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## EXPERENCIAS DE INNOVACIÓN Y ESTUDIOS BREVES

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### GREEN GUIDANCE: GUIDANCE FOR THE FUTURE

#### *GUÍA VERDE: UNA GUÍA PARA EL FUTURO*

Peter Plant<sup>1</sup>

Universidad de Aarhus, DPU  
Copenhague, Dinamarca

#### ABSTRACT

With global warming and environmental plights, new guidance concepts are needed to question the mainstream individualistic career development theories and practices. There is more at stake. Green Guidance puts a wider perspective to career choices: what is the environmental impact of a particular career path? Guidance needs a reorientation, a new approach. It is argued that just like Frank Parsons a hundred years ago in the USA was seen as a utopian in his vision of the role of guidance and counselling to create a balanced, just, and peaceful society, the guidance philosophies of our times need to envisage a shift towards a greener future.

**Key words:** Green, career guidance, economic growth, guidance policies

#### RESUMEN

Con los problemas ambientales y el calentamiento global, son necesarios nuevos conceptos de orientación para cuestionar las teorías del desarrollo de la carrera y de las prácticas individualistas. Hay más en juego: La Guía Verde plantea una perspectiva más amplia de

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence: Peter Plant. Universidad de Aarhus, DPU, Copenhague, Dinamarca. e-mail: [pepl@dpu.dk](mailto:pepl@dpu.dk)

<sup>2</sup> Large parts of this article are based on Plant, P. (2014). Green Guidance. En: Arulmani, G. & Watts, A.G. (eds). *Handbook of Career Development: International Perspectives*. London: Springer.

opciones. ¿Cuál es el impacto ambiental de una trayectoria particular?. Es necesaria una reorientación, un nuevo enfoque. Se argumenta al igual que Frank Parsons cien años atrás en Estados Unidos, que fue visto como una utopía en su visión del papel de la orientación y el asesoramiento para crear un equilibrio justo y una sociedad pacífica. Las filosofías de orientación actuales necesitan prever un cambio hacia un futuro más verde.

**Palabras clave:** Verde, guía de carrera, crecimiento económico, políticas de orientación.

## Introduction

A number of well known career development theories are focused on the individual's career. Examples of this include Super's life-span theory (Super, 1957), illustrated later by the career rainbow which goes up and down on an individual basis (Super, 1980). Holland (1997) used the metaphor of the hexagon to illustrate his highly influential person-environment fit theory: another individualistic approach. Gottfredson (2002), in her theory of circumscription and compromise, also focused on the individual career. So did Gelatt (1989) in introducing the concept Positive Uncertainty, and Krumboltz, Levin, & Mitchell (1999) and Krumboltz and Levin (2004) with their equally bipolar and dialogical ideas of Planned Happenstance. What these North American, mainly middleclass-based theories have in common is that they reflect a mainstream individualistic culture, a westernised culture. Even constructivist approaches have this bias when addressing moral and ethical issues in career development: "Every worry and trouble, big and small, that a person can experience has an ethical-moral dimension. To ask: what kind of career is best and possible for me is to ask: How should I live my life?" (Peavy, 2002, p 12).

Likewise, in introducing the Boundaryless Career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), the mental boundary remains the same: the focus is on the individual career. Thus, it is no wonder that career guidance practitioners mostly have an individual focus: they deal with mainly individuals, and they are supported by deeply rooted ideas of Client-Centered approaches (Rogers, 1951). In addition, Max Weber (1958) who has coined the concept of the Protestant Work Ethic and analyzed westernized individualistic work values has linked prosperity, economic growth, protestant work ethic, and capitalism, thus pointing to the complex linkages between culture, religion, and economic philosophy. Such concepts and values are reflected in current (westernized) guidance and counseling practices and theories.

In addition, the European Union has issued a number of important policy papers, such as the European Union Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (European Commission, 2004. p. 7), in which the emphasis is also on individual careers as the main focal point, in stressing (...). "The preventive role of guidance services in encouraging school completion and their contribution to the empowerment of individuals to manage their own learning and careers."

Influential models that capture learning aspects of guidance also build on such individualistic approaches, such as for example the DOTS model which has been used in formulating learning goals for guidance (Law & Watts, 1977, p. 8): D: Decision Learning, O: Opportunity Awareness, T: Transition Learning, S: Self Awareness. Even in these broad terms, O for Opportunity Awareness, is associated with individual progress: "We mean opportunity awareness also to refer to the exploration of the different paths and strategies which are open (or closed) to particular individuals for gaining entry to those opportunities. And at the level of the individual we take it to refer to the

combination of demands, offers and strategies which match (or at least do not mismatch) a particular individual's characteristics". (ibid).

