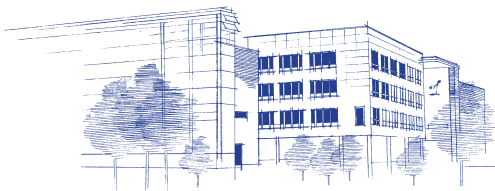




# Social Representations of Career and Career Guidance

in the Changing World of Working Life

INGELA BERGMO PRVULOVIC



School of Education and Communication  
Jönköping University  
Dissertation Series No. 28

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in the Changing World of Working Life

Ingela Bergmo Prvulovic



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## ABSTRACT

Ingela Bergmo-Prvulovic'

Title: Social Representations of Career and Career Guidance in the Changing World of Working Life

Language: English, with a summary in Swedish

Key-words: Career, career development, career guidance, career guidance practice, educational and vocational guidance, guidance counselling, changing world of working life, European policy, lifelong learning, human resource strategies, human resource profession, social representations, document analysis, free associations method, qualitative content analysis, subjective career, objective career

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This thesis explores the meaning of career as a phenomenon and its implication for career guidance. In 1996, career as a phenomenon was more or less considered to be an obsolete or even extinct phenomenon. Since then, career guidance has received increased attention along with the increased interest in lifelong learning strategies. This thesis is motivated by the paradoxical message of career as an extinct yet living phenomenon. Career is outlined as a bridging issue that involves several contexts and is characterized by a number of dominating discourses in tension with one another. Two educational fields linked by career are of particular interest: the field of education and training in working life and the educational field of career guidance counselling. This thesis explores the meaning of career among a triad of various interested parties in this time of transition in the world of working life, and it explores the sense in which such understanding(s) of career influence policies and practices of career guidance. The thesis is based upon four separate studies. *The first study* explores, in order to disclose underlying views on career, how the language of European policy documents on career guidance characterize career and career development. Qualitative content analysis is used as the basic method to approach the subject in the texts, with an inductive development of categories. The analysis then conducts a sender-oriented interpretation, based upon a textual model for analyzing documents. The results revealed that underlying perspective on career in the documents derive from economic perspective, learning perspective and political science perspective, and communicate career as subordinated to market forces. *The second study* pays attention to the receiving side of the ideational message, disclosed in the first study. The second study extends the analysis of the first study with an exploration of ethical declaration documents for the profession. The exploration focuses on significant key principles, the profession's role and mission, and significant changes between the initial and the revised ethical declaration. Similarities and differences were compared, combined with the first study's results as an interpretive frame for analyzing what consequences and significance the core meaning of career at structural level will have for career guidance practice. The results revealed an implicit shift of emphasis in the career guidance mission, which creates uncertainty regarding on behalf of whom the guidance counsellor is working. *The third study* explores common-sense knowledge of career, among a group of people influenced by changing conditions in working life. This study explores what social representations people have about career. The study also explores how people's anchored thoughts reflect scientifically shaped thoughts, and how they relate to thoughts currently dominating on structural level. Results disclose how the group explored has stable social representations of career that are anchored in the past, in previous working life conditions, and that contrasts with perspectives dominating in the structural context. The group also has dynamic representations, which provide space for negotiation of the meaning of career. *The fourth study* explores guidance counsellors' social representations of their mission and of career therein. Results generated four social representations expressed in argumentative pairs of opposites. The first pair is concerned with their professional mission and reveal their professional identity. The second is concerned with career. Their view on their mission and their professional identity is in sharp contrast with how they experience others' interpretation of their mission, as being a matching practice on behalf of the business sector. Guidance counsellors reject the general view of career among others' and they regard career in the context of guidance as something other than the common view. At the same time guidance counsellors reveal difficulties in really clarifying the meaning they ascribe to career. The empirical findings of each of the four studies are finally interpreted as a whole in the final section of this thesis. With support from social representations theory, the empirical findings illuminate the sources as bearers of social representations of career, which both meet and clash.

