for a job, where he is not granted any form of recognition for his mental health background. In the context of her unemployment, Birgitta Blomberg feels resentful that her education is not recognised since all of her attempts to find a job were unsuccessful, despite her professional experience. Also, she feels a lack of recognition regarding her need for financial support since her attempts to apply for social assistance are denied³¹. Finally, in Linda Landgren’s experience, the social system does not recognise that humans can make mistakes. Even though she did not break the social system’s rules on purpose by working undeclared, she nevertheless has to bear the far-reaching consequences of her mistake.

In total, the cases demonstrate that the experience of long-term unemployment is connected to severe losses and withdrawals of recognition, both on the level of personal interactions and the level of structural recognition of individual prerequisites.

7.1.3. Violations against the right to independence and autonomy

Thirdly, the case reconstructions showed that injustice experiences are characterised by a significant loss of autonomy, mostly accompanied by a loss of agency and/or dignity. In the context of long-term unemployment, the interviewees experience a severe loss of interpretative power over their role and a lack of power to act self-determinedly.

While Manfred Moser feels that his actions are dictated by the social system’s rules and regulations, Jakob Janisch equally feels that he has no autonomy to act self-determinedly. In Jakob’s case, the prevailing power structures of the work-sphere deprive him of the ability to speak and define his role, which he experiences both in job interviews and at meetings with his counsellor. Jakob feels that he is being degraded into a subordinate role, deprived of his dignity and agency, and therefore criticises this pattern as injustice. Similarly, Birgitta Blomberg also experiences a loss of the autonomy to define her role when she is obliged to attend employment training. Finally, Linda Landgren is actively deprived of

³¹ In Birgitta’s narration, it is not entirely clear if she tried to apply for social aid and was denied or if she anticipated the denial and therefore never tried it.

her autonomy when she is disowned of her property, the vacation home on the countryside. Moreover, she finds herself powerless since she cannot do anything against a treatment that she perceives as disproportional and therefore unjustified.

Experiencing losses of autonomy in the context of long-term unemployment is primarily rooted in a structural level. The analysis revealed that the social system's power structures, sometimes in the form of social authority figures, are actively depriving individuals of their autonomy. More specifically, the interviewees mostly criticise losing (1) the freedom to decide self-determinedly over their actions and (2) the freedom to be treated according to their self-image, in contrast to what they perceive as demeaning roles ascribed to them by the welfare system. Following Young (1990), the interviewees' injustice experiences can be interpreted as experiences of oppression, considering the power-structures that lead to the loss of recognition and autonomy. The cases show how long-term unemployment leads to a feeling of entanglement in dependency structures, in which individuals find themselves marginalised and powerless. As it is suggested by Young (1990), marginalisation can be perceived as a feeling of being useless or not needed, which corresponds to the documented experience of the disregard of individual backgrounds, abilities and experiences. Powerlessness is experienced by the interviewees as a loss of decision-making power regarding their own life, as well as their actions in concrete situations (Flügel-Martinsen & Martinsen, 2016, p. 57).

In terms of autonomy, Elisabeth Erhart's case represents an interesting exception. Conversely to the other cases, she does not feel powerless in the situations she describes, despite existing power structures. Supported by her strong normative background and self-confidence about her claims, she can draw on her rhetorical skills and empower herself to oppose the injustice she is experiencing. Structurally, it is the awareness that her entitlements as a single-parent are commonly shared and thus generally recognised as legitimate, enabling Elisabeth to express her claims openly and self-confidently. This high level of confidence about the legitimacy of one's critique is not equally distributed among the other cases. Though the interviewees mostly perceive what happens to them as wrong, or in other words, as a *violation of their entitlements*, the options to denounce these grievances are somewhat limited. If, for instance, the social system's individualised logic does not acknowledge the situation as unjust, given the individual responsibility of the respective person, it becomes more challenging to criticise injustice openly, which Linda Landgren's case shows. Manfred Moser equally struggles with such attributions of individual responsibility to his situation. Being confronted with the idea that his physical condition is his "own problem", the feeling arises that he has to deal with the consequences and that there is no legitimate reason for critique (for instance, Flecker, 2017; Grint, 2005). In Jakob Janisch and Birgitta Blomberg's case, they feel that their degrading and disrespectful treatment is legitimate from the social system's perspective. This perceived

structural legitimacy of their treatment makes it necessary for the interviewees to defend themselves against systemic attributions and subsequently reclaim their role in the narration to compensate for their lost interpretative power. This defence is enabled by drawing on the justice norms of equality or legitimate social hierarchies, recognition and autonomy.

Generally, the case reconstructions showed that formulated criticism requires a strong normative basis and sufficient confidence about the common validity of individual conceptions regarding entitlement. Although some of the interviewee's adopted this mindset, there was still a significant degree of uncertainty about the general validity of individual entitlements. This pattern was reconstructed by interviewee's seeking reassurance from the interviewer for their perspectives by formulating questions at the end of their narrations.³² This insecurity can be traced back to general processes of re- and de-institutionalisation proposed in the relevant literature (Voswinkel & Wagner, 2013). The analysis showed that, for instance, the idea of the standard employment relationship posed a normative frame of reference for justice conceptions.³³ A perceived loss of normal employment's normative value and social meaning was reconstructed in the interviewees' injustice experiences.

In summary, the analysis of violations against legitimate justice claims and entitlements showed that the experience of long-term unemployment leads to a loss of interpretative power over one's role. A dominant pattern of perceived injustice among the interviewees was that they found themselves in situations in which they were ascribed specific roles that fundamentally contradicted their self-image and identities. The social system's logic leads to these "false" role attributions experienced as a feeling of *structural estrangement*. Moreover, the analysis generally showed substantial degrees of incomprehension among the interviewees for the social structures that allow things that are so fundamentally contradicting their individual entitlements and ideas. The situations they find themselves in and the things the social authorities expect from them do not make any sense to the interviewees. Hence, it becomes clear that injustice experiences are strongly characterised by a notion of *anomie* (É. Durkheim, 1964), expressed by a lack of normative orientation and subjectively perceived as a dysfunctionality of the social structures. Following Voswinkel and Wagner (2013), the anger and frustration about this dysfunctionality and incomprehension documented in many of the analysed text passages can be interpreted as *anomic claims for recognition* (ibid., p. 77).

³² Many of the narrations about experienced injustice ended with questioning how such a treatment or system logic can be suitable or even possible.

