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Citation for published version:

Darmon, I & Perez, C 2011, 'Conduct of Conduct' or the Shaping of 'Adequate Dispositions': Labour Market and Career Guidance in Four European Countries' *Critical Social Policy*, vol 31, no. 1, pp. 77-101., 10.1177/0261018310385440

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1177/0261018310385440](https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018310385440)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Author final version (often known as postprint)

Published In:

Critical Social Policy

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Darmon, I., & Perez, C. (2011). 'Conduct of Conduct' or the Shaping of 'Adequate Dispositions': Labour Market and Career Guidance in Four European Countries. *Critical Social Policy*, 31(1), 77-101doi: 10.1177/0261018310385440

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‘Conduct of conduct’ or the shaping of ‘adequate dispositions’? Labour market and career guidance in four European countries

Abstract

In this paper, we provide an analysis of the deployment of labour market and career guidance as an instrument of liberal governmental rationality, and hence as a key tool for shaping attitudes suitable for the labour market. We characterize such processes and their effects on both those in receipt of guidance and those delivering it, on the basis of a three-year study in France, Slovenia, Spain and the UK. This leads us to put forward the problematic character of the notion of ‘conduct of conduct’, especially owing to the conflation implied between adaptation to governmental ends and freedom. We suggest that Max Weber’s categories for depicting active adaptation in bureaucratic capitalism provide a more grounded grasp of the processes involved, and that the radical distinction he establishes between adaptation and the possibility of conduct may provide a new basis for conceptualizing resistance to liberal governmental rationality.

Key words: adaptation, labour market coaching, liberal governmentality, resistance, Max Weber

Introduction

In recent years, labour market as well as career information, advice and guidance (hereafter ‘guidance’) have spurred much policy and research effervescence, especially – though not only – fostered by the OECD and the European Commission (Sultana, 2004). After decades in a rather more humble and obscure position, this shift raises questions as to the new properties and functions with which labour market and career guidance may have been endowed.

If we accept, with Foucault, that to govern is to structure the possible field of action of others and one’s own (Foucault, 1983: 221), and that governmentality refers to a political rationality for governing in order to achieve an economic end (Foucault, 1978), it can be said that career guidance had been conceived, from the beginnings of its institutionalization in the inter-war period and especially just after the Second World War as a key instrument of governmentality in the employment sphere. Its remit, then, was more specifically the occupational matching of young people. In the tension which existed from the beginning between a ‘humanist’ trend for the development of individual potential and the concern with planning for the national economies in a context of stable education/occupation relationships, the latter had the upper hand (Perez and Personnaz, 2008: 13).

From the 1970s and 80s onwards (in Western Europe) and the 1990s (in Central and Eastern Europe), the matching of individuals’ vocational choices with the planned ‘needs’ of the economy gave way to the dissemination of a new imperative of ongoing self-matching to the

labour market (Serrano, 2004: 500): constant attuning (of the self) should ideally replace periodic planning (of fluxes). This was but one of the manifestations of a further turn in liberal governmentality, which consecrated the market as a unique source of value: as Frade has suggested, liberal governmentality should be understood as the shaping of thought, dispositions, and action by means of market or quasi-market mechanisms with the aim of intensifying the economic processes (Frade, 2007: 37–8). Thus this new conception of guidance went alongside a radical shift in the conception of work (advocated and fostered from different, sometimes opposed, perspectives), from employment in bounded occupations regulated through employment protection legislation, to the mobilization of more floating, 'portable' competences and skills, whose maintenance and enhancement is supposed to be the new protection of the individual on the labour market. It was in that context that career and labour market guidance, now also addressed to adults, was progressively institutionalized as a component, both, of the labour market policy sphere (for the so-called 'activation' of the unemployed and other benefit recipients) and of what became the 'lifelong learning' policy sphere (for the promotion of permanent concern with one's 'skills' and 'employability').

Our characterization of adult guidance as an instrument of liberal governmental rationality reflects this institutional development of adult guidance as a key tool for shaping attitudes suitable for the labour market and facilitating mobilization for work. This, we had already suggested, should be the starting point for a proper understanding of what guidance is meant to do and what it does in a context of ongoing 're-commodification' of labour (Frade and Darmon, 2006). Our purpose in this paper is precisely to document these moulding processes and their effects on the dispositions and behaviours of both those in receipt of guidance and those delivering it; and in this way hopefully to contribute some initial pointers to what we see as the necessary reassessment of the notions of 'conduct' and 'conduct of conduct' in the theorization of liberal governmental rationality.

In particular, as has been argued by Frade (2007), the idea according to which freedom is at the core of this rationality, an idea which is not only entertained in the secondary literature but which, in this case, goes back to Foucault's definition of the exercise of power (Foucault, 1983, 1984) and of liberalism (Foucault, 2004: 65), is shown to be rather an obstacle to understanding what exactly is 'produced' by such rationality and how. More specifically, we argue that categories such as 'conduct of conduct' (Foucault, 1984: 314) and 'governing through freedom' (Rose, 1999: 84) inadequately render the kind of fostering of stereotypical attitudes taking place through disciplinary instruction in the compulsory or strongly incentivized arrangements of activation programmes or through the organization of the performative actualization of a 'career management' competence in the formally voluntary arrangements of lifelong guidance, which we document and analyse in the 'Models of guidance' section; and that they also do not do justice to the kinds of mechanisms at work for the mobilization of staff as active and effective relays of the policy goals of governmental guidance ('Mobilization of staff' section).