In short, there seems to be a blind spot here. Some of the main roots of individualistic thinking stem from market-oriented thinking, which implies that individual decisions, ego-centered as they may be, sum up to a collective good, steered by the market's 'invisible hand', as so famously phrased by Adam Smith (Smith, 1776). It has been argued (Watts, 2003, p. 12) that:

"Career development could be viewed (not only by economic liberals) as a classic case of Adam Smith's famous dictum that individuals encouraged to pursue their own interests are led by an 'invisible hand' to promote an end that is no part of their intention – the public interest – and to do so more effectually than when they intend to promote it. In this sense, career development services could represent Smith's 'invisible hand' made flesh."

### *Inconvenient Truths: Growth and Happiness*

The values behind Adam Smith's thinking represented answers to societal questions of his time, no doubt. But it seems fair to observe that Smith, and his neo-liberalistic economic followers, may not be the final answer to the problems of (post) modern times, as the present worldwide financial and environmental crisis shows. Perhaps the pursuit of one's own interests in a narrow sense does not promote the public interest, after all. In his film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore, USA, states that: "Humanity is sitting on a ticking time bomb. We have just ten years to avert a major catastrophe that could send our entire planet into a tail-spin of epic destruction involving extreme weather, floods, droughts, epidemics and killer heat waves beyond anything we have ever experienced." Al Gore's persuasive argument is that we can no longer afford to view global warming as a political issue - rather, it is the biggest moral challenge facing our global civilization. See <http://www.climatecrisis.net> Al Gore is not alone: other influential policymakers have raised these issues. The French influential commentator Nicolas Hulot (2006), for example, has introduced five concrete proposals on environmental issues and policies, including CO<sub>2</sub> taxation, sustainable agriculture, and eco-education. Stern (2006) from the UK, in his important report, linked economic growth issues with climate change. US-based commentator Jeremy Rifkin (2010) claims, even more radically, that transition to 'biosphere consciousness' has already begun: a younger generation is beginning to realize that one's daily consumption of energy and other resources ultimately affects the lives of every other human being and every other creature that inhabits the Earth. And in a forecast for the next 40 years, Randers (2012) has predicted that there will be an increasing focus on human well-being rather than on per capita income growth.

Still, the present role of career guidance remains pointed toward the promotion of economic growth that is powered by individualistic aspirations. For example, in policy documents such as the European Union Resolution on Lifelong Guidance (European Commission, 2004), mentioned earlier, guidance is a vehicle for economic growth in a global race for better competitiveness, the irony being that much growth is what has been labeled 'job-less growth', and with a notable absence of any concern for the environmental impact of this particular approach. Surely, economic growth without an ecological impact is possible, but we have not seen much of this, yet. The controversial Global Green Growth Institute, for instance, was founded "on the belief that economic growth and environmental sustainability are not merely compatible objectives; their integration is essential for the future of humankind... (it) is dedicated to pioneering and diffusing a new model of economic growth, known as 'green growth', that simultaneously targets key aspects of economic performance, such as poverty reduction, job creation and social inclusion, and those of environmental sustainability, such as mitigation of climate change and biodiversity loss and security of access to clean energy and water." See <http://www.gggi.org>.

The European Union (EU), in its goals for 2020, now has realized a need for refining its thinking on these issues. Growth in itself is no longer the answer to future challenges: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is the future lead concept (European Commission, 2011). Even if such a concept relies heavily on traditional one-dimensional growth thinking, it represents steps toward a greener and more wide ranging direction. This will have an impact on the societal goals of guidance, which, so far, in many countries have been preoccupied with the individual path towards, for example, less educational drop-out, employability, international competitiveness, or full employment. All commendable goals, but driven by narrow individualistic and economic growth concepts, even if disguised as social inclusion goals.

Interestingly, the well-established yardstick for prosperity, economic growth seen as GNP (Gross National Product) is now being questioned, even by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which, so far, has had a narrow focus on economic growth. Now the OECD (2011) has introduced the *Better Life Initiative* which aims to measure well-being and progress. The index allows citizens to compare lives across 34 countries, based on 11 dimensions: housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance. Career guidance is not (yet) on the list. In the EU, the French commissioned the so-called Stiglitz Report (Stiglitz, Sen &, Fitoussi, 2009) which scrutinized the concept of GNP in relation to social progress, and produced a number of recommendations to supplement current GNP concepts. Other researchers, such as the German Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, aim at developing strategies to support sustainable development. For example, the focus of this Institute is on analyzing and supporting technological and social innovations that decouple prosperity based on economic growth from the use of natural resources, using the complete life-cycle model to illustrate the ecological footprints of particular products.