³³ Especially in the cases of Manfred Moser and Birgitta Blomberg.

7.2. Formulating grievances as wishes

Besides denouncing violations against legitimate entitlements or justice norms, the interviewees also referred to severe grievances in their lives without phrasing them indignantly as unfair or wrong. Instead, they formulated these grievances as wishes for their future. The analysis showed that the reason why some grievances become wishes (instead of claims) is rooted in a lack of a normative framework to draw from, which corresponds to the findings of Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014) and Motakef et al. (2018). To find an outlet to express these grievances, the interviewees formulated them as wishes. Dominant patterns were identified regarding how the interviewees expressed their wishes and the wishes' content. Two interpretative patterns proved to be particularly relevant in the context of experienced injustice. **First**, regarding the **formulation** of wishes, the analysis showed that wishes are expressed as *reflexive considerations* to appear socially legitimate, enabling a *modest attitude of entitlement* for having a wish. **Second**, in terms of the wishes' **content**, the interviewees have a strong desire for independence from physical or mental health-grievances. However, the interviewees do not ascribe themselves any agency over this dimension of their lives, which prevents them from expressing health-grievances as claims to justice. These two main findings are briefly elaborated on in the following.

7.2.1. Expressing socially legitimate wishes

Generally, the analysis revealed that the formulation of wishes follows certain rules and is subject to specific *social restrictions* and motives. For instance, Manfred Moser's case showed that articulating a wish for independence from physical suffering is a challenging act of balancing the expression of an inner "honest" need on the one hand and the maintenance of his self-image in the anticipated external perception on the other hand. A wish must be in accordance with both one's self-image and the desired external perception. Moreover, a wish has to be perceived as socially legitimate. A desire must carefully be justified, for instance by referring to examples to demonstrate the severeness of the situation that is wished to be changed. Elisabeth Erhart points out that her wish for relief from the mental burden of financial precarity had already come up earlier in her life. By drawing on this reference, she demonstrates her wish's recurring character and argues for its "realness" and legitimacy.

It becomes clear that specific strategies must be applied to express wishes. The case of Linda Landgren demonstrates this strategic account to formulate a wish most clearly. She articulates her wish for the future as a *reflexive consideration* and thereby follows two motives: first, she phrases it *realistically* so that the chances for it to be realised are as high as possible. Secondly, she phrases it *humbly* to maintain the wish's normative basis. Only then she can make sure that her wish seems legitimate even from an

outside perspective. In similar ways, these reflexive considerations were found in the other cases and enable what I call a *modest attitude of entitlement* to a wish. Only if a wish is formulated modestly and realistically, it corresponds to what is perceived as socially and subjectively appropriate; only under these circumstances there is a moral and normative right to have a constructed anticipation.

Thus, the analysis of wishes in the context of long-term unemployment demonstrated that wishes are not entirely independent from a normative frame, as it is suggested by Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014). The authors argue that a wish's fulfilment cannot be expected utilising (work-related) norms (ibid., p. 42f.). My analysis at least partly contradicts this assumption because in my cases, the interviewees were vigorously seeking to phrase their wishes realistically and humbly so that, at least from a moral point of view, an entitlement for having the wish can be ensured. Conversely to Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), I argue that individuals develop specific strategies to ensure that they have a normative right to their wishes – even if they cannot expect the wish to actually become true, due to a lack of experienced agency over them. However, the cases demonstrate that already the mere *act of expressing a wish* and referring its realisation to a higher power, such as faith, requires a certain social legitimacy and, therefore, a normative frame.

7.2.2. Wishing for physical and mental well-being

Regarding the content of the interviewees' expressed wishes, a strong motive for *independence* was reconstructed in the analysis. This wish for independence was particularly mirrored in a longing for freedom from physical suffering and mental distress of economic precarity. It was striking that the topic of health, either in mental or physical well-being, recurred among the interviewees' wishes for independence.

Although a desire for well-being turned out to be a common denominator for many of the interviewees' expressed wishes, the motives behind this wish differed. On the one hand Manfred Moser's wish for health is rooted in his longing for independence from both his physical suffering and from the employment service AMS. For Birgitta Blomberg, on the other hand, health has a functional meaning for coping with everyday life, which is why she wishes to stay healthy. Elisabeth Erhart refers to mental well-being when she is formulating a wish to be free from the emotional burden of financial precarity. Like to Manfred Moser, well-being would mean independence to her too. Manfred, Birgitta and Elisabeth have in common that they see no normative framework to refer possible claims for health to. In these three cases, physical or mental well-being was regarded as something uncontrollable, over which neither the interviewees themselves nor anyone else has any power. Ascribing themselves no agency over their own physical or mental well-being leads to the impression that health is not demandable by referring to justice norms. On the contrary, health was understood

as a privilege³⁴ and expressing the mere idea of mental well-being was framed as an unattainable fantasy rather than entitlement.³⁵ Nevertheless, health was a significant priority for the interviewees, and some, like Birgitta Blomberg, it is even the highest priority in life.

Especially in Elisabeth Erhart's case, it becomes clear that while care for others is strongly normatively rooted and can therefore be demanded under justice aspects, for self-care, no such normative frame of reference exists. Corresponding to the findings of Motakef et al. (2018), the results of this thesis point out that there is no normative framework for self-care, even though significant grievances exist in this dimension of life. The proposed "ideal of self-care" (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 37) based on the idea of "cultural individualisation" (Wagner, 2004), which was found to be a vital reference for justice claims among employees, does not seem to be available for the long-term unemployed interviewees of this thesis. Elisabeth Erhart's case clearly shows that there is no entitlement to emotional or physical well-being. Interestingly, while the care for herself is nothing she can claim, her children's care has a solid normative basis, which becomes understandable from the perspective of "relational self-care" (S. Flick, 2013). The concept proposes to take intersubjective relations into account when analysing self-care. In Elisabeth's case, her biographical self-constitution as a single mother of three clarifies that the right to care only applies to her children but not to herself.

