

Understanding the dynamics of work meaningfulness when crafting sustainable work. A longitudinal study among members of a grassroots community enterprise

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Moral drivers such as the search for meaningful lives are one of the strongest drivers for individuals to engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR), be they CSR managers or prefigurative entrepreneurs from an eco-village. These actors craft their own work to “save the world”, giving them a sense of meaning at work. However, it is not because they see crafting their job as a source of meaning that their work is necessarily going to be meaningful over time. Understanding about the effect of time on work meaningfulness is important as it could impact CSR engagement and motivation over time, which could prevent CSR actors and their organizations to move beyond business as usual. This study is a four years ethnography that focuses on prefigurative grassroots cooperators’ experience of work meaningfulness: What paths to meaningfulness do these actors follow? What are the dynamics of meaningfulness over time? What challenges do these actors experience, and what are the outcomes? I answer these questions using Rosso et al.’s (2010) four paths to meaningfulness theoretical framework. I find that the four paths are followed simultaneously, showing how satisfied and frustrated psychological needs contribute to the design of a responsible organization over time. However, I find that the need for self-concordance remains frustrated, revealing the challenges of pursuing Rosso’s four paths to meaningful work at the same time. My findings contribute to the emerging literatures on the tensional processes inherent in the double-edge sword phenomenon of meaningfulness, and to CSR addictions, which contributes to better understanding employees’s experiences of CSR in a time where RH marketing communicates on notions of values and meaningfulness as a competitive advantage to attract newly graduated young adults into their organizations. Rosso BD, Dekas KH and Wrzesniewski A (2010) On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review. *Research in organizational behavior*, 30: 91-127.