Finally, on a global basis, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has issued a number of *Human Development Reports*. The first report in 1990 opened with the simple premise that has guided all subsequent Reports: "People are the real wealth of a nation." Featuring a Human Development Index, a recent report (UNDP, 2011) has outlined the potential for positive synergies in the quest for greater equality and sustainability. The 2011 report has further emphasized the human right to a healthy environment, the importance of integrating social equity into environmental policies, and the critical importance of public participation and official accountability. UNDP calls for bold new approaches to global development financing and environmental controls, arguing that these measures are both essential and feasible. One of these new, bold approaches could be Green Guidance, which is not (yet) on the UNDP agenda.

## Non-Western Inspiration<sup>2</sup>

Interestingly, a number of inspirational points come from non-western cultures, as a counter balance to the concepts and values that underpin current individualistic career development theories which were mentioned above. This is not to say that the individual in a non-Western perspective does not have a will of his/her own. But the balance and perspectives are different. Careers within such epistemologies are viewed in a wider perspective. Here inspiration can be found, for instance, in ancient Indian approaches to career development. Life and career are intertwined and seen as playing out over four stages (ashramas), not all of them with an individual

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<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, Orientación – the Spanish word for guidance – means 'The East', where the sun rises. It comes from Latin: *oriens*.

focus: Brahmacharya Ashrama (learning), Grahastha Ashrama (family, personal career, but practiced as an integral part of the community as a whole), Vanaprastha Ashrama (pursuing career development but not for personal gain), and Sanyasa Ashrama (serving humanity). 'Serving humanity' hardly figures in traditional westernized career paths (Arulmani & Nag-Arulmani, 2004, p. 9). Without entering further into the philosophy of the Ashrama system that underlies these four stages of life, it seems fair to observe that cultural factors come to the forefront when economic and social policy goals are expressed. Such values are far from most westernized considerations. They point towards mutual responsibility - on a sustainable basis. Bhutan, for example, has introduced the concept of the Gross National Happiness (GNH), which builds on four pillars of development: (1) sustainable and equitable socioeconomic development, (2) conservation of the environment, (3) preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and (4) good governance (see [www.grossnationalhappiness.com](http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com); Plant, 2007a). Thirty three indicators provide a framework for indexing the GNH approach, grouped in these overarching domains: psychological wellbeing, health, education, culture, time use, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity, and resilience. Even from this short list of factors it is clear that green issues are brought into focus, rather than left in oblivion, as is the case with GNP; Gross National Product approaches, where all kinds of economic factors are bundled together, with no view to their environmental impact.

Along similar lines, the concept of "Sufficient Economy" is pivotal to understanding main economic and social policy goals in Thailand. The Sufficient Economy focuses on the middle path approach as a mode of conduct to achieve moderation in life. The main point is to live together in peace and harmony with nature and the environment: *Yuyen Bhensuk*: happy and healthy living is the policy driver here.

Approaches such as these have huge implications for career guidance policies which in this light will not seek, for example, to advance economic growth at the expense of sustainability. Individual career choices, in this perspective, have a wider scope than just the pursuit of narrow individual goals. Guidance will have to take a stand when faced by such challenges. The point being made here is that career guidance serves as a link between the aim of economic growth at the expense of other, perhaps more important goals, and the essentially individualistic values which have underpinned much career development theory over the last few generations in westernized cultures. This is not to say that the individual can no longer pursue personal fulfilment and happiness through personal career development. But Green Guidance will be a pivotal component in the already disputed concept of careers (Barham & Hall, 1996; NCGE, 2009; Plant, 1996; 1999; 2003; 2007b; 2008). Career choices, individual as they may be, have implications beyond the individual, especially when linked to wider societal goals of social justice, as pointed out by Irving & Malik (2005). It is high time these issues are acknowledged.

## **Green Guidance: Economy and Ecology**

A new approach is on its way, and it is green. As a reaction against the often one-dimensional economic thinking and its market-driven principles, a new wave, concerned with ecological issues, is in view. It simply does not pay to think only of short-term economic goals. Clearly, the analysis of cost-benefit ratios, for example, falls far behind a number of important issues in terms of environmental concern. Large companies such as General Electric, have recognised this, and coined the strategy of Ecomagination, that is, producing with less energy and pollution. Other major companies such as Wall-Mart, Tesco, BP, and Virgin have seen the writing on the wall and introduced CR, i.e. Corporate Responsibility, and banks are into what they label as Conscious Banking. Green accounting also includes other factors than merely economic performance

aspects, such as carbon emission, waste handling, and other environmental footprint indicators (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2000).