Rather, as we explain in the 'Theorizing conduct' section, we have found it necessary to go back to the roots of the notions of conduct and the 'possibility of conduct', that is to say, to the thought of Max Weber, and to the radical distinction he establishes with the spirit of adaptation characterizing modern bureaucratic capitalism. Crucially, Weber insisted that adaptation does require drive and even initiative, and the active fostering of 'adequate dispositions': such an approach appears particularly suited for the illumination of the empirical processes of 'inner tuning' (Eingestelltheit) and mobilization of self-interest documented in our empirical work. But the distinction between adaptation and 'conduct' also allows us to analyse how mechanisms designed to entrench adaptation have corruptive effects on the possibility of self-determined conduct, a process which Richard Sennett's notion of the 'corrosion of character' also illuminates. Thus we suggest that this distinction, and hence the overcoming of the confusion generated by the conflation of adaptation and freedom in the notion of 'conduct of conduct', is also important for the conceptualization of resistance to governmental power: and perhaps for pointing to a possible way out of the impasses of Foucault's theory of the exercise of power in that respect (Bouquin, 2008: 29).

Characteristics of the study and guidance programmes and centres analysed

We base our analysis on a European research project, carried out between 2004 and 2007, and more particularly on 38 case studies of guidance programmes and centres in France, Slovenia, Spain and the UK, four countries with contrasting institutional trajectories of adult guidance. The case studies entailed in-depth interviews with programme and centre managers, advisers and guidance receivers. We choose to generically refer here to guidance 'receivers' as the designations of individuals as 'users', 'clients', 'candidates', 'members' correspond to specific policy, managerial, and less frequently professional discourses.¹

The programmes and centres studied were selected so as to broadly cover the spectrum available in each country across the various policy and legal frameworks within which guidance is organized: (1) 'activation'; (2) 'lifelong learning'; (3) territorial or voluntary sector employment programmes, delivered outside of any activation framework; and finally (4) programmes set up in the context of collective redundancies. In this paper we focus more particularly on the first two, which constitute the dominant frameworks for guidance as a governmental technology: in a context of activation, guidance follows a model of labour market coaching, whilst it is more akin to a model of tutoring for career self-management and/or career coaching in the context of lifelong learning policies.

A table of the case studies used in this paper and their distribution across these three models of guidance is provided later in the paper.

Theorizing conduct: Indications for a confrontation between Foucault and Weber

In 2004, crowning years of work of an expert group, the Council of the European Union coined a definition of guidance as

a range of activities that enables citizens of any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which these capacities and competences are learned and/or used. (p. 2)

Such formulation appears almost as the technical specification of Nikolas Rose's contention that liberal governmental rationality acts upon the 'self-steering capacities of individuals' (Rose, 1998: 160): here individuals are 'enabled' to 'make decisions', 'manage' their own array of 'capacities, competences and interests'. However, it is not only 'a mistake just to "read off" consequences from governmental ambitions', as McKee (2009: 474) rightly argues. Rather government discourse is taken at face value in the governmentality literature because, all too often, it is pervaded by the very rationality that it claims to analyse. Such phrases and terms ('make decisions', 'manage', 'self-steering', 'conduct') convey the idea that freedom is at the core of liberal governmental rationality, and indeed that this rationality is constitutive of 'citizenship', whilst the 'subjects' thus shaped are rendered more adaptable to, in this case, the workings of the labour market, even though Rose acknowledges that this might mean the 'continuous economic capitalization of the self' (Rose, 1999: 161).

As suggested above, the problem posed by such conflation between freedom and adaptation may be seen as going back to Foucault's text on the exercise of power ('Le pouvoir, comment s'exerce-t-il?', i.e. the second essay on 'the subject and power', first published in English in 1983 and in French in 1984). In that text Foucault equates the definition of government as an 'action on actions', which shapes 'the field of possibilities', with the notion of government as the 'conduct of conduct'.² Further, he defines the freedom presupposed by such conception of power as the availability of a 'field of possibilities where several conducts, several reactions and various modes of behaviour can take place' whilst insisting on its 'intransitivity' and therefore on the 'agonism' of power relations (Foucault, 1984: 314–15). But we sense that such equivalences, between the action located in a pre-defined field of possibilities and 'conduct', and between freedom as choice and the intransitive freedom which struggles for its survival and affirmation, really bring together different universes. Returning to Weber's notion of conduct might help us clarify what these universes are, and therefore the implications of such equivalences.

