

***Career guidance, education, and dialogues  
for a fair and sustainable human development (\*)(\*\*)***

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***Abstract:***

How could career interventions promote a fair and sustainable human development? In order to answer this question, first an account is provided of the factors that contributed to defining the first general model for career interventions and to the emergence of the second one. One such factor was a political dispute over the purpose of these interventions: should they aim only to provide companies with the required workforce, or should they both foster the optimal individual development and promote a richer and fairer social organization? In the current model, these interventions are supposed to help people manage their careers and, more generally, their lives. Designed with this objective in mind, such interventions meet the needs of people who live in postmodern societies. Nevertheless, to effectively prepare people for coping with the major challenges that humanity confronts today (such as decent work deficit, economic and social precarity affecting billions of young people, serious environmental and technological hazards, etc.), such interventions definitely need developing. Various proposals are made to contribute to solving these serious problems.

***Key words:***

Career interventions, career guidance, life designing dialogues, decent work, sustainable development, fairer world

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## *Career guidance, education, and dialogues for a fair and sustainable human development*

**Jean Guichard**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). Its purpose is to “contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the UN Charter”.

Education and human rights are major concerns for UNESCO, and, likewise, for the professionals working in the field of educational and vocational counselling. That was notably confirmed in the declaration adopted by the Board of Directors of IAEVG on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September, 2001, at a conference that marked the association’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and took place precisely at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The declaration reads: “Effective educational and vocational guidance and counselling can assist individuals to understand their talents and potential and enable them to plan the appropriate steps to develop essential skills that will lead to personal, educational, economic and social advancement for the individual, family, community and nation. (...). High quality educational and vocational counselling not only aids the personal development and career opportunities of every individual, but also contributes to a wider social, economic and sustainable development as a whole”.

But do the current interventions – in the domain of career education, guidance, counselling or dialogues – actually contribute to such a noble undertaking?

It is an urgent issue to consider, given some recent observations made by the International Labour Organization (ILO), another United Nations agency which seeks to unite governments, employers and employees jointly to promote certain international labour standards for the organisation of work and to supply decent work for all.

Among the numerous observations made by the ILO, I’ll now mention only the titles of two of its illuminating and influential reports. The 2001 report was titled: “Reducing the decent work deficit: A global challenge”. To tackle this important issue very briefly, I just want to quote the statistics for the year 2005 published in the ILO’s journal *World of Work* (No 56, April 2006): “Half of the world’s workers – some 1.4 billion working poor – live with their families on less than US\$2 per day per person” (p.13). This year, the ILO has issued another report, the title of which speaks for itself: “Global employment trends for youth 2013: A generation at risk”. The title of its first chapter is even clearer: “Global youth employment crisis worsening”. Now, 50% of the world population is under 28.4 years of age (2009 statistics)...

Unfortunately, the serious disorders in the work organization, in employment, and more particularly in youth employment, are not the only crisis our world faces today. One could also mention, for example, a depletion of natural resources, the global warming, or a deepening rift between the poorer and the wealthier individuals and communities, etc.

This is why I believe that it is essential to open this UNESCO chair’s work with the following question: Do our current career development interventions – as they are implemented by professionals – contribute to solving these crises? If not, could they do so? And how? I tried to synthesize these preoccupations in phrasing the following question, which serves, at the

same time, as the title of our conference: How could career development interventions promote a fair and sustainable human development?

In order to provide some answers to this question, I'll first outline the genesis of the first grand model which underpinned career guidance interventions as they developed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in industrialised societies. Three categories of factors played an important role in the emergence of that model. We shall see that one of those factors was a political and ideological controversy about the economic, social and human goals of vocational guidance.

In the second part of this presentation, I'll describe how those factors kept changing, prompting a gradual emergence, in the last three decades, of another model: one in which the human actors are considered to have more agency and liberty than it was previously thought, but also bear a greater responsibility for the direction of their lives and occupational pathways. I'll stress that this model seems to match the requirements of contemporary modern societies as regards the designing by individuals of their personal and occupational lives.

Nevertheless, as I'll attempt to show in the third part of this presentation, this model seems to be viable in the long run only if, firstly, some profound transformations occur in education and training; secondly, international regulations of the organisation of work and employment are progressively implemented worldwide; and, thirdly, ethical considerations – generally engaged in by individuals when they think about the direction of their lives and careers – are given greater prominence. Such changes, I believe, are necessary if our interventions are to contribute to a fair and sustainable human development.

## **1. The construction and evolution of the matching paradigm**

Vocational guidance emerged as a professional activity in Western societies at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was conceived then as working toward matching individuals, seen as equipped with certain stable characteristics, with occupations or professions, i.e. with some relatively well delineated and fixed sets of work activities which made up an organized whole.

This “matching paradigm” for career interventions was designed as a result of the conjunction of three categories of factors. The first factor was a new challenge people in western societies came to face at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It could be expressed in the question “How to find a job I could succeed in?”. This, consequently, bred another question: “How to help people in answering this difficult question?”