## PROLOGUE

### **“The career is dead – long live the career!”**

Such is the proclamation made alongside arguments that a new career contract emerges because of turbulence in business environments in times of global change (Hall, 1996, p. 8). Careers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are described as protean, referring to the Greek god Proteus, who could change shape at will (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). In the traditional career contract, people became employed, worked hard, were loyal and performed well in exchange for rewards and job security. The emerging career contract, in contrast, is based on continuous learning, adaptability, and identity change, where career is driven by the person rather than the organization (Hall, 1996). In contrast to the vertical success of the old contract, the new protean career contract emphasizes psychological success as the ultimate goal. Success is shifting from know-how to learn-how, from job-security to employability, from organizational careers to protean careers, and from work-self to whole self. The organization provides work challenges and relationships, wherein “development” does not necessarily mean formal training or upward mobility (Hall & Mirvis, 1996). Because of changes in career environments, a need to reformulate our language of conceptualizing careers has been emphasized (Hall, 1996; Savickas et al., 2009). The present work is motivated by the paradoxical message of career as a dead, yet living phenomenon. The aim is to explore the meaning ascribed, by the various interested parties, to “career” in this time of transition in the world of working-life and to explore in what sense such understanding(s) of career may influence policies and practices of career guidance.

## LIST OF ARTICLES

This thesis is based on the following articles<sup>1</sup> and manuscript:

- Article 1:** Bergmo-Prvulovic, I. (2012). Subordinating careers to market forces? A critical analysis of career guidance policy. *European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning for Adults*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2012.<sup>2</sup>
- Article 2:** Bergmo-Prvulovic, I. (2014). Is career guidance for the individual or for the market? Implications of EU policy for career guidance. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2014<sup>3</sup>
- Article 3:** Bergmo-Prvulovic, I. (2013). Social representations of Career – Anchored in the Past, Conflicting with the Future. *Papers on Social Representations*, Vol. 22, No.1, 2013.<sup>4</sup>
- Article 4:** Bergmo-Prvulovic, I. (Manuscript). The uneasy relationship to *Career*: Guidance Counsellors' Social Representations of their Mission and of Career.

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<sup>1</sup> The published articles have been reprinted with the kind permission of the respective journals

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rela.ep.liu.se/issues/10.3384rela.2000-7426.201232/rela0072/rela0072.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The published article is reprinted without the final typeset according to the journals allowance. To cite this article, please use the original publication as described above.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.psych.lse.ac.uk/psr/>



# FÖRORD

Nu är doktorandtiden över.

Det har varit en fantastisk resa, inspirerande, utvecklande, och stundtals också prövosam. Jag är innerligt tacksam för att ha fått den här möjligheten. Det finns många personer som har varit betydelsefulla för mig under resans gång. Inledningsvis vill jag rikta mitt varmaste tack till min huvudhandledare Christina Chaib, och min biträdande handledare Mohamed Chaib. Ni har båda varit mina mentorer och pedagogiska förebilder. Med er båda vid min sida, har jag fått det bästa av två världar, med era djupa kunskaper i metod och teori. Christina – tack för att du har stöttat och trott på mig. Ditt stöd, din uppmuntran och tilltro till mig har varit avgörande för att jag genomfört det här projektet. Med din noggrannhet, din skarpa blick och ovärderliga förmåga att i dialog, med humor och värme, förmått mig se bortom mina självklarheter, har jag ständigt utvecklats. Mohamed – tack för att du varsamt väglett mig i vetenskapsteoretiska resonemang, för att du stöttat och trott på mig, och för det intresse du väckt hos mig för teorin om sociala representationer. Jag vill också tacka Lennart Svensson och Magnus Söderström, för kloka och värdefulla synpunkter vid halvtids- och slutseminarium. Tack också till läsgrupperna vid dessa seminarier. Ett innerligt tack också till Christine Carter, som varit ett fantastiskt stöd på vägen i arbetet med engelska formuleringar på tankar tänkta på svenska.

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*Jag älskar er!*

Jönköping, 9 mars, 2015

*Ingela Bergmo-Prvulovic'*

## CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided in two sections, where the first section portrays the problem, based upon experiences from my professional practice as educational and vocational guidance counsellor. The second section outlines career as a bridging issue which involves several contexts.