Indeed it is Max Weber who coined the notion of life conduct (*Lebensführung*) as the key to the advent of the rationality of modern capitalism, whereas he associated the later mechanization into bureaucratic capitalism (Weber, 2004: 4) with a spirit of 'adaptation' (Weber, 2002: 32). He thus suggested that adaptation, as such, is fundamentally antithetic to conducting one's life. Self-determined life conduct stems from an inner orientation and constancy of direction, and it is that inner drive, in opposition to external constraint or 'stereotyping', that endows one's conduct with a plasticity and capacity for action and adapting to new situations (Weber, 1922: 331). Self-determined conduct does require a capacity to look the world 'full in the face' (Weber, 2004: 24); but this is meant to avoid self-delusion, to maintain one's distance with oneself and the world, not to submit to it. On the

contrary, the inner drive described by Weber is never content 'with the world as the world is' (Frade, 2009: 19) but seeks to shape new forms, create new understandings, provide strengthened grounds for life in common etc. In other words, self-determined conduct subordinates adaptation to its own purposes and seeks to polish its knowledge and understanding of 'reality' from a perspective that both relies on and fosters engagement with the world, passion and responsibility (for one's engagement), distance and judgement: Weber's characterization of the life conduct of the politician and scholar of vocation can be extended, we believe, to all self-determined life conduct (Weber, 2004). By contrast, adaptation to the 'intrinsic logic' of bureaucratic capitalism requires the 'inner tuning' (Eingestelltheit) of dispositions and affects to certain 'forms of life' whether through discipline or the ingrainings of habit; or/and the development of an inner rationality spurred by social aspirations and economic interests (Weber, 1922: 60). The mechanization facilitated by this spirit of adaptation is not synonymous with lack of life, initiative or choice, and governing individuals towards it requires constantly renewed efforts. But what such mechanisms entail is the erosion of all things 'personal', in the very peculiar sense of the term for Weber, that is to say the way in which we refuse to be the mere conjunction of affects, needs and interests, that 'self' which is but matter ready to be moulded; and the way in which we maintain our own inner consistency in the conduct of our life, in our relations and accomplishments, whilst fully facing up to the world (Darmon, 2011).

Richard Sennett has also stressed how the roles contemporary capitalism casts us into bring about the 'corrosion of character', i.e. the erosion of the capacity 'for loyalty and mutual commitment . . . the pursuit of long-term goals' (Sennett, 1998: 10; see also Sennett, 2003: 52-3): in Weberian terms, the undermining of the possibility of life conduct, and hence of that inner strength and 'inner distance' which underpins the capacity for judgement. The Weberian argument of life conduct, for all its proximity with Sennett's, nevertheless casts light on the political, rather than moral tenor of these 'personal consequences of work in the new capitalism' (Sennett, 1998), something we will return to in our conclusion. But both highlight the hampering of conduct through the shaping of adaptation.

Thus it can be said that Foucault's notion of power as government unites what Weber had distinguished: administration (which, alongside the capitalist firm, seeks to mould 'types of men' and their 'form of life' amenable to the requirements of bureaucratic capitalism) and politics (the sphere of struggle, as well as of self-determination and affirmation, to be fought for by men and women whose life conduct is oriented to a cause) (see Frade, 2009). Precisely one of Weber's most constant endeavours was to point to the shrinking of the possibility of life conduct in a world manufacturing adaptation to what there is, and hence to pose the question of the conditions for a self-conducted life and for freedom as a question not for government but for politics and for each individual concerned with his/her stance in the world. Weber leads us to ask whether it is not the deliberate unification of the sphere of government and politics in Foucault's theorization of power, which so informed the further theorizations of liberal governmentality, that underpins the confusing conflation of adaptation and freedom; and whether this may make it difficult not only to understand what liberal

governmentality actually is and produces but also to conceive of resistance other than as feedback for power.

This brief confrontation shows, in our opinion, the need for a reassessment of the relevance, and limits, of the notion of conduct of conduct to characterize liberal governmentality: this, of course, is an ambitious undertaking which we can only begin here. We only wish to provide pointers for such reassessment, through our empirical analysis of guidance programmes and of the kind of dispositions and behaviours fostered by such liberal governmental instruments.

Models of guidance and the shaping of adequate dispositions in guidance receivers

Labour market coaching

The main policy framework for adult guidance is that of activation, which is but the latest version in the subordination of the protection of the unemployed and inactive to the market imperative ever since the creation of the labour market. Activation can take the shape of compulsory workfare programmes oriented to labour market placement or of non-workfare activation programmes, which are not formally compulsory and target other, 'labour market relevant', outcomes. The organization of guidance in such a framework derives from the liberal governmental rationality presiding over the supply of 'formally free' labour (Weber, 1922: 71), that is to say from the coupling of the 'right disposition of things', as Foucault, quoting 16th century author G. de la Perrière, liked to characterize government (Foucault, 1978: 643), with coercion: activation is always organized according to what can be called 'support/controlling regimes', even though their specific modalities vary across countries: the 'support' component is operated after four months of unemployment for all the unemployed in France, after three months in a targeted way in Slovenia, and only after eighteen months in Britain. In Spain, it is increasingly organized for recent benefit recipients after a few months of unemployment. In that context, the most extended model of guidance, in all countries of our study, is what we refer to as labour market coaching, and consists in developing the attitudes, the skills and tools of the unemployed for the end goal: return to the labour market.

The contents of programmes following that model tend to be everywhere the same: diagnosis of 'real needs', definition of an occupational target, jobsearch skills training (information search, CV writing, knowing how to go about interviews etc.) and individualized jobsearch monitoring. Programmes or modules targeted to the long-term unemployed or people who have been out of regular work for a long time also include training into basic personal skills (punctuality, presentation) and generally seek to address what they present and naturalize as 'barriers to employment'.