The second factor was an ideological (political and philosophical) dispute about the core purpose of support that could be offered to individuals: Was this purpose only to provide industry with the workforce it needs? Or was this purpose also to enable all people to develop their human potentials? In a word, the debate came down to the “why” question: Why should people be helped in their transition to work?

The third factor which played a role in defining that paradigm was a debate about the “how” question: “How” to go about helping people “choose their vocation”? Do vocational counselors need to rely only on common sense observations? Or, alternatively, do they need to ground their interventions on some scientific knowledge and, if so, what knowledge should it be?

As these factors played an important role in how the first paradigm was defined, changed and became obsolete, I'll now discuss them in greater detail.

### **1.1 “Choosing a vocation”: a new social problem**

The problem of “how to choose a vocation” appeared in industrialized countries at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. at a very particular stage in the history of the division of labor in societies that had some specific characteristics. It surfaced then and there as a result of technical changes (industrial revolution) and social transformations (rural depopulation, migrations, etc.) which made people confront a question which had been irrelevant in traditional societies. Indeed, in those societies, sons had usually to follow their fathers' careers without further questioning, and daughters had to follow in their mothers' footsteps.

The industrialized societies, in turn, were societies of individuals (Elias, 1991). In such a context, the “choosing of an occupation” was seen as a task that should be completed by individuals themselves. In such societies, the dominant form of work organization was a professional work system (Touraine, 1955; Dubar, 1996) based on a clear division into distinct occupations, professions or trades. In the same societies, work activity was also seen as a major opportunity of achieving something in life (Schlanger, 2010). Therefore, the “vocational” or “career” issue came to be seen as concerning an individual who needed to choose an occupation or a profession and would find fulfillment in such a “vocation” or “calling” (Parsons, 1909).

At the same time, this issue was deemed very important for both each individual and society as a whole. It was crucial for individuals, because their vocational choices were seen as giving their lives a fundamental direction. And it was paramount for society, because its future prosperity and common good depended on such individual choices. In addition, this important issue was also regarded as quite a complex one: it was therefore thought that individuals should be helped in dealing with it. This sparked debates about the purpose of such assistance.

### **1.2 Why help people choose their vocation and direct their careers?**

An important dispute about the purpose (or the end, to use a more philosophical term) of vocational guidance took place in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The bone of contention in the dispute was which pole of the relationship between “individual” and “work” should be prioritized: Should precedence be given to the “world of work” or to the “person”?

The advocates of what might be called the “business world” view claimed that the ultimate goal of vocational guidance was to provide industry with the workforce it needed. Seen from this perspective, vocational guidance was regarded as preparation for personnel selection.

The opposite view was promoted by what may be called the “Progressive movement”, to use the name of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century American group (Gysbers, 2010). Its representatives contended that the major purpose of vocational guidance was to enable each person to develop his/her major individual capacities. In their opinion, the attainment of such a goal entailed some major reforms in school- and work organization that would universally foster personal development. Such changes, in turn, would bring about a remaking of society which would become both wealthier (because everybody would have a job corresponding to their capabilities) and fairer (because job distribution would not depend any longer on ethnicity, social background or gender). The “progressive” conception was endorsed both in Europe and

in the USA by scholars such as Alfred Binet, Edouard Toulouse, Edouard Claparède, Faria de Vasconcelos, Adolfo Lima, John Dewey, Felix Adler, Edward L. Thorndike, G. Stanley Hall, etc.

In contrast, the proponents of the “business world” view were social conservatives. They asserted that the ultimate goal of vocational guidance was to reproduce society as it was: daughters’ and sons’ position in the social structure should be equivalent to that of their mothers and fathers. Such ideological bias can be illustrated by the following example – coined by Fernand Mauvezin, who was a major representative of this current in France – of what he would say to a very brilliant, but lowly born young man who would dream to go to college: “We told him: ‘Let’s assume you’ll succeed. You’ll be a high-school teacher, or even a college professor. Your father and your mother will still be the crude peasants of your childhood. Most likely, your brothers and sisters will be servants. Despite all your care for them, they probably won’t forget that you were given everything when they got nothing. You will get married. As a tenured professor, you will probably marry an educated and rich girl. Won’t you feel uneasy when you show her your birthplace and introduce her to your father, your mother, and all your kin of such a humble standing? If you have a child, your wife probably won’t let him play with his peasant cousins, whose rude manners could damage his beautiful clothes and teach him bad habits” (quoted by Huteau, 2009).

### **1.3 How to help people choose their vocation and direct their career? The scientific reconstruction of career issues**

The ideological dispute about the purposes of vocational guidance was interlaced with a debate on the possible role of scientific knowledge in vocational guidance. The conservatives – such as Mauvezin – asserted that counselors should rely only on the common sense observations (e.g. “it takes physical strength to do this job”, “this kind of job is not suitable for women”, etc.). In contrast, the champions of the reformist view were scholars (for example, in France: Toulouse, Piéron, & Vaschide, 1904; Binet, & Simon, 1907). They wanted to show that certain guidance interventions actually achieved their goals, and that they did so for scientifically explicable reasons.