A different attitude towards the expression of a wish could be found in Jakob Janisch's case. In his wish for recognition and appreciation of his skills and identity, a stronger notion of entitlement is documented. His initial desire for a more understanding companion in his life, in the form of a girlfriend who "fits him", becomes gradually more normative in the narration process. What was first a cautiously expressed wish for a more understanding treatment in his private life shifts to a need for acceptance and finally took on the character of a claim to recognition and appreciation. A stepwise, reflexive justification during the narration enables this shift from a wish to a claim. By pointing out that he "just" wants something reasonable, he connects his wish to a normative frame, making it seem socially legitimate. Moreover, he finds arguments for the form of recognition that he feels entitled to, referring to the "truth", which is a justification pattern identified in the formulations of claims in other cases as well.³⁶ By referring to the justice principle of autonomy, a respectful and appreciative treatment can be claimed. Jakob Janisch's case demonstrates that by connecting a wish to a normative framework, an entitlement attitude for receiving recognition for skills and identity can be developed.

³⁴ See Brigitta Blomberg's case when she phrases her wish for health as "get to be healthy".

³⁵ Like in Elfriede Erhart's case, when she phrases her wish for being liberated from the mental stress of financial precarity with the words "sometime the day comes" and laughs at the end of her statement.

³⁶ For instance, Birgitta Blomberg argues the injustice of being unemployed by referring to the perception of people who "know her" and hence know the truth about her, which is that she is highly educated and professionally experienced.

On a manifest level, the other cases made no such claims to their wishes' fulfilment. However, on a latent level, the hermeneutical analysis revealed a certain degree of entitlement in the other cases too. Even though they cannot demand fulfilment of their wishes for health and well-being, due to perceived lack of agency over this dimension of life, the interviewees made sure to *phrase* their wishes in a way that entitles them to have a specific desire in the first place. Using this reflexive formulation of their wishes, the interviewees develop the above-described *modest attitude of entitlement*.

However, the question remains *why* Jakob Janisch managed to connect his wish for recognition to a normative framework and thereby claim it. In contrast, the other interviewees' wishes for well-being were not phrased as a claim. The perspective on life arrangements sheds light on this question and summarises this thesis's overall findings in the following last chapter.

7.3. Injustice in terms of life arrangements

In the following, I will finally explore in which dimensions of life arrangements grievances are expressed as morally not right and in which they are formulated as unfulfilled wishes. By doing that, I will refer to the interviewees' life-orientations (Hürtgen & Voswinkel, 2014, p. 30) since individual claims can only be understood in the biographical context in which they arise. Following Hürtgen and Voswinkel (2014), I argue that claims to justice, in contrast to wishes, entail a higher degree of entitlement for *changing* what is perceived as unjust, because claims reflect what individuals generally regard as possible, or in other words, legitimately demandable for them (ibid., p. 46). For instance, in terms of how the social authorities treat them, the interviewees show a clear awareness that something is wrong and that they deserve better treatment. This awareness creates the basis for formulating demands or claims to a different treatment. However, there is no such awareness that grievances could or should be changed in other aspects of life. Regardless of how burdensome they are, some grievances seem like unfortunate but "normal", unchangeable circumstances because there are no normative patterns available that would suggest a different situation. This low level of entitlement to change a burdensome situation could mainly be found in life dimensions, in which grievances were expressed as wishes. The following will demonstrate in which contexts of life grievances are expressed as claims (because of a violation of a justice norm) and in which contexts they are formulated as wishes. Based on these findings, some general conclusions will be drawn from the analysis.

Looking at injustice in different dimensions of life arrangements (Klenner et al., 2012; Motakef et al., 2018) revealed multiple grievances in the context of long-term unemployment. These grievances occur in different life areas, which confirms the initial assumption that long-term unemployment is accompanied by exceptionally high levels of personally experienced grievances due to the far-reaching social implications of unemployment (a.o. Dörre et al., 2008; Globisch & Madlung, 2017; Jahoda, 1986).

The perspective on life arrangements revealed that, in the context of long-term unemployment, most violations against legitimate entitlements occurred in the sphere of work, and more specifically, regarding the search for work or the contact with employment-related institutions. This finding demonstrates that long-term unemployment, and thus the individual's work situation, is strongly connected to experiences of injustice. The cases showed that criticism of injustice was first and foremost expressed regarding unemployment, particularly in terms of the multiple losses of autonomy and recognition accompanied by it. Dörre et al. (2008) or Motakef et al. (2018) argue that work-related norms, such as recognising previous merits or professional biographies, are an essential frame of reference to express injustice. My analysis confirms this assumption and extends it to the experience of long-term unemployment. Based on the findings of this thesis I argue that, also in the context of long-term unemployment, the work-sphere serves as a normative point of reference to express injustice and denounce an unfair treatment. Particularly the search for work and the contact with work-related public institutions such as the national employment services proved to be meaningful for the experience of injustice.

The perspective on life arrangements revealed that severe grievances in long-term unemployment also occur regarding other dimensions of life, such as health, self-care, or in terms of the financial situation. However, as illustrated in previous chapters, these grievances are not always expressed as violations against legitimate entitlements because it is not always possible to relate them to a normative framework. *Why* becomes apparent when the interviewees' claims and wishes are compared by paying particular attention to the respective dimension of life in which they occur.

For instance, Elisabeth Erhart expresses significant grievances regarding her financial situation and conveys the tremendous mental burden that follows from it. However, instead of *claiming* freedom from her financially precarious situation and demanding more financial support for her as a single parent, she expresses a *carefully justified wish* to be liberated from her mental burden. A normative frame to denounce her mental situation as unjust or claim freedom from her financial precarity is not available. While from a perspective of Elisabeth's life-orientation as a single mother, care for her children poses a solid norm to claim justice, care for herself and her mental health is not demandable in terms of justice norms.

Manfred Moser experiences grievances in terms of his unemployment as substantial violations against his legitimate entitlements, especially regarding the recognition of his identity and professional experience and his right to autonomy. At the same time, he does not perceive such a moral right in terms of his physical well-being. Due to Manfred's life orientation and the normative setting surrounding him, he ascribes himself no agency over his physical well-being.

Similarly, Birgitta Blomberg also faces a lack of agency over her health situation. Instead of claiming some right to physical or mental well-being, she views health as a privilege. Conversely, there are multiple violations against her right to respectful and status-appropriate treatment regarding her unemployment. Moreover, Birgitta formulates critique of her financial situation since she feels that neither her income nor her unemployment benefits are sufficient to pay for housing. She refers this critique to the social system that does not allow working and receiving social benefits simultaneously.