Table 1 Programmes and centres studied and referred to in the paper

	Model 1 Labour market coaching	Model 2 Tutoring individuals into career 'self- management'	Model 3 Career coaching
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France	France	France	France
Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (Public Employment Service) and subcontractors	Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (Public Employment Service) and subcontractors	Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (Public Employment Service) and subcontractors	Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (Public Employment Service) and subcontractors
Cités des Métiers	Cités des Métiers	Cités des Métiers	Cités des Métiers
Competence assessments	Competence assessments	Competence assessments	Competence assessments

The starting diagnosis is a crucial instrument across all programmes studied in this model for simultaneously 'adjusting' the expectations of the unemployed to the labour market (that is to say, lowering them) and yet fostering active (if not enthusiastic) jobseeking. By researching 'real' needs, the diagnosis constructs the jobseeker both as inadequate and yet as adaptable: it exposes the 'lack of realism' of job expectations as well as a lack of 'labour market relevant' skills. The aim of the diagnosis is to lead to an action plan for the individual to correct these lacks with some help: each step in the process then entails enhanced adaptation and is at the same time presented as a personal achievement, which is bound to enhance 'motivation' and 'self-image'.

In a context in which the support component of the 'support/controlling regimes' is hard to 'sell' to the unemployed (in the words of a UK workfare manager), it is rather pressed on them through the construction of a paradoxical dependency on the adviser, or on experts: thus, interviewed advisers of the Agence Nationale Pour l'Emploi (ANPE, the French public employment service [PES]) organized the 'experience' of individuals so as to make them come 'by themselves' to the conclusion that they should revise their goals, as a result of a sort of concentrate of exposure to 'reality', that is to say, employer requirements (Ségas, 2006: 13):

It is easier to change jobseekers' behaviour if they become aware of the reality of the situation by themselves than when I directly tell them the truth [sic]. For instance I organize interviews with professionals. I have to confront the incoherence of their project to the reality of the labour market. (ANPE adviser)

Clearly, disciplining is an appropriate depiction of the kind of shaping of dispositions and actions carried out in the labour market coaching model. For discipline, according to Weber, is 'the consistently rationalised, i.e. systematically instructed and precise execution of the received order, unconditionally setting aside any criticism of one's own, and the unremitting inner tuning (Eingestelltheit) exclusively towards this goal' (Weber, 1922: 642). Compliance with the order, here, of taking up a job, is worked upon not only through the instruction and ingrainings of specific attitudinal and behavioural 'skills', but also through the tuning of one's expectations and aims in life within the 'shell, hard as steel',³ of labour market 'reality'. The play on and modulation of the affects of the individual (fear – of inadequacy, of exclusion; helplessness; hope; anxiousness to do well etc.) are the key to this 'inner tuning' and the removal of 'any criticism of one's own', that is to say, the removal from any distance from

the 'order'. In this process, as suggested by Sennett for other contexts, 'character' becomes 'corroded', all the more so that the individuals subjected to such discipline, who have long internalized the general imperative of labour market participation, are treated as if their true self should be revealed to them through expertise, and reformed (Sennett, 2003: 178).

What is striking across the cases studied in the four countries is the uniformity of the behavioural and, most importantly, attitudinal 'skills' fostered or forced upon the unemployed with the aim of getting them into jobs: guidance measures seek to bring the unemployed to 'realism' about both the labour market and themselves (i.e. the lowering of their expectations), but also to 'responsibility' (the order is not 'get a job' but 'get a job by yourself'), 'motivation' and a 'positive' attitude (the banishment of criticism about the jobsearch process). But are these features of 'conduct'?

Rather they can be understood as adjuncts to the main order of return to the labour market, in which the unemployed are to be 'systematically instructed'. Indeed they appear as endless invocations, magical words passed on from programme specifications to advisers and to the unemployed:

The aim is setting the clear and realistic target with the client and a realistic view of the situation in the labour market. (adviser based in a provider organization delivering the main workfare programme in Slovenia)

Job-seekers must be treated like individuals, not like numbers. We have to help them to restore a positive image of themselves. (adviser, ANPE)

We want people to be more positive about life and work. (adviser based in a provider organization delivering a pilot workfare programme in the UK)

The adviser has helped me recover self-confidence by enabling me to see my own potentials and that the age could be an advantage, and as such it must be presented to potential employers. (former participant in the main workfare programme, Slovenia)

Such repetitions put forward the stereotypical character of these attitudes. This could be anticipated, since discipline is training into a 'mechanised capacity' (Weber, 1922: 642), and brings about 'stereotypical responses' (Weber, 2004: 355).

Whether individuals abide by these stereotypes in an instrumental way, or whether they end up identifying with them and so to speak, self-stereotyping themselves into dutiful, responsible and active jobseekers, is highly variable, and this is something to investigate further. However, we might surmise that it is likely to be dependent on the capacity to maintain one's distance with regard to this 'tuning' process – a capacity which in turn depends on many factors and in particular on one's perception of the 'legitimacy' of such distance. It is notable that scepticism and criticism tended to be expressed much more frequently by our Spanish respondents than in the other countries ('what we need is not motivation but better jobs'). Participants in the experimental workfare programme studied

insisted on 'enjoying' their benefits whilst they could have them, as they knew that return to the labour market often means returning at best to a temporary 1,000 €job and were suspicious of the availability of benefits in the future (Darmon and Álvarez, 2006: 29). Such subordination of work to a more general conception of acceptable life is still rather strong in Spain, where the economic explanations of unemployment have tended to prevail over discourses on the undeserving poor. Such behaviour forced target-

constrained advisers (see section below) to highlight strategic and instrumental aims ('take advantage of us and our knowledge of the market whilst you're here') and so to appeal to self-interest rather than manufacturing dependency.