This stance of the reformists led them to reconstruct the vocational career issues within a scientific framework. This reformulation was the third factor that played an important role in the elaboration of the first paradigm for vocational and career interventions. An important point must be emphasized here. Scientific research seeks to answer scientific questions. Such questions always pertain to the processes and factors that determine a phenomenon (for example: Which factors and processes explain why a person trains faster for a certain trade than for another?). Yet vocational or career issues are always about the goals people pursue in their lives and careers, about decisions to be made, or about actions to be undertaken. This, however, is quite a different way of looking into them. In other words, the two kinds of approaches belong to two different rationalities: knowledge and action, respectively (or, to use Kant’s notions: pure reason and practical reason).

Obviously, people who have to make a decision about their career had better rely on knowledge provided by research (and conclude, for example: “I’m likely to have more difficulties learning this job than this other one”). But such knowledge is just one (more or less relevant) element that the individuals have to consider when they define their goals and implement a certain behavior. The career decisions people make and the directions they give

their lives depend fundamentally on the meaning they invest in such or such anticipation, that is to say, on how they answer the question: what is it that essentially matters in my life now?

Starting from the career issue people were faced with (“which occupation should I choose?”), scholars formulated their research questions and core hypotheses within the models that prevailed in the then social sciences and humanities. Those models insisted on the stability of the human subject’s psyche. To describe the stable features thought to render an “objective” view of the human mind, they relied on such concepts as “aptitudes”, “personality traits”, “mental age”, etc. In addition, most of those models insisted on either the genetic origins of these characteristics (Huteau, 2002, uses the term “biocracy” to depict Toulouse’s work) or on the lasting role of early or childhood experiences in fixing them.

In such a context (where the established form of the work organization sustained clear-cut distinctions among various trades or professions, which were also seen as stable, and where the dominant scientific models insisted on the stability of objective personality traits), scholars formulated the following core research query: “How to describe objectively the relationships between individuals and work activities?” As already mentioned, this take on the issue differed from the question that people had to answer, i.e. “Which occupation should I choose?” The researchers described this relationship as a match between individual personalities and occupations (or professions) in terms of aptitudes, work values, interests, personality styles, etc. The “TWA” model developed by Dawis & Lofquist (1984) is probably the most comprehensive formulation of the first paradigm; a formulation, which propelled rather directive career interventions (as counselors were supposed to be able to know “objectively” the kind of occupations or professions that matched the individuals’ stable characteristics).

#### **1.4 The evolution of the matching paradigm in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

As result of changes in the work organization and in the scientific models within which the research questions were formulated, the first paradigm evolved over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The evolution as such cannot be recounted here, but it seems that Donald Super’s work marks both its final stage and a transition to the second paradigm.

When Super (1957) investigated the relationships between individuals and work, a new form of work organization was gradually materializing as a consequence of the automation (and later, computerization) of production. Touraine (1955) and Dubar (1996) named it the “technical work’s system”. The new organization notably involved long-standing working teams which formed various function networks. Within such a network, the functions of each of the team’s members were less precisely defined than in previous forms of work organization. As a consequence, the work activities adding up to these functions were less stable than before and tended to evolve much faster. Therefore, the notion of career captured the diverse sequences of work activities people would perform over their lives more adequately than such terms as “occupation”, “profession” or “job”.

As a parallel development, new scholarly approaches to the human subjects appeared. For example, Lewin (1935, 1936) insisted on the personality dynamics and the role of the “psychological field”. Rogers (1951) showed the importance in behaviors of the subjective perceptions of a situation. Havighurst (1952) described the age-bound “development tasks” individuals must accomplish, etc. Taking stock of these advancements, Super introduced three major changes in the matching model. He stressed that, in this matching, firstly, the persons’

subjective views (notably, their vocational self-concepts) were at least as important as the “objective” considerations (e.g. their test results); secondly, a person’s vocational self-concept could acquire its true meaning only in its relationships with the person’s other self-concepts; and, thirdly, the notion of career (defined as the meanings a person assigns to his/her occupational pathway over his/her life course) should replace those of occupations or professions.

All these changes resulted in the concept of “life span, life space career development” (Super, 1980). Vocational guidance became life-long life-span career counseling and career education developed. The prime goal of interventions shifted to helping people cope by themselves with all decisions they might make in order to direct their careers from school to retirement.

## **2. The career- and life designing paradigm**

Over the last four decades, a second paradigm has gradually emerged in the field of life and career counseling as a consequence of changes, firstly in modern societies, secondly, in the organization of work and the distribution of jobs and, thirdly, in the scientific approaches to human behaviors.