Also, Linda Landgren's injustice experiences become most visible in the dimension of work and employment. However, even though she perceives her treatment by the social authorities as unfair, it is not easy to denounce this due to the systemic conviction of *individualised responsibility*. Still, on a latent level it becomes clear that she regards her treatment as disproportionate and wrong. In terms of her wishes, her freedom to live the life that she wants is limited, documented in how she formulates her ideas about her future. Instead of freely wishing for something, Linda develops a *reflexive strategy* to express and approach a wish to strengthen its social legitimacy. By doing that she develops a modest attitude of entitlement for having a specific wish.

Finally, Jakob Janisch criticises grievances regarding the working-world because he perceives no room for expressing his subjectivity and individual living-situation in the context of his mental health. He strongly criticises the lack of recognition for his specific life-reality in the dimension of employment and in the sphere of his social relationships. Because of his specific life orientation, rooted in his biographical experiences, and his ability to relate his wish to a normative frame, it becomes possible to extend his right to recognition not only to the sphere of employment but also to the dimension of social relationships and love (Honneth, 2010; Wimbauer & Motakef, 2017).

From a perspective of their life arrangements, looking at this final comparison of the interviewees' wishes and claims, it becomes clear that while public aspects of life arrangements, such as work or the search for work, are relevant for justice claims, grievances in supposedly private dimensions of life, such as health and well-being, are not regarded as injustice (Motakef et al., 2018, p. 112). Injustices in the private sphere are often framed as individual problems, regarding health or a household's financial situation. This *individualised framing* makes it more challenging to reveal the structural origin of grievances and prevents them from being denounced as injustices. The cases demonstrated that as soon as there is a structural instead of an individual explanation for a grievance, it is easier to identify injustice on a normative basis and formulate a claim to justice. A clear example of this can be found in the different accounts among the interviewees to dealing with the grievance of financial precarity. Both Birgitta Blomberg and Elisabeth Erhart experience severe grievances in terms of their economic situation. While Birgitta criticises this grievance by addressing the structural impossibility to afford housing (because the social system does not allow extra income to the unemployment benefit),

Elisabeth sees no such structural background for her financial hardship. She even normalises the economic difficulties of being a single mother and, instead of criticising her situation, formulates a wish to be free from the mental burden. This inability to relate grievances to a normative framework is connected to a lower level of entitlement, or in some cases, to an overall lack of entitlement. Without a perceived entitlement to address and subsequently change specific grievances, it becomes significantly more difficult to express criticism about them. This dynamic was reconstructed based on the expressed wishes of the interviewees.

Drawing to the “capabilities approach” by Sen (1985), it becomes clear that the experience of long-term unemployment is connected to massive limitations of the individuals’ freedom to lead the life that they want. As the case reconstructions suggested, it is mainly the lack of recognition and autonomy in long-term unemployment which is strongly related to a loss of the ability to realise individual goals and values (ibid.). Referring to Nussbaum’s (2003) list of capabilities, this thesis demonstrated severe limitations of the ability to “bodily health and body integrity” (ibid., p. 41) among the interviewees, which they experienced as a lacking right to self-care and mental or physical well-being. Generally, this thesis’s findings support what Klenner et al. (2012) identified as *characteristics of precarity* in life arrangements. The interviewees of this thesis experience extreme insecurity in shaping and planning their lives (ibid., p. 57), both demonstrated in how they formulate their wishes and their claims to justice. Moreover, injustice in long term unemployment is significantly characterised by a limitation of individual autonomy, due to contradicting calls to action, a lack of resources or the experience of powerlessness and discrimination (ibid.).

By relating this thesis’s findings to a macro-sociological level, the case reconstructions provide evidence for what Schimank (2005) calls “justice gaps”. Similar to Schimank’s idea, the interviewees of this thesis experience gaps within justice because specific expectations, which they perceive as legitimate, are not fulfilled, while at the same time, other people seem to be better off than themselves (ibid., p. 311)³⁷. Schimank (2005) argues that different dynamics caused by attempts to increase societal inclusion led to the perception that “qualitative justice”, meaning justice based on the meritocratic principle, generally decreased in society. This perception was also documented in the present cases as well. From a perspective of their biographical and normative self-constitution, the interviewees see themselves as constantly striving to do the right thing and to act accordingly to the rules of the social world surrounding them, and could, therefore, with Schimank’s words, be seen as “engaged ones” (ibid., p. 339). Against the backdrop of this self-image, certain entitlements arise, which, however, at least subjectively, are not fulfilled. The interviewees feel that they receive no

³⁷A clear example of this is when Birgitta Blomberg believes that other social groups with a supposedly lower status receive social assistance, while she feels that she receives “nothing.”

recognition for their engagement, neither by trying to do the right thing nor in terms of their merits or specific life situations. Conversely, the interviewees feel that the social authorities or actors in the work-sphere actively *deprive* them of their legitimate expectations for recognition, making them feel suppressed in their situation.

Furthermore, a profound degree of incomprehension of *why* they are treated in such a demeaning and estranged way was found in all cases. Despite being confronted with the idea that *they* are responsible for their situation, the interviewees feel that they did nothing wrong. In most cases, it was either their physical or mental health situation that was the reason for their long-term unemployment. Against this backdrop, being treated disrespectfully, losing autonomy and not receiving any recognition for their merits or individual living situations seems highly illegitimate and becomes the subject of intense criticism. However, formulating this criticism becomes a struggle because structures must be opposed, which suggest that (a) it is legitimate how they are treated and (b) it is their fault that they are in the situation. Thus, expressing critique becomes a challenging, rebellious act of opposing powerlessness and marginalisation (Young 1990). Simultaneously, the suggested structural legitimacy of a specific treatment causes insecurity about the validity of individual expectations. This leads to a feeling of *structural estrangement* and *anomie*, which is mirrored in the suppressed anger and curses in the narrations of the interviewees.

In summary, this thesis's findings show that injustice in the context of long-term unemployment is experienced in different dimensions of life. However, it was also demonstrated that it is not always possible to frame grievances as injustice, especially regarding supposedly private dimensions of life. In addition to injustice experiences regarding work and the work search, grievances in health and self-care were identified by analysing the interviewees' wishes. For future research, it would be interesting to analyse injustice in terms of other dimensions of life arrangements, such as political and social participation, house, and care work, and social relationships. Moreover, as Motakef et al. (2018) suggest, more analytical focus should be paid on the interdependencies of different life dimensions regarding subjective justice perceptions (ibid., p. 105). In doing this, a deeper understanding of how individuals prioritise and subordinate certain aspects of life could be developed. Of course, it would also have been interesting to explore country-specific differences in the formation and experience of justice in the context of long-term unemployment. Doing this was unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. However, this thesis could be a fruitful basis for further research on subjective justice conceptions in different national contexts.