The maintenance of the possibility of some relative distance towards the labour market imperative nevertheless appears as a key factor putting limits to the 'corrosion of character' taking place in activation programmes: and here, despite the proximity of our work with some of McDonald and Marston's analyses of the concrete operation of welfare to work in Australia, we disagree with them, when they claim that 'the theoretical orientation [NB of governmentality studies] is able to call into question the rationality of advanced liberalism and its orientation to the "problem" of dependency' (2005: 397): for if 'resistant practices are . . . cracks and fissures' (2005: 394) in governmental rationality, then they can only be conceived of as deriving from the irrationality lodged in that very rationality. Yet our Spanish example (and indeed, we believe, McDonald and Marston's own examples of resistance) are rooted in a 'substantive rationality' of the good life, which, as Weber has shown, is the exact opposite to the formal rationality of the market, and precisely that against which modern capitalism was erected (Weber, 2002: 17).

Tutoring towards 'career self-management' and career coaching

The other main policy framework for the set-up of guidance arrangements is that of 'lifelong learning' policies and their concern with entrenching the norm of employability. There we find guidance centres and programmes whose whole design is predicated upon

voluntary access and the absence of any outcome requirements. They follow a model of tutoring towards 'career self-management'; or of career coaching. The incidence of such models is very significant in both the UK and Slovenia, where open-access resource centres and voluntary programmes have been set up as vehicles of national lifelong learning strategies oriented to raising the education levels of the general population. However, guidance in such centres and programmes in the UK is usually targeted to the lower skilled or other priority groups. In Spain, a national lifelong learning strategy has also been devised in the last few years, but no such guidance models had been implemented at the time of our fieldwork. In France, which has a highly developed system of continuous training for people in employment, such models are encountered in the field of competence assessments and other forms of guidance for people in employment. Open-access centres (the Cités) have been set up by the Regions.

In these models, the fostering of 'career development skills' as such signals them as something which is to be acquired and valued quite independently from the substantive interest embodied in a specific professional orientation, as objects of a conscious learning process, whereby one becomes aware that one is responsible for the development, fruition and mobilization of a 'capital of skills'. 'Career development skills' paradoxically reflect the dilution of the notion of profession, and it is one's actual trajectory, the empirical sequence of jobs and inter-job lapses, that one is encouraged to prepare oneself for, cope with, and 'manage'. Here again it is the formal competence of labour market readiness that takes precedence over the substantive interest in a profession and its content.

A paradigmatic example of such centres is constituted by the Cités des Métiers, which started in Paris in 1993 and now form a network of 14 certified Cités in France and 14 in the rest of the world. The Cités are resource centres, aimed at, in the words of their founders, 'helping users to become the actors of their professional lives' by, first, acquiring a better understanding of their own position in the world of work. Access is open to all, voluntary, free and anonymous. One of the core principles underpinning the Cités is to develop the individuals' autonomy for information search. Advisers are asked to

incite users to develop an iterative and autonomous approach to the space of the Cité, moving from a meeting with an adviser to the documentary resources to the public encounters with professionals [i.e. sector representatives, employers etc.] and back. They should encourage individuals to gather complementary outlooks and visions. (extract from the Cités certification kit)

The Cités are illustrations of an approach where things are 'arranged' (disposées) rather than forced upon through coercion – here it is the physical space and time which performatively constitute advisers as resources amongst others and constitute visitors as investigators, researchers for themselves. Indeed the individuals interviewed made a very diverse use of the place – from punctually looking for information, to meeting an adviser to 'discuss and confirm their career decisions', to writing up their CV simply because the place is pleasant and there is free access to computers, and this shows that they identified the Cité as a resource for their own search. Several visitors interviewed used the Cité in a recurring fashion (Perez and Personnaz, 2008: 131–5).

By 'career coaching' we refer to a more pragmatic and finalized model of guidance, represented for example in Learndirect in the UK and the Adult Educational Guidance centres in Slovenia, targeted to direct and concrete outcomes, and ranging from simply helping individuals to identify training courses, or to apply for funding, to defining a 'training project', an 'action plan' (Kopac and Ignjatovic, 2006). These concrete coaching interventions are nevertheless also a vehicle for fostering the skills for further 'career self-management'. Thus Learndirect, a publicly funded internet and telephone-based platform of voluntary information and advice on courses, also provides career coaching (in principle to low qualified people, some of whom are referred by Jobcentre +). Special care is there given

to the 'contracting process' with guidance receivers (Bertram and Wright, 2006: 20–1). Contracting, which occurs not only at the beginning but throughout a call to a 'career coach' (adviser), interjects a meta-level of interaction in the development of the conversation: the adviser seeks to ensure that the caller fully realizes that each of his/her demands is identified, clarified and treated (if only to refer to another organization). It signifies to the caller that he/she has entered a relation of 'service', in a role of 'client', entitled to satisfaction within the boundaries of what the service can offer (and whose satisfaction will be probed in the regular surveys which feed into the monitoring of the platform).