### **2.1 Liquid modernity and the self-identity issue**

“Globalization” has greatly transformed most societies and, more particularly western ones. To use an expression coined by Bauman (2000), modern societies have become “liquid”. Previously, in “solid modernity”, certain major institutions (as religions, ideologies, parties, guilds, syndicates, influential collective representations, etc.) guided individuals in directing their lives. In liquid modernity, this “institutionalized” function of support, or “holding” (Winnicott, 1986) has declined. In such a context, individuals cannot but determine what life means to them all by themselves (Taylor, 1989; Malrieu, 2003). Individuals must define their fundamental values or “ordinary goods” (Taylor, 1989) that serve the holding function and allow them to construct their lives and careers. In a word, they have to engage in an ongoing process of designing their lives.

### **2.2 Flexible work and employment: From predictable career to insecure work pathways**

The technologies of information have prompted an extraordinary growth of a new type of capitalism, that is. “financial capitalism” (Marazzi, 2010), which doesn’t intend fundamentally to develop the production means, but pursues only short-term investments yielding big profits quickly.

Financial capitalism, in conjunction with the development of transportation, has had very important ramifications for work and employment. For one, many companies have relocated employment to countries where labor is cheap and labor law is still embryonic. At the same time, many firms have developed innovation marketing, which consists in continuously supplying consumers with allegedly innovative products to replace their purportedly obsolete equivalents.

To attain such a goal many, companies have deeply transformed their work organization (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002). Three such changes, which have essentially impacted the career issues people are faced with, can be mentioned. Firstly, work is increasingly often

organized in networks of workers assembled only for the duration of an assignment (Amossé, & Coutrot, 2010). Consequently, more and more job incumbents have flexible work functions in non-lasting networks of workers. Secondly, this very flexible work organization requires a differentiation between “core workers” (who form the “memory” of the company’s know-how or of the “trade’s genre”, Clot, 1999) and peripheral ones (who are hired when the economic conjuncture is good and laid off when it deteriorates) (Edwards, Reich, & Gordon, 1975). Studies have shown that many employees remain in the peripheral position over long stints, in some cases never actually joining the first segment of the labor market (that of long-term employment). The third change is corporate relinquishing of any obligation as regards the careers of employees, who are seen as entirely responsible for the management of their working paths (Rousseau, 1995; Arthur, & Rousseau, eds., 1996).

Combined, all these changes have severely unsettled the work pole of the individual-job relationship, which formed the core of the first career counseling paradigm. As a consequence, the second paradigm couldn’t any more focus on the relationship between stable individuals and stable sets of work activities (corresponding either to occupations or professions). Therefore, this paradigm focuses on individuals seen as managers of their working (and training) paths. To describe this new view, authors have coined new terms, such as “protean careers” (Hall, 1976; Hall, 2002) or “boundaryless careers” (Arthur, 1994; De Fillippi, & Arthur, 1996).

In fact, such “careers” should better be named “working paths”. They indeed differ greatly from what occupational careers were previously, when people were supposed to be able to outline plans of and for their future at work: when they were able to figure out their future from a certain point of reference located in the future and corresponding to a regular career development.

In the context of flexible work and employment, however, individuals have no alternative but to anchor their predictions for the future at work in the present: they have to develop a strategic mindset, i.e. an ability to spot in their environments work activities (opportunities) that potentially might become theirs.

But to produce such a strategic mindset, individuals must know what matters to them in their lives. Indeed, persons are able to discern what might become an opportunity only if they have already thought about (or immediately begin to think about) what is important in their lives. Recognizing a potential opportunity presupposes certain expectations already formed by people who pick it out as such, because it “strikes them as such”, immediately making (such) sense to them. In Gibson’s terms (1979), it can be said that an opportunity is an affordance: something that is perceived in this very way by a person because he/she immediately decodes this phenomenon, which jumps out, as offering options which might fulfill his/her meaningful expectations.

This essential relationship between “meaning making” and “opportunities appearing” can be illustrated by the following example stemming from an actual counseling dialogue (Robinet, 2012). Joel (the client) was 27 years old. He worked as a computer engineer. Although he earned a very good living, he was not happy with his job. During the life designing dialogues, he realized that as a teenager, his dream had been to become a physician, a profession he had conceived as a way of helping people to a well-balanced and happy life. Continuing reflection, he realized that he had aimed at a similar goal in practicing aikido, a sport he had liked. And he began to wonder whether he could perhaps become an aikido coach in his own



dojo. Some days later, as he was walking in his neighborhood, he suddenly saw a notice advertising space to let. Immediately, he thought: “Wouldn’t that be a perfect place for a dojo?” In other words, this opportunity “just jumped out at him”. Joel discerned the opportunity because he had earlier asked himself: “Could I make a living as an aikido coach?” Aikido made sense, in this case, since it referred to what Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979), as well as Savickas (2011), would call a major life theme in Joël’s mind: a desire to help people live a balanced and happy life.