Analysing injustice conceptions and experiences in the context of long-term unemployment generally showed that it would indeed be too simplistic to reduce injustice to the mere absence of justice, for instance, in the form of the violation of a justice principle (Flügel-Martinsen & Martinsen, 2016, p. 53). In line with Young (1990) and Fraser (1989), my findings suggest that the experiences of injustice are instead significantly shaped by prevailing power structures of institutions and organisations, as they sustain or renounce normative patterns to express criticism about a grievance. Against this backdrop, this thesis's results support Fraser's (1989) diagnosis that legitimate entitlements or needs are the product of hegemonic discourses and power relations, providing specific interpretative patterns that shape the individual experiences of (in)justice. By applying a perspective on injustice in different dimensions of life arrangements, it becomes visible that injustice even exists when the person experiencing it does not express a clear break of a justice principle. Poverty or the structural non-recognition of the need for self-care and mental and physical well-being is, according to Young (1990), also seen as an injustice. However, the findings demonstrated that in these private dimensions of life arrangements, there is a lack of norms that injustice could be referred to, making it more difficult or even impossible to denounce specific grievances as injustice.

Finally, the main findings of the interpretative analysis of subjective conceptions and experiences of injustice in the context of long-term unemployment can be summarised in the following five hypotheses:

- Injustice conceptions and experiences in the context of long-term unemployment are characterised by violations of (1) ideas of equality and just inequalities (2) legitimate expectations of recognition and (3) the right to independence and autonomy.
- Grievances regarding mental or physical well-being are expressed as wishes instead of entitlements due to a lacking normative framework to claim a right to self-care.
- From a perspective of life arrangements, public dimensions of life, such as employment, are relevant for claims to justice while grievances in supposedly private dimensions of life, such as health, are not regarded as injustice.
- Structural ascriptions of individual responsibility for precarious living situations make it more challenging to denounce injustice.
- Wishes are formulated in a reflexive way to demonstrate their social legitimacy, which enables a *modest attitude of entitlement* to have specific wishes.

8. Bibliography

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9. Links

Distribution of unpaid work in Europe:

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Unemployment in Europe:

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Unemployment in the EU and the euro area](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#Unemployment_in_the_EU_and_the_euro_area)

Unemployment in Austria:

<https://www.ams.at/regionen/osterreichweit/news/2021/02/arbeitsmarkt-jaenner-covid-19-krise-laestt-arbeitslosigkeit-und-kurzarbeit-weiter-steigen>

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<https://arbetsformedlingen.se/statistik/analyser-och-prognoser/arbetsmarknadsprognoser/rikt/arbetsmarknadsprognos-2019-2021#:~:text=Under%202020%20bed%C3%B6mer%20Arbetsf%C3%B6rmedlingen%20att,arbetsl%C3%B6sheten%20n%C3%A5%207%2C4%20procent.>

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<https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/stod-i-arbetet/ekonomiskt-bistand/ekonomiskt-bistand-for-privatpersoner/>

10. Appendix

10.1. Abstract – English

This master thesis focuses on *conceptions and experiences of injustice* in the context of long-term unemployment and starts from the assumption that injustice can be experienced in all dimensions of life arrangements. Taking on a social constructivist methodological position, justice is understood as a contested, normative concept that serves as a legitimising basis for formulating entitlements. I suggest that injustice conceptions can be reconstructed based on narrations about subjectively experienced *grievances* in every-day-life. Building on theory of recognition and a gender-sociological perspective on (in)justice, the interpretative analysis of five single cases reveals which dimensions of life become relevant for justice claims and which not, despite severely experienced grievances. By applying an analytical distinction between claims and wishes, it becomes visible which justice principles are used as a normative frame of references for *claiming* injustice. At the same time, this differentiated perspective reveals in which dimensions of life, a normative framework is missing, and grievances are therefore framed as *wishes*. Narrative interviews with long-term unemployed persons living in Austria and Sweden form the empirical basis of this thesis. Applying the hermeneutical interpretation technique of the "fine-structure-analysis" enabled theoretical generalisations about injustice conceptions to be made. Based on five in-depth single case reconstructions, different dimensions of experienced grievances in long-term unemployment are explored. The interpretative analysis showed that injustice experiences in long-term unemployment are mainly characterised by violations against various justice principles, such as the idea of humanitarian equality, legitimate social hierarchies, expectations of recognition, and the right to autonomy. Moreover, the perspective on life arrangements revealed that while *public* dimensions of life, such as employment, serve as a normative frame to express claims to justice, grievances in supposedly *private* life dimensions, such as health, are not perceived as injustice. Especially grievances regarding mental or physical well-being are expressed as wishes instead of entitlements due to the lack of a normative framework to claim a right to self-care. However, the interpretative analysis also showed that structural ascriptions of individual responsibility for precarious living situations make it more challenging to identify and denounce injustice. In summary, the findings suggest that injustice conceptions and experiences are significantly shaped by prevailing power structures of institutions and organisations, which offer or renounce normative patterns to express criticism about personally experienced grievances in long-term unemployment.