This example, as well as the example of the Cités in the second model of guidance, clarifies the notion of 'autonomy' at the core of these two models: autonomy is the competence of the individual as bearer, owner, administrator, provider and seller of marketable skills, able to resort to specialized 'services' for the advancement of his/her own capital of skills.

Again, the stereotypical character of the figure of the 'career self-manager' found here is striking. It alerts us to a disciplining process at work, albeit in a context totally exempt from formal compulsion. Indeed the centres and programmes in these models can count on the self-discipline stemming from the internalization of the de facto compulsion of labour market participation. Guidance, in this model, can therefore be content with organizing and making conscious the experience of the role of 'manager' of one's own 'career', thereby strengthening a conception of working life in which substantive professional interest is reframed or relegated.

The mobilization of staff and the possibility of resistance

The shift from the norm of employment to that of employability over the last decades has propelled guidance into a strategic place, as a key governmental technology, which in its turn has led to its further, ever more encompassing governmentalization, tying it to policy objectives of activation and mobilization for work (Frade and Darmon, 2006). As far as implementation is concerned, this has meant, as is well known, the adoption of marketization as the structuring principle – be it through the organization of quasi-market (and market) competition, or through the spread of internal contracts.

In all of these contractual arrangements, provider or unit mobilization for governmental objectives is demanded, obtained and monitored through activity, output and/or outcome targets which directly condition funding in most cases, as well as, usually, through forms of accreditation against standards. Only a few organizations amongst those studied (the French Cités, the Adult Education Centres in Slovenia), considered as centres for the public, have so far preserved themselves from the ubiquity of target culture and chiefly monitor numbers of visitors. Targets and standards in turn shape the internal organization of providers: they are translated into standardization processes, management procedures, the definition of staff profiles and staff recruitment, employment conditions and staff monitoring and assessment (Perez and Darmon, 2007).

This seems the perfect assemblage of cascading contracts for securing provider and staff commitment, responsibility and accountability through 'the right disposition of things'. Indeed, as Nikolas Rose has pointed out, liberal governmentality relies on an array of devices set up to render delivery agencies amenable to calculation and to disseminate a norm of accountability that is 'not professional but [that of] accounting'. Further, the generalization of such a norm fosters a 'culture of suspicion' and an obsession with the 'defensibility' of practices which completes what amounts to an onslaught on any idea of professional discretion (Rose, 1999: 152–6).

All of this received ample empirical illustration in our study. However, although it is true that the introduction of targets and standards has been decisive for the shaping and 'streamlining' of staff dispositions and practices, the imposition of managerialism on staff also requires the more direct fostering of adequate attitudes, unless the all-encompassing character of the target system, as in the UK PES, Jobcentre +, effectively transforms staff into pure executants: advisers need to be mobilized as active relays of the governmental aims of guidance. A disposition of active adaptation is required for advisers no less than for guidance receivers.

Strategies have included the active remodelling of staff through recruitment (more business administration and human resources graduates and fewer psychologists in ANPE, but also in the competence assessment centres; younger people with less professional experience, who can be trained into in-house practices, as is the case in Learndirect and Careers Scotland); and, in the UK, the complete redesign and restructuring of professional qualifications in the 1990s (steered by the professional associations) in a way that tied them to the lifelong learning agenda and the new contexts of implementation.

But our findings also reveal the importance, in that respect, of 'tricks' inherent in managerial mechanisms – across most programmes and centres studied: contradictory injunctions, the creation of dependencies, the misuse of collegiality and the engineering of the relaxation of professional ethical stances put individuals in a position where, in order to 'perform well', they may have to go not only against what they consider 'a job well done', but even against what, as individuals as much as in their professional capacity, they hold as valuable. This leads to inner contradictions with 'corrosive' – or, in Weber's terms, corruptive (Weber, 2008: 120) – effects, not only on one's stance at work but, as Sennett has argued, on 'character', understood as the 'ethical value we place on our desires and our relations to others'. In the attempt at suppressing these inner tensions and the feeling of uneasiness, and sometimes outright suffering, that they cause, individuals develop self-justifications, which inevitably bind them more tightly and firmly to the rationality of the organization and programme.

The linking of continuity of employment with target-related performance constitutes a first example of such mechanisms, which has its most serious effects in the case of workfare programmes and redundancy advice (our 'labour market coaching' model above), given the

tying of these programmes to outcome targets. In particular, the resort to fixed-term employment contracts for the duration of the programme is current practice for the employment of guidance advisers in Spain (where one third of the working population is in fixed-term employment). This circumstance, which is the norm in Spain, has also been noted elsewhere (e.g. for New Zealand see Strathdee, 2004: 68). It amounts to making advisers directly dependent on the take up of a job by the unemployed they monitor, and to have a direct material and pressing interest in fostering certain kinds of behaviours in the unemployed, quite independently from the latter's demands (Darmon and Álvarez, 2006).