### **2.3 A new look into the human subject**

In the meantime, approaches to human subjects in the social sciences and humanities have changed. Four major changes can be enumerated. Firstly, human subjects are now seen as less unified and homogeneous than previously. They are described as “plural” (Rowan & Cooper, eds., 1999; Lahire, 2011), as speaking with different voices (Gergen, 2011), as combining different “I” positions (Hermans, & Kempen, 1993), as made of a set of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1986), as composed of different “subjective identity forms” (Guichard, 2001; Guichard, 2005; Guichard, 2009), etc.

Secondly, the new approaches to “plural” human subjects describe them as seeking to give their lives unity, coherence and meaning. They do so notably through elicitation of certain life themes (Csikszentmihalyi, & Beattie, 1979; Savickas, 2005) and construction of life stories (Ricoeur, 1992; Delory-Momberger, 2009) around some plots, which from a certain future perspective invest some of their past and present life events with meaning.

Thirdly, behaviors are seen as less immediately determined by the individuals’ early or past experiences than was the case before. Rather, the new conceptions of the human subjects insist on the importance of meaning-making processes (Baubion-Broye, Dupuy, & Prêteur, eds., 2013), of (re)interpretations & symbolizations (Wiley, 1994), of dialogues (Jacques, 1991) and of various modes of relating to the self and to one’s own experiences (Foucault, 2010), etc., in determining individual self-conceptions and behaviors. The major consequence of these three changes is, fourthly, that human actors are now conceived as endowed with greater (at least potential) agency than before (Bandura, 2006).

### **2.4 A new grand research issue**

As the re-made concepts of the human subject are intertwined with an obligation to design independently lives and work pathways that individuals living in liquid modernity and working in flexible work organizations must meet, life- and career counseling researchers have come to concentrate on an individual’s self-construction. Their grand research question may be outlined as: What are the factors and processes involved in people’s government (to use Foucault’s term; Foucault, 2010) of their work pathways and of their lives?

In such circumstances, the dominant model of directing work pathways by individuals stipulates that individuals are holders of a certain capital of competencies they must be aware of and know how to invest in the work opportunities they are able to recognize. These competencies are described either in terms of career capital (Arthur, 1994; DeFillippi, & Arthur, 1996; Arthur, & Rousseau, 1996) or of identity capital (Côté, 1996, Côté, 1997). Concepts such as “serendipity” (Merton, & Barber, 2003) or “planned happenstance” (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999) were either retrieved or constructed to describe the capability of spotting certain opportunities and seizing them. Special attention in scrutiny has

been paid to decision-making processes (Gati, 1986; Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, & Reardon, 2002) as well as adaptability to continuously changing conditions (Savickas, 1997), etc.

In the same contexts, as regards life designing processes, researchers have applied different theoretical perspectives to investigate the ways in which people build their mid-term projects, their future goals, or their life plans, etc. (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994 ; Young, Valach & Collin, 2002). In addition, a few general models have been developed to describe the reflexive processes through which individuals make sense of their lives and work pathways and direct them accordingly (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2011; Guichard, 2005; Guichard, 2009; Guichard, & Dumora, 2008; Collin & Guichard, 2011).

### **2.5 Three kinds of interventions for career- and life construction: information, guidance and dialogue**

The second paradigm informs three forms of interventions developed to help people design their careers and/or their lives. A single word is enough to sum up the major features of each of them: information, guidance, and dialogue.

Interventions of the first type aim to teach people how to find relevant and accurate information they need to direct their work pathways. Their major purpose is to teach them to collect pertinent and reliable information about the current world of work and answer such questions as: What activities form this work function? What are the employment prospects in this domain? How can one prepare for such a function? What are the common recruiting procedures?

Interventions of the second type can be named guidance on the development of employability. Their goal is to help clients construct an adaptable vocational self-concept that matches the current social norms of employment. For this purpose, clients learn to engage in a certain type of reflection on themselves and their diverse experiences – a reflection guided by the current norms of work and employment. This means that, in these interventions, clients learn to relate to themselves and their experiences in some specific ways. For example, they learn to reflect on, firstly, the competencies they have developed in their various life experiences as related to the competencies required to perform a particular work function; secondly, the fundamental needs, interests and values they expect to be fulfilled in a particular job; and, thirdly, all the resources they can rely on to facilitate their transitions to a certain job. The competencies portfolios, most career questionnaires, software and career education workshops are prototypical examples of such guidance interventions.