10.2. Abstract - Deutsch

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit legt den Fokus auf subjektive Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen sowie die Erfahrungen von Ungerechtigkeit im Kontext von Langzeiterwerbslosigkeit. Grundlegend wird die Annahme verfolgt, dass Ungerechtigkeit in allen Dimensionen des Lebenszusammenhangs erlebt werden kann. Ausgehend von einer sozialkonstruktivistischen methodologischen Grundpositionierung wird Gerechtigkeit als umkämpftes, normatives Konzept verstanden, welches der Legitimierung von Ansprüchen dient. Dabei wird angenommen, dass sich Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen vor allem in Auseinandersetzung mit persönlich erlebten Missständen im täglichen Leben entfalten. Eine geschlechtersoziologische Perspektive auf Gerechtigkeit mit besonderem Fokus auf Anerkennung ermöglicht es, basierend auf Einzelfällen exemplarisch zu rekonstruieren, in welchen Dimensionen des Lebenszusammenhangs Missstände als verletzte Gerechtigkeitsansprüche formuliert werden. Mithilfe einer analytischen Differenzierung zwischen Ansprüchen und Wünschen wird herausgearbeitet, welche Gerechtigkeitsprinzipien für die Formulierung von *Ansprüchen* dienen. Gleichzeitig wird aufgezeigt, in welchen Lebensbereichen normative Bezugspunkte fehlen, und Missstände daher als *Wünsche* formuliert werden. Narrative Interviews mit langzeiterwerbslosen Personen in Österreich und Schweden bilden die empirische Grundlage, auf der mittels der hermeneutischen Interpretationstechnik der „Feinstrukturanalyse“ theoretische Generalisierungen zu den normativen Bedingungen von Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen entwickelt wurden. Basierend auf fünf Einzelfallrekonstruktionen wurden unterschiedliche Aspekte persönlich erlebter Missstände im Kontext von Langzeiterwerbslosigkeit herausgearbeitet und in Zusammenhang mit Gerechtigkeitsvorstellungen gesetzt. Die Perspektive auf den Lebenszusammenhang zeigte, dass, während *öffentliche* Dimensionen des Lebens, wie beispielsweise Erwerbsarbeit, als starker normativer Bezugspunkt für Gerechtigkeitsansprüche dienen, Missstände in *privaten* Lebensbereichen, nicht als ungerecht bezeichnet werden. Insbesondere Missstände bezüglich mentaler und physischer Gesundheit werden von den Interviewpartner*innen als Wünsche anstatt als verletzte Ansprüche gerahmt. Dieses Ergebnis wurde auf ein fehlendes normatives Recht auf Selbstsorge im Kontext von Langzeiterwerbslosigkeit zurückgeführt. Gleichzeitig verweist die Analyse darauf, dass strukturelle Zuschreibungen individueller Verantwortung für prekäre Lebenssituationen die Möglichkeiten erschweren, eine ungerechte Behandlung als solche zu artikulieren. Insgesamt ist die Erfahrung von Ungerechtigkeit im Kontext von Langzeiterwerbslosigkeit maßgeblich durch Machtstrukturen von Institutionen und Organisationen geprägt, welche die normativen Rahmenbedingungen bilden, um persönlich erlebte Missstände zu kritisieren.

10.3. Interview segments from the analysis in original language

Manfred Moser

MM, TS1: „Und jetzt (-) brauchst nua am Arbeitsmarkt schauen. //mhm// I i hab (/) mei Beruf hätt eh a Chance. Weil mi suachatns eh. Aber i kaun des körperlich nimmer. Des is mei Problem. //ja// Und damit bin i a durchgfoin. Weil sonst krieg i lauter so (--) wirklich Dodlarbeiten. (-) Joa (-) kaunst mi amaoi oiso (schwer verständlich) [gelallt, gemurmelt] fia wos bin i ind Schui gongan? Fia wos hobn i gleant? Dass i daun in (/) kurz vor der Pension mim Putzfetzen durch die Gegend renn? Des kauns oba ned sein oda? //mhm// Naja (-) des woins oba von mia.“

MM, TS2: „I woa do bei SOZIALVEREIN (--) ganz zum Schluss ne //mh// do homs mi dort einesteckt und i muas fia de (/) fia de Jungen die sand fünfundzwanzig Joa na sicher (schwer verständlich) [genuschelt] sand die mit mit Migrationshintergrund. Aber i muas für den in vierten Stock ois aufetrogn der (-) mocht ma ned amoi auf weil der schloft um zwa am Nachmittog. (--) //mhm// Naja wie geht sowas oder?“

MM, TS3: „Na wa wa waun dann mechat i ehrlich gsogt (/) daun mechat i meine Beschwerden weg haben. Sonst nix. Weil des andere kann i ois d’erarbeiten und und (/) waun i des weghob hob i mei Rua. Da da brauch i den da beim AMS ned. Genau (/) des mechat i weil dann kann i mi so wie (/) weil die (/) i bin jo ned (/) i bin i bin ja no ned so oid dass i nix duan kau waßt. I mechts nur (/) genau beschwerdefrei.“

Elisabeth Erhart

EE, TS1: „Auf olle Fälle hot mir der erklärt ich muss die Alimente die mir Vater Staat vorgeschossen hat für die Betreuung für meine Kinder hernehmen. Und i hob dann gsogt Na. (-) Sog i des kanns ned sei dass wenn i oarbeiten geh die Alimente die mir Vater Staat vors (/) vorschießt (/) i dafür hergebn muass wen andern der meine Kinder (/) da sag i des Göd ghört ja für meine Kinder persönlich. Für Essen Trinken Gwand Ausbildung owa ned für des dass i hergehn muass wen ondern betreuen loss wen ondern zoin muass.“

EE, TS2: „Und i hob ihn ma angeschaut und dann hob i gsogt und wie fü Kinder hoben Sie? Am lieber war i umegfa und da a si (gemurmelt) [unverständlich] Waßt so söba durten sitzen aufn tollen Sitz und mi (/) und sog ihm wie fü Kinder haben Sie? Na kane. (-) Und i na eh super ne.“

EE, TS3a: „Und anfoch so dieses dass ich weiß (/) des hob i ma wirklich a scho oiso des hob i ma wirklich gwunschen dass afoch irgendwann der Tog kummt wo i waß ich kann alles zahlen was zum zahlen is. Mit (-) afoch guaden (/) im Gegenteil i waß i kaun sogar mehr zoin ois wos i zoin miaßt.“

EE, TS3b: „Oder i hätt mehr Göd zur Verfügung ois wos i (/) afoch so dieses wost immer (-) (/) i man des is hoid mit drei Kinder. Finanziell is des natürlich immer so dieses (/) host immer irgendwo mit na. Kann ich eh alles wieder alle Erlagscheine zahlen (-) oiso des amoi so fü finanziellen Poister zu haben dass i anfoch guad schlofn und guad munter wird (lacht laut)“

Jakob Janisch

JJ, TS1: „Oder bein Vorstellungsgespräch (--) (/) es merkt ma scho dass erna irgendwos ned passt. Zum Beispü weil mein Lebenslauf (/) weil i scho länger daham bin. Des sand lauter so Diskussionen die (/) die soin mi auf des ansprechen. Warum und wieso. Aber i kann ja dann ned sogn wiarum und wieso. Weil waun i von der Psyche ins Erzählen anfang brauch i goanimmer hinkuman.“