A second mechanism, meant to deal with the reluctance of PES staff to play sanctioning roles is the introduction of modulated sanctioning. In France, a new, more gradual, system was introduced in 2005, of which advisers are made a key part as they have to assess the opportunity of sanctioning for 'refusal to take up a job' and 'insufficiency of jobsearch'. Before then, hardly any other sanction existed than suspension of benefit payment and striking someone off from the benefit registers, which advisers were unwilling to trigger. Since the reform, ANPE advisers have become less hesitant about reporting individuals whom they deem to be 'passive'. This places them in a position which they had so far avoided: in the words of a respondent, being simultaneously the 'lawyer, the cop and the judge' (Perez and Personnaz, 2008: 26). But some advisers overcome their uneasiness by reformulating this as a dilemma between compliance and the risk of 'degraded professionalism' due to heavy workloads caused by individuals for whom they feel they can do nothing (Lavitry, 2009): through such formulation, advisers take the view that, in applying sanctions, they do not so much comply with a 'cop' role as preserve their professional capacity to act.

Our third example concerns the implementation of standardization in guidance centres and programmes following models of tutoring towards 'career self-management' and career coaching: whilst there is no monitoring on outcomes, since the content of the decisions made by guidance receivers escapes them, some of these centres, especially in Britain, are subjected to very stringent and high activity and output targets. Thus Careers Scotland is monitored on output targets (global and for determined priority groups), as well as on modalities of implementation, e.g. mode of access: 70% of the more than 200,000 annual users (a correct term here) should opt for the self-service mode.

In that context, a key instance of standardization has been the introduction of a software tool, the 'Career Planning Journey', which was expected to become the most common resource accessed by users, with advisers providing back-up only. This new procedure was enforced on staff through a 'soft' governance mechanism, a quality process involving exchange of practices, mutual observation between staff and 'self-reflection' forms. However, the results of these analyses, supposedly a product of collegiality, were directly fed into the individual annual staff reviews. The outcomes of the review for staff, in terms of rating and bonuses, were thus directly dependent on their adhesion to standardization. Staff conformity was sought through measures clearly amounting to the disciplining of reluctant staff, usually those

with more seniority, alongside the valorization and mobilization of younger staff, better disposed towards the tool. The engineering of competition between colleagues, framed as generational and to do with receptivity to innovation, is certainly one of the most directly 'corrosive' mechanisms of mobilization (and marginalization of the unwilling, tagged unfit).

Resistance to such mechanisms of mobilization has become increasingly difficult to set up and justify in terms of professionalism. The reasons for this difficulty are apparent in the way in which professionalism and managerialism are represented as different modes of 'accountability to sets of norms' (Rose, 1999: 154), as different 'conceptions of mandate' (Lavitry, 2009), and thus as equally legitimate. The logical consequence of this has been that the readability of these sets of norms has become blurred, and performance against targets and standards has itself been cast as 'organizational professionalism' (vs. 'occupational professionalism') (Evetts, 2005). Furthermore, the way in which professionals 'from within' wish to present their activity is itself sometimes pervaded by managerialist concerns – thus the standard against which career guidance organizations are accredited in England has been developed by the professional association of guidance practitioners. Four of the eight assessment dimensions concern the management and render the 'service' measurable (Perez and Darmon, 2007: 12).

Against such a background, resistance to certain managerial practices can easily be questioned and marginalized. Thus senior advisers in Careers Scotland sought to resist the introduction of the software tool and refuse the 'McDonaldisation' (their word) of delivery (Bertram and Wright, 2006: 62): they chose to ignore the target, carried on deciding on a case by case basis whether to refer a user to the tool or not, and renounced their target-related bonuses. In so doing they sought to uphold a vision of professionalism predicated on the maintenance of one's own capacity for judgement. Yet it could also very well be relegated as professional conservatism and lack of transparency.

The Weberian notion of 'vocation', in reintroducing the question of the ends pursued, may provide a more grounded foundation for resistance than the appeal to professionalism, and one which is not necessarily to be seen as an individual path, but which can give rise to collective endeavours as well (Weber, 2008: 57). Vocation, for Weber, implies the passionate everyday devotion to a task, not, however, as the mere discharge of everyday duty and the submission to its logic, but in a way which engages us personally in a pursuit which seeks to reach beyond the everyday (Weber, 2004).

Indeed vocations for guidance are rather encountered on the margins of governmental guidance, in particular when it is a component of emancipatory projects: a rare occurrence, a remnant of more militant years, since funding not tied to governmental objectives has become the exception. Thus the French network of Information Centres for Women and Families (Centres d'Information sur les Droits des Femmes et des Familles, CIDF), a voluntary network partly funded by the government's Service to Women's Rights and Equality, has set up 'Offices of Individualised Mentoring for Employment' (Bureaux d'Accompagnement

Individualisé vers l'Emploi, BAIE), where women are received for free and provided with advice and guidance. There, labour market participation is seen primarily as a possible source of autonomy for women, rather than as a means to increase the labour supply. In the words of the interviewed CIDF adviser (who comes from feminist militancy, as do many in the network): 'Women's autonomy means getting a job, being economically independent'. The subordination of employment guidance to a concern with overall autonomy, that is to say the inclusion of economic concerns (which can be very pressing for the women visiting the Bureaux) within a more global emancipatory project, is an approach which can (and does) attract vocations in the strong sense.