Interventions of the third type involve life designing dialogues. They intend to assist people in developing reflexivity they need to design their lives in liquid modernity (Savickas, & al. 2009). Unlike career guidance, these dialogues don't aim to support clients in thinking about their lives from the perspective of the current social norms of employability. Their purpose is more fundamental. It is to help them define their own norms – the norms from which they can give their lives meaning and direct them. Life designing dialogues intend to assist clients in finding their life bearings that will play the holding role in their lives, which stable institutions and established ideologies offered in solid modernity. What lies at stake for the individuals is eliciting major future perspectives which would imbue their lives with meaning. In Peirce's terms (see Colapietro, 1989), such perspectives could be called the final interpretants of the past, present and expected life events which an individual construes as mutually interdependent and forming a meaningful whole. As shown by Peirce and Jacques (1991), the

production of such interpretants implies that people engage in dialogues with themselves and others. That is why these interventions take the form of dialogues about what fundamentally matters in the clients' lives and what they expect to achieve. They are deliberation processes (Lhotellier, 2001) which help clients look at their various experiences from various "potential future perspectives" and give them a (never fully established) meaning.

The career construction interview (Savickas, 2005) and the counseling dialogues for self-construction (Guichard, 2008) are examples of such dialogues. Counselology, as developed by Alicja Kargulowa (2012), is a major contribution to the understanding of specificities of these dialogues. Counselology can be defined as an anthropology based on the insight that Man is fundamentally a speaking being able to look at things from the perspective of the other, and, in doing so, to give advice to other people or to him/herself as well as to receive advice from others or from him/herself.

### **3. Can career and life designing interventions contribute to solving the major issues perturbing currently many societies and the world?**

The paradigm which holds that individuals are managers of their lives and work pathways seems to match well the demands posed to individuals in western societies at present. But it also raises doubts and questions. Some of them concern the considerable differences in people's capabilities to govern their training and working pathways and the current lack of decent work. And some other questions refer to a broader query: Can such a paradigm contribute to solving the major crises that the world is now facing?

#### **3.1 Facilitating common individual construction of competencies required to design lives and career**

As noted earlier, the new paradigm posits that individuals rely on a bunch of competencies to manage their careers and lives. This observation raises the issue of how these competencies are constructed. Numerous studies (for example: Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Law, 1981; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Guichard, 1993; Côté, 1997; Young, Valach & Collin, 2002) have suggested that activities, interactions and interlocutions which individuals engage in in their different life settings (family, occupation, education, sports, community, etc.) play a determining role in this construction.

But, individuals' involvement in one setting or another depends closely, on the one hand, on the volume of the different types of capital (economic, cultural and social; cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) that they inherit, and, on the other hand, on their gender (Oakley, 1972). In addition, experiences provided by some settings lead individuals to construct certain competencies that have a greater social utility or value – as regards the direction of their protean careers – than experiences available in other settings. Furthermore, individuals can enter interactions and dialogues in a more or less important number of settings (generally, the better a person is endowed with different types of capital, the more settings he/she participates in). These various factors combine to produce a same result. Namely, the capital of competencies a person can rely on to manage his/her protean career may considerably differ – in terms of nature and volume – from another person's capital.

It is also very true about individual agency. Agency – as regards career- and life designing – appears to be closely bound with individuals' positions within the different social fields which make up their society (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Therefore, it would be hard to disagree

with Michèle Grosjean and Philippe Sarnin (2002, p. 16), who conclude: “The almost exclusive attribution to the individuals of their career management (...) may appear as a progress to those who have a latitude of choice in their system of activities, and as a social regression, coupled with a psychological ordeal, to the precarious workers, since they are put in a paradoxical situation of having to consider that their career depends on them whereas what they live is an undergone course of events”.

Admittedly, some relevant counseling interventions (whether information, guidance or dialogues) can somewhat compensate for such inequalities. But, in all likelihood, they are not enough. Indeed, the new paradigm presupposes that everyone – at least from childhood to emerging adulthood – is a creative being that should be provided with all opportunities of developing his/her idiosyncratic potentials via activities, interactions, dialogues in a variety of settings comprised of a developmental component.

Such a view profoundly differs from the way education is conceived today in most Western societies. In these societies, schooling plays a major role in education. But school is generally organized as a more or less covert competition among young people for an access to the best possible positions in society (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1990).

Therefore, it seems urgent to develop new frameworks for education and training of young people and adults. Elias (1991) indeed showed that school was conceived as a means of educating and training citizens of solid modern societies. It was instituted this way because such an organization appeared as the most appropriate way to build the kind of subjectivities such societies required. Now, this organization is reaching its limits: liquid modern societies are increasingly often confronted with what are generally referred to as “school problems” (failure, dropouts, violence, suicides, resorting to private companies selling educational supplements, etc.). Therefore, we need to imagine and implement forms of education and training which would suit the characteristics of liquid modern societies. Given the features of such societies, the changes shouldn’t be limited to a reform of the school organization. More broadly, they should involve a redefinition of all relevant knowledge in liquid modernity, new ideas about combining school and other learning experiences, and new ways of recognizing and validating socially the different kinds of knowledge.

### **3.2 Contributing to the institution of world labour law with a view to eradicating non-decent work**

The current decent work deficit - to use the International Labour Office’s expression (2001) - is another limit to the model of individuals responsible for directing their working paths. According to this international organization, it is unlikely that the world market of work, as it develops in the wake of financial capitalism (Marazzi, 2010), could offer a decent job to everyone in near future.