The International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), already in 1995, adopted a statement on global Ethical Standards, which included recognition of the tensions between economic growth and environmental issues, -that is, ecology. Back in 1995, the text was followed by a question mark. 'How should educational and vocational guidance services ethically respond to the global tensions between economic and environmental issues in the working lives and work places of clients? (See <http://www.iaevg.org/iaevg/nav.cfm?lang=2&menu=1&submenu=2>)

Now it would more likely be followed by an exclamation mark! In short: new concepts are under way to challenge current paradigms of blind growth. *Green Guidance* is part of this trend. What would this indicate?

It would define guidance, and especially career choice, in terms of ecology rather than just economy. Environmental concern will be put to the forefront of many daily activities, including guidance, and guidance workers will have the difficult task of transforming this concept into daily practice - with a view to global perspectives. It does matter, now perhaps more than ever, what people do with their working lives: whether they produce lethal weapons or simple water-pumps for irrigation. The need to make such choices is globally evident: pollution, overconsumption in some areas and fundamental unmet needs in others, the pressure on scarce water resources, overfishing, global warming, ozone holes, --the list is endless.

Some economists and some politicians are aware of the clash between senseless economic growth and environmental concern. Wars are already being fought over oil, and the next wars will be fought over water resources, no doubt. Whereas economic growth used to be the solution, it now seems to create as many problems. Jobless growth and a deterioration of the natural resources: these are some of the present predicaments. In this situation guidance must become part of the solution, rather than the problem. A new approach, a mental U-turn (Scharmer, 2007), is needed, based on a number of principles for *Green Guidance*:

- Guidance should take into account and create awareness of the environmental impact of vocational choices;
- Guidance should play an active role in establishing training and education opportunities with a positive contribution in environmental terms;
- Informational materials on career options should include environmental aspects;
- Guidance should be measured, not only by an economic yardstick, but also by green accounting, (i.e., by relating environmental goals to guidance activities);
- Guidance theories and practices should address common career development issues in addition to individualistic approaches – with a focus on environmental impacts of career choices;
- On a much smaller scale, guidance workers themselves should inspect their own practice: how green are my routines re recycling waste, cutting down on power consumption, etc? How is ICT used to cut down on travelling, for example?

This is not an exhaustive list, and it should be read along with an inspirational list of green jobs and activities such as, for example:

- green activist working with neighbourhood ecological gardening;
- green keeper working with a no-pesticide approach to maintenance of sports grounds;

- green lawyer working with environmental cases;
- green transport engineer work with non-pollutant means of traffic and transport;
- green farmer working with ecological practice in fields and stables;
- green painters using non-toxic and degradable paints;
- green builders using natural insulation materials;
- green fishers, working with sustainable fishing
- green hairdressers...etc. In short, most careers could be seen as potentially green.

## Conclusion

Some guidance workers, no doubt, will find the outlined approach dangerously *directive*: it may indeed question some current guidance practices, and perhaps even the traditional Rogerian client-centered approach itself. But then, all new approaches would threaten older ones, and new philosophies take some time to break through. Even Frank Parsons (1909) – a well-known guidance revolutionary who is considered the father of modern career guidance and counseling – had visions which reached far beyond guidance and counseling itself. His vision was for a balanced, just, and peaceful society. He saw the link between career development and a society which made the best use of its human resources through career counseling, to the benefit of all. In his days, economic growth and social justice went hand in hand. Based on ‘brotherly love’, he named his societal vision ‘Mutualism’ (Parsons, 1894) and, surely, today he would have added a Green Guidance dimension to his thinking. He was a prophet and a practical utopian (Gummere, 1988). Now, we need new utopians green ones.

At its best, Green Guidance could be proactive, questioning, probing, reflexive, and client-centered in the real sense: it leaves the decisions to the client, but, perhaps, on a higher note of commitment. Moreover, especially in relation to globalization, it puts guidance into a central position: environmental issues and concerns know no boundaries (Monbiot, 2006). This is why it is so urgent that guidance workers make their contribution towards green changes. With this kind of approach, the individual career fades into the background, and common goals come into focus, including social justice issues. This is Green Guidance.

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**Fecha de entrada:** 4 de noviembre 2013  
**Fecha de revisión:** 28 de abril 2014  
**Fecha de aceptación:** 10 de mayo 2014