JJ, TS2a: „I find dann die Worte während den (/) während dieser (klopft mit Faust hörbar auf den Tisch) find i ned. I find's anfoch ned. I bin dann so (--) wie a klans Kind. Des wos an an aner höheren Position unter is.“

JJ, TS2b: „Und so kumts ma beim AMS vor. Da bin i wie a (/) (-) do (/) (-) des find i ned lustig. (-) Nur weil er Magister is (--) es hoit bin i jetzt ned oder d des hob i ned (genuschelt) aber bei denen hob i des. //mh// Und i wü des oba ned hom. Weil des mocht mi klan.“

JJ, TS3: „Des war scho sche. Diese Gelassenheit ja. Eh zu oin glaub i. Gelassenheit zu oin. Zu mein Leben söba. Zu der zu der Oabeit. Zu den wos i bin. Des wos i kau. (-) Anfoch akzeptiern. Und eigentlich froh sei dass i des kau. (--) Weils jo woa is.“

Birgitta Blomberg

BB, TS1a: "om jag har A-kassa och jobbar extra då får jag dra bort A-kassan (/) då får jag dra bort dom här extrapengarna som jag har jobbat så det lönar sig inte att jobba extra //mhm// utan då måste man jobba svart för att få ihop till hyran"

BB, TS1b: "och de enda dom säger det är att du får söka försörjningsstöd och då menar dom att man ska gå till sociala myndigheterna och säga att jag behöver pengar //mhm// och det får ju inte vi (/) ingen av oss får det därför att vi (/) vi äger kanske en bil (/) eller du får inte äga en bil du får inte äga nånting (/) och du får inte under åren tidigare haft en normal inkomst (/) har du haft en (/) jag kan inte säga några summor nu men //mhm// dom tittar inte på vad du har nu. Du får ingenting. //nåe// Det är bara dom som är på gatan som får nånting och vi andra får ingenting"

BB, TS2: "då ska du sitta med en jävla trettioåring och vara jobbcoach åt mig och säga vad jag ska göra alltså förstår du det är så jävla sjukt (/) jag har (/) jag har världens utbildning och alla människor som känner mig dom säger men varför jobbar du inte med det varför jobbar du inte med det?"

BB, TS3: För min framtid (-) oj (--) ja men det är nog att jag får vara frisk tror jag. Det är nog det viktigaste för mig. Får vara frisk så att jag (paus 3) orkar (--) (/) jo men det är nog det allra viktigaste ja //mhm// (paus 4)

Linda Landgren

LL, TS1: "när jag började då fick man jobba extra utan o rapportera man fick jobba natt men sen så mitt upp i allt då fick man inte då ändra man reglerna o jag missade o fylla i det (—) de handlade om 20 dagar sammanlagt (—) o då blev jag avstängd i 7 månader (pause 7) så jag hade ju liksom inget val (-) de va bara tvungen o sälja (-) o de e dom pengarna jag lever på nu"

LL, TS2: "Man har lite funderingar så där vad man vill göra (—) vem vet en dag kanske det slår in (---) man måste ha nånting o se framemot så här små mål // precis // även om dom kanske inte är direkt att man kan ta på dom nu men man kanske kan ta små steg framåt"

10.4. Transcription rules

The following rules were applied to transcribe the interviews. The guidelines are based on the suggestions of Froschauer and Lueger (2003) and Kukartz (2010) for transcribing interviews in interpretative social research and were adapted to the requirements of this thesis.

- Fine transcription: everything should be transcribed exactly as it is heard on the recording. This applies to everything that is spoken as well as to all other sounds and peculiarities that can be heard on the recording (see table for details).
- No conversion to "Hochdeutsch" or "rikssvenska".
- Punctuation marks: no grammatical punctuation marks are used, except:
 - o Period - if the sentence is audibly finished.
 - o Question mark - when the sentence is audibly formulated as a question.
- Non-linguistic, noticeable sounds (clearing throat, coughing, car driving by, door opening, etc.) should be written in parentheses (either round or square brackets).
 - o Round bracket: description of a sound (laughing).
 - o Square bracket: interpretation of a sound (laughs) [sarcastic].
- Change of speaker: a paragraph is made, unless the flow of speech is not clearly interrupted. In this case, two slashes are sufficient (see table).
- Numbers/years: should be written out in full.
- Abbreviations for people speaking:
 - o Interview leader: MC
 - o Interview partner: IP
- Anonymization: no names should appear in the interview transcript - neither the name of the interviewed person, nor names mentioned by the interviewed person. Mentioned names are anonymised in the transcript.

Overview transcription system

Examples from the interview transcript	Meaning
(-), (--), (---) (pause 4), (pause 5), etc.	Speech pauses; indicate the number of seconds in parentheses.
Mhm, aha, etc. Not clear interruption: B: flow of speech flow of speech //mhm// flow of speech flow of speech //aha// flow of speech. Clear interruption: B: Speech flow Speech flow. I: Aha B: Picking up the flow of speech again....	Pause filler, reception signal If the interviewer uses reception signals very often and the interviewee's flow of speech is not clearly interrupted by them, it is not necessary to insert a line break/speaker change every time. Instead, the reception signals should be noted in the continuous text.
<u>sure</u>	Underline conspicuous stresses
(laughs), (leaves the room), (fast), (stretched)	characterization of non-linguistic events or manner of speaking, tone of voice; the characterization precedes the corresponding passages and applies until the end of the utterance or until a new characterization is added
[Comment.] E.g. (laughs) [ironic]	Interpretative comment or additions inserted by the transcriber.
(...) [unintelligible, 2.5 sec]	Unintelligible Subsequently, the length of the incomprehensible interview passage should be indicated
(does it come?)	Not exactly understandable, presumed wording
(/)	Interruption of a sentence, with the attempt to rephrase it in further speech
(//)	Complete interruption of a sentence Interruption by another person