Rather than the inner cracks of governmental rationality, it is the dedication to a task not reducible to the feeding of economic processes which, arguably, provides that inner strength necessary for resisting contrary governmentalizing pressures and refusing to go along. Thus the CIDF also has to deliver the official activation programmes alongside its activity of advocacy, and to juggle its political commitment with the demands of labour market oriented programmes. This juggling has for example involved the refusal, by staff, of the outcome targets for one of these programmes (job, training or business creation), and their substitution with the mere definition of a 'professional project' (Perez and Personnaz, 2008: 129).

But is vocation possible for those operating exclusively within the confines of governmentalized guidance? Can the personal decision to place the consideration of the individual as a whole person above other considerations inform one's stance in a target-steered depersonalized standardized environment? We suggest that it might often be in fact what underpins documented refusals to co-operate or the relaxation of discipline even in the PES context: a conception of the uniqueness of each individual and hence of the irreducible uncertainty of each individual situation has for example spurred advisers in the ANPE to carry out longer interviews; to abstain from systematically transmitting job offers to their guidance receivers so as not to have to 'track' them and leave more leeway to the individuals; and to foster the exchange on guidance practices between colleagues (Lavitry, 2009). The resistance of senior advisers in Careers Scotland can also be seen as motivated by such a conception of guidance, even though they themselves rather put forward the preservation of their professional space for discretion of judgement, which is but a corollary of such a conception.

Conclusion

In seeking to characterize the shaping of dispositions, thoughts and actions in the implementation of guidance as a governmental technology, we have found Weber's categories particularly pertinent. The disciplinary attuning of dispositions and affects, the instruction into stereotypical attitudes, the mobilization of self-interest, the introduction of mechanisms with corruptive effects on the capacity to preserve discretion of professional judgement: all are found in Weber's analysis of the discipline of industrial work and the

shaping of workers' forms of life, of the levelling of bureaucratic rule, of the organization of research along capitalist lines and the bureaucratization of universities etc.

In all these instances, affects and interests are mobilized and stirred, 'life' is summoned: adaptation requires drive, emotions and action.

But the conduct of life, for Weber, is an entirely different process, one in which an individual engages in the world through personal accomplishments and refuses, precisely, to be a mere conjunction of governable affects and interests. The possibility of life conduct rests on an individual's capacity to face the world as it is, but at the same time to pursue ends which can never be the mere adaptation to what there is. Indeed the capacity to inwardly subordinate the logic of the economic order to other, substantive, pursuits is what underpins the few instances of resistance to the labour market imperative which we have encountered amongst guidance receivers and amongst advisers. This suggests that it is the enduring maintenance of substantive rationalities (of the good life, of vocation) in the face of the dominant formal rationality of the market, which can ground 'conduct', and hence resistance, struggle, real 'agonism', rather than the mere 'cracks and fissures' in liberal governmental rationality itself.

Sennett's distinction between personality and character echoes Weber's own distinction between 'self' and what is 'personal', and leads to a similar emphasis on the need to promote the possibility of character – yet he grounds such a possibility in a 'psychology of autonomy' which ultimately seems to stem from the moral decision of the individual, whereas the preservation of the possibility of life conduct demands individual and collective struggle to curb the extension of the capitalist logic.

As far as guidance itself is concerned, this means seeking to limit, and as far as possible reverse, its governmentalization, through actions such as the refusal to co-operate in the subjection of guidance to targets – particularly outcome targets; but also through the collective reflection of professionals on the purposes they serve. The wealth of resources developed in the last few years, particularly in the context of the open centres such as the French Cités, the Adult Educational Guidance centres in Slovenia and Careers Scotland, could only gain from dimming the discourse on career self-management and from taking a more sober approach to professions and the world of work.

Through the prism of the study of a particular governmental technology, career and labour market guidance, and through the confrontation of Weber's and Foucault's categories of conduct, we have thus sought to cast light on some problems in the grounding of liberal governmental rationality in the notion of 'conduct of conduct', and in the restrictive conception of resistance that goes with it. We believe that the continuation of this illumination of liberal governmentality through Weberian concepts might be a fruitful way for addressing some of the impasses of its current theorization.

Notes

1. The paper presents results from a 36-month research project on 'Guidance in Europe', funded by the EC Leonardo da Vinci Programme. The project was jointly led by the Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications (Céreq) based in Marseille (France) and by the ICAS Institute (Barcelona, Spain). Partners included: Philippe Cuntigh, Coralie Pérez, Elsa Personnaz and Sébastien Ségas (Céreq), Isabel Álvarez, Isabelle

Darmon and Carlos Frade (ICAS), Anja Kopac and Miroljub Ignjatovic' (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Christine Bertram and Sharon Wright (University of Stirling, United Kingdom). A German partner was also involved but their participation remained limited. Though underpinned by and grounded in the collective work of the consortium, the views expressed in this article are the sole responsibility of the two authors.

2. The English translation renders 'conduire des conduites' as 'guiding the possibility of conduct'.

3. As is now better known, this is a correct translation for what became famously known as the 'iron cage' in Talcott Parson's forceful but misleading translation of stahlhartes Gehäuse at the end of Weber's Protestant Ethic.

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© Darmon, I., & Perez, C. (2011). 'Conduct of Conduct' or the Shaping of 'Adequate Dispositions': Labour Market and Career Guidance in Four European Countries. *Critical Social Policy*, 31(1), 77-101doi: 10.1177/0261018310385440

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