This development is even more worrying for young people under 25 years of age (ILO, 2013). They make up now 43% of the world population (60% in the countries of the global South; 26-27% of the world population is under 15). In some countries – particularly in Europe – unemployment rates are very high among young people. In April 2013, one young European out of four was unemployed. In some countries, the youth unemployment rates peaked. The figures are 62,5% in Greece, 56,4% in Spain, 51,8% in Croatia, 42,5% in Portugal, and 40,5% in Italy. In addition, the ILO (2013) observes that increasingly frequently young Europeans remain unemployed over long periods of time (the average time is 6 months), that they get

under-qualified jobs (as compared to their training) more often than those older than 30 years of age, that young people often have “non-standards” jobs (notably, imposed part-times jobs, interim jobs, very flexible schedules, etc.) and that the young unemployed are mostly uneducated or poorly educated or trained people.

Admittedly, the world figures are not so bad. The world unemployment rate for people under 25 was 12.6% in 2013. But the ILO report adds that this rate increases. It is expected to rise to 12.8% in 2018. In fact, the biggest problem lies elsewhere. The ILO notes namely that in developing regions, where 90 per cent of the global youth population live, stable, quality employment is especially lacking. In countries and regions with high poverty levels and high proportions of vulnerable employment, the youth employment challenge is as much a problem of poor employment quality as one of unemployment. The ILO report stresses that a major threat is implicit in the extremely preoccupying challenge of youth employment: “Perhaps the most important scarring is in terms of the current youth generation’s distrust in the socio-economic and political systems” (ILO, 2013, p. 2). In such a context, we cannot rule out that the current paradigm for career and life designing interventions – which aims to provide individuals with greater agency and liberty – may prove counterproductive and, instead, produce in many people a sense of social despair, which in some states might trigger situations similar to what occurred in 1933 Germany.

It is indeed clear, notably in the Europe, that the information and guidance interventions for employability – even the best possible ones – won’t be able to ensure professional inclusion of all young people, and even less decent jobs, in a near future. Hence, one can posit that these interventions could be relevantly supplemented with two categories of considerations.

The first category would aim to raise awareness of the decent work issue in all young people. For this purpose, some guidance interventions – such as career education workshops – wouldn’t only concentrate on the development of individual employability, but would also include some more general thinking on the modes of work organization, on the global distribution of jobs, on the characteristics of decent work and on the ways to contribute to its worldwide expansion. For example, these workshops could be based on the definition of decent work given by the ILO: “Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men”.

Such career education workshops could comprise a phase during which participants would share their thoughts about this definition, about its strengths and limitations, about its possible improvement and about the ways to make it operational and even compulsory everywhere in the world. This perspective would add a new dimension to career education, a dimension of education for citizenship, for world citizenship.

The objective would be eventually to develop – as a cumulative effect of increased awareness in many young people – an international organization for worldwide regulation and control of work organization and job distribution. It is indeed difficult to come up with anything else than a powerful world organization of work, based on democratic principles, to contain the deleterious effects that current unregulated economic competition has on work (Dejours, 2000; Sennett, 1998). The new international organization would have a normative power. It

would define and implement labour law worldwide (similar to currently valid international law regulating the world trade).

### **3.3 Helping deprived people create and develop local exchange trading systems and/or micro-companies in the sector of social and solidarity economy**

Introducing such a reflection on decent work into career education would not have any immediate impact on the current job supply and people's transitions to work. But, the situation today is such that many – young or adult – people remain unemployed over very long periods of time and get only some interim and non-decent jobs. Therefore, another new perspective might be brought into career guidance interventions (targeting either adults or young people in whatever form, including education or counseling interview). It would aim to help them create and develop some Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) of competencies and/or micro-companies in the sector of social and solidarity economy.

In fact, a type of economy based on selling one's competencies locally is already flourishing in many urban underprivileged neighbourhoods, as showed by Lapeyronnie (2008) in his *Urban Ghetto* and confirmed in a recent report titled *The housing project of managing* published by *Le Monde* (dated Sept. 5, 2013). Some guidance interventions could probably help transform such *black* economy into a more rewarding organisation for the people involved in it: that of the Local Exchange Trading Systems of services and products. (LETS. Cf. Laacher, 2002; Liatard & Lapon, 2005). Such systems seem able to compensate (at least for a time) for the lack of opportunities of inclusion into the existing economic system. In such exchange networks, people can indeed invest and develop some of their competencies, exchange the goods they have produced for the products of other people in the network, be recognized as bearers of a certain capital of competencies, skills, mindsets, etc., and recognize other people (Honneth, 1995) according to the same dimensions.