10.5. Example from an interview transcript

- 1 MC: Genau (-) okay dann leg ich das da so her das sollt eh gehen denk ich amal (atmet tief ein) okay
2 ähm dann würd ich gern mal äh einsteigen a bissl damit ich Sie a bissl äh besser kennenlernen // jo //
3 äh (lacht kurz) würd ich Sie gern äh drum bitten dass Sie mir vielleicht so a bissl Ihr (gedehnt)
4 Lebensgeschichte erzählen (-) also so wie Sie aufgewachsn sand und ah (//)
- 5 IP: Jo mir sand relativ guad aufgewachsn. In unsera Zeit no. I bin jo scho neinaufzgz na //mhm// und
6 (gedehnt) da war das natürlich ganz anders wie heit. //mhm// (-) Woa a durch des (/) wia soi i sogn,
7 es woa einfoch (lacht kurz) angfangt dass ka Leasing geben hat (lacht) [kichernd, verschmitzt] ka
8 Handy (/) es hot nix geben ge. Es woa natürlich (/) waunst mi frogst woas bequemer zum aufwochsn
9 oder gmiaadlicher //mhm// und freier. Ned so wie heid wast eh heid is des scho (/) i wü jo ned sogn
10 Polizeistaat aber heit (/) die Jungan diafn goa nix mehr mochn. (-) //mhm// Waunst jetzt heit schaut
11 (/) es is furchtbar goi. //mhm// I mechad nimma so jung sei. //mhm// [Interviewpartner klopft mit
12 einem Kugelschreiber zweimal auf den Tisch, wirkt nervös] Jo es is (/) bei uns woan die Vorschriften
13 weit ned so. //mhm// Und mia ham genauso (/) und jeda hat an Job ghabt. Jeder. //ja// Des gibt's
14 heit a nimma mehr. Waun ma heit schaut die Jugendarbeitslosigkeit goi //mhm// (-) des is ois weg
15 //hm// (Pause 12 Sek.) [währenddessen immer wieder „mhm“ von MC]
- 16 MC: Sie finden alles war (-) bequemer was was (//)
- 17 IP: Na i find es woa a freier. Es woa ned soo a Druck drauf es woa a beim Oabeitn ned so a Druck
18 drauf. //mhm// So wie heit zum Beispü dass ois wast eh des geht jo ois ruck zuck na //mh// (-) Oiso
19 fria (/) es is fria genauso goabeit woadn und es is genauso gschofft woadn und heit is des nimmer so.
20 Heit wiad (/) i was von mia zum Beispü (/) i hob beim beim Dings goabeit (-) die verkaufen einfach die
21 Firma (-) und (/) so wie zum Beispü der der BAUFIRMA is verkauft woadn an die an die BAUFIRMA.
22 Die BAUFIRMA sogt du kaunst ruhig bei uns bleibn muast oba nach China gehn. (-) Na asso
23 (unverständlich) [gelallt, verächtlich] wos soi i in China bitte? Nua damit i mein Job behoit? //mhm//
24 Und die Firmen lagern ois aus ne (-) woascheinlich aufgrund der Steuerbelastung is eh woascheinlich
25 kloa na //ja// und (gedehnt) dadurch (-) schauts bei uns (-) traurig aus ne. (-) Und es wird immer
26 mehr von Jahr zu Jahr (/) naja von Jahrzehnt zu Jahrzehnt wird's schlechter. (-) Des kaun ma a
27 verfoign. (-) //mhm// I was ned wie des in Schweden oben is owa (-) (atmet hörbar ein) bei uns is des
28 a Katastrophn weil wia sand ja trotzdem a Sozialstaat na. //mhm// Und Schweden glaub i a oder
29 //mh// aber wer sois zoin? (-) Waun ma ka Hockn hom. Oder wauns uns ned wirklich ordentliche
30 Jobs geben (-) //mhm// (-) weil es is ja nur mehr (/) is jo nur mehr ois auf die Aktionäre auslegt. (-)
31 Sonst nichts. (-) //hm// (---) //hm// Und es is natürlich a Problem ne. Des wird aber a die Jungen
32 treffen. Mi nimma. I bin neinaufzgz. Fscht (macht pfeifendes Geräusch) (klatscht mit Hand auf Tisch)
33 //mh// mi wird's nimmer so wirklich jucken ne. Owa schod is drum. (-) //mh// Waun ma ehrlich is ne.



Sinneinheit: Und jetzt (-) brauchst nua am Arbeitsmarkt schauen.

Paraphrase	Intentionen/Funktionen	Latente Bedeutungen	Rollenverteilungen	Anschlussoptionen /Prüfung
Du musst einfach nur auf den Arbeitsmarkt schauen	Aufforderung, die Aufmerksamkeit auf den Arbeitsmarkt zu lenken	„und jetzt“ Anschluss auf etwas zuvor Gesagtes („und“) „jetzt“ = Zeitangabe, Verweis auf Gegenwart → verweist auf Aktualität, auf gegenwärtige Situation Bedeutung der kurzen Pause nach „und jetzt“?? Hyp.: Befragter will Aussage über gegenwärtigen Zustand treffen, muss dafür aber Erläuterung einschieben und auf etwas anderes verweisen (den Arbeitsmarkt)	Interviewerin → wird direkt angesprochen („brauchst“)	..., um → Begründung für Notwendigkeit, Blick auf Arbeitsmarkt zu richten, um etwas zu erkennen → WAS??
Richte deinen Blick auf den Arbeitsmarkt	Person möchte Aufmerksamkeit auf den Arbeitsmarkt lenken	„Brauchst nua“ → es ist nichts anderes nötig, als den Blick auf den Arbeitsmarkt zu richten Brauchst → um xy zu verstehen/zu erkennen/etc. muss nichts getan werden, als auf den Arbeitsmarkt zu schauen Etwas brauchen → etwas benötigen, zwingend notwendig Jemanden brauchen → um ein Bedürfnis zu erfüllen/Hilfe zu erhalten	Arbeitsmarkt als gesellschaftliche Institution	→ Auflösung → was sieht man, wenn man auf den Arbeitsmarkt schaut?? Bezug zum Arbeitsmarkt wird fortgesetzt
Sieh hin auf den Arbeitsmarkt	Person möchte, dass Interviewer*in an den Arbeitsmarkt denkt; evtl. Wissen über den Arbeitsmarkt abrufen	Will darauf verweisen, dass am Arbeitsmarkt etwas passiert, das für den Gesprächsinhalt relevant ist		Eigene Rolle am Arbeitsmarkt wird thematisiert durch Fortsetzung mit „I hab (/)“ → Satzabbruch und Neuformulierung
	Person will ein Argument belegen/untermauern	Geschichten: Ich brauche dich (Notsituation) Du brauchst Geld/einen Job. Er braucht Zuneigung/Liebe.		

10.6. Example from the fine-structure-analysis