Such networks could be seen as devices for promoting social and occupational inclusion, which could make up, partly at least, for the deleterious consequences of a lack of work. They encourage their participants to realize that exchanges, interactions and dialogues with other people are the active principles of personal development provided that they take place in a democratic organization which alleviates possible tensions among the actors. They offer thus an opportunity for developing one's civic awareness. One may also think that some of the competencies and products developed within such exchange systems could, ultimately, fit in the dominant economic system and pave the way for establishment of micro-companies (in the legal form of, for example, workers' cooperatives of production - SCOP) in the context of the social and solidarity economy (De Calan & Guichard, 2013).

### **3.4 Care for distant others, fair institutions and a fair and sustainable development as a topic of counselling dialogues**

Decent work deficit is not the only current world crisis. Other crises are at least equally worrying. One can mention, for example, the demographic explosion (the world population has reached 7 billion. Forecasts for 2050 have been revised upwards and stand at 10 billion now) inducing massive migrations of populations who can't survive where they were born (Ehrlich, & Ehrlich, 2009). This demographic growth goes hand in hand with massive exploitation of the natural resources (also caused by overconsumption in some countries), which goes far beyond their capacity to replenish (for example: in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world water consumption increased sevenfold. Today, it amounts to 4 billion cubic meters, which is

more than the reserves' capacity to replenish [Fotopolous, 2007]). In addition, one observes global warming, which causes new problems (such as a rise in the ocean water level) and a growing gap between the rich individuals and populations and the poor ones (Thompson & Reunevy, 2009).

How could the current dominant paradigm in the domain of career and life interventions – the model of the responsible individuals managing their lives and occupational paths – contribute to the solving of these major crises, which weigh heavily on the future of humanity?

To try to answer this question, one can start from observing that when people wonder about their future work pathways, they generally take into account the possible repercussions of their career decisions on their close ones. This is obviously thinking in individual terms, but in most cases, individuals consider how their choices will affect the lives of other people, notably their kin. Additionally, some people seem to wonder also about the consequences of their choices for distant others or for mankind in general (Devine, & Maassarani, 2011; Chateauraynaud, & Torny, 2013). Nevertheless, most people don't enter into such considerations when they have to make a decision about their work pathways. Some people happen even to get involved in professional duties although they realize how harmful they may be to others. The subprime mortgage crisis is an example of such involvements, since one of its causes was a supply of loans to people who, as bank credit officers and their supervisors very well knew, should not have taken them.

At the same time, when people design their lives, they usually enter into broader considerations. They ask themselves such questions as: What will be my legacy to my children? Or, more generally: What kind of world are we going to leave for the coming generations? When they do so, they embark necessarily on an ethical reflection about what really makes life worth living. Indeed, as stressed by Charles Taylor, the self can exist only in a space of moral issues: "We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for me. (...) We are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions, as we seek and find an orientation to the good" (Taylor, 1989, p. 34). To make sense of their lives people must attend to guiding questions such as: What does it mean to be good? What gives my life human dignity? (Malrieu, 2003). Therefore, it may be said that designing one's life always occurs against a background of more or less explicit and developed ethical considerations. In some cases, a profound dissonance occurs between these ethical considerations and the decisions a person has made or needs to make about his/her work pathways. Taking stock of such dissonances is a major element of the plot that structures the life narratives of people at work who want to redirect their careers towards jobs belonging to the social and solidarity economy (De Calan, & Guichard, 2013).

Consequently, we could posit that enhancing this background of ethical considerations, an integral part of people's reflections on their life perspectives, could make the counselling dialogues contribute to solving the previously mentioned world crises. Work on this issue has already been undertaken and supervised at the University of Wroclaw by Violetta Drabik-Podgórna (2007).

In practical terms, this means that in these dialogues counselors would systematically take on board the issue of care about distant others and fair institutions (in particular, the topic of decent work) when it is not spontaneously addressed by their clients. Indeed, according to Ricoeur (1992), reflecting on good life and taking into account the care about distant others

and fair institutions lie at the very heart of any ethical intention. The themes of “care for others and fairness” should be combined with the “Imperative of Responsibility” proposed by Jonas, 1984 (p. 37): “Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life.”

Reflecting on their lives in this way would probably affect the way people see their work pathways and their current or expected job. Of course, such individual considerations are not likely to produce any immediate effects on the world of work as it is organized now, that is, with a view to maximizing financial profits. One may nevertheless imagine that a further expansion of such thoughts might entail devising both a world organization of work and a world distribution of jobs relative to the maximization of human development they might foster.

Nevertheless such a change stands a chance only if an international labour law is developed to enforce across the world the standard of decent work for a fair and sustainable development. Elaboration and implementation of such a law should be seen as one of the major tasks that the current globalized world has to undertake, just like the Rights of Man and the Citizen were and are still gradually specified and implemented.

To conclude, I need to add that I’m aware that such a take on the issue of “How could career and life designing interventions contribute to a fair and sustainable human development?” looks fragile and a bit utopian. I hope that in near future the UNESCO chair of lifelong guidance and counselling and its UNITWIN partners will contribute to clarifying and applying some of these solutions as well as to discovering and implementing other solutions to the pertinent problems of liquid modernity.

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