### **Portrayal of the problem in professional practice**

“Actually, I am not quite sure why I am here. I am just so confused”. Such a phrase was often expressed by people who visited me at the newly established municipal guidance counselling center where I worked as an educational and vocational guidance counsellor during the early 2000s. The aim of this public centre was to make career guidance available for all adults in the municipality, regardless of their employment status or whether they were interested in adult education, other educational levels, or a new career. Educational and vocational guidance counselling for adults has a history related to employment services and municipal adult education and has focused on unemployed people or people with limited

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education (Larsson, 1993), where adult education has historically focused on giving individuals “a second chance” (Rubenson, 1997, p. 72). However, it is not necessary to be admitted to an adult education course<sup>5</sup> to receive career guidance, and therefore adults can receive career guidance regardless of whether or not they intend to seek further education or training.

In the early 2000s, the labour market was not in a crisis and the unemployment level was low. The local management therefore expected that our supportive service would not be overloaded with work. I experienced the contrary. Many of those who visited us were employed workers. Through my experiences in the guidance process with these people, it became clear to me that a lot of them had something in common, despite their various life stories and needs. They shared a diffuse kind of confusion that seemed to derive in particular from their experiences in working life. They were not sure of how to move on or what kind of support they needed. People expressed feelings of not being appreciated or recognized. Some stories indicated that their knowledge and competencies were not optimally utilized by their workplaces. People spoke of heavier workloads, increased responsibility, demands for competence development, and lack of appreciation. Some felt that their desires for development in working life were not addressed. Others had lost their self-confidence and considered themselves useless. People with higher educational levels sometimes experienced structural barriers, such as being denied admission to a course because of having a higher educational level. Such situations seemed confusing to me given that societal debates emphasized the need for lifelong learning to become a reality for all people as well as the need for valuing and recognizing competences (see e.g., European Commission, 2000, 2001; Valideringsdelegationen, 2008). An increasing number of people needed to have their informally acquired skills evaluated, recognized and documented for various reasons. They needed to demonstrate eligibility to be able to move on, and sometimes they were required by their employer to validate their competences into formal merits if they wanted to keep their jobs. People found themselves in situations

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<sup>5</sup> Ordinance 2002:1010 of Adult Education Chapter 1, § 3

where they had to reconsider their careers in a complex society. They didn't know whether they should stay or leave their workplaces, whether they should adapt and accept the conditions or not. Employed workers also expressed needs for career guidance support to handle changed work situations and new demands, and their career-related issues seemed far more complex than just dealing with educational and vocational choice.

Such increasing needs in later life has been noted by researchers in Sweden (Lindh & Lundahl, 2008) and in other countries (Kidd, 2006). Choosing one's education, vocation, and way of life is described as a much more complex and risky task nowadays, compared to just about a decade ago. People need to cope with rapid change in several contexts: in the educational system, in the labour market, in the workplace, and in society. It is more difficult to orient oneself in present working life as well as towards a future labour market when possibilities of secure and lifelong employment by the same employer and organization have decreased. The choice of vocation used to be regarded as a "once in a lifetime" choice, where peoples' abilities should be "matched" with the requirements of a specific vocation, but nowadays people need to continuously reshape their own careers (Lindh & Lundahl, 2008). Obviously, it was precisely these types of situations and issues that brought adults to seek career support at the guidance center where I worked at that time. As noted by Herr (2008a), changes in working and career contexts influence how adults perceive their careers. Career, in turn, is identified as the core issue of career guidance practice (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a). Because it was in my professional work in a type of career guidance practice that such career-related issues among adults appeared, my approach to the problem is originally situated there.

### **Outline of career as a bridging issue**

The concept of "career guidance" became more common in Sweden in the year 2000, in line with the use of the concept internationally (Lindberg, 2003; Lindh & Lundahl, 2008; Nilsson, 2010). Guidance and counselling may have various meanings related to cultural and linguistic differences (Van Esbroeck & Athanasou, 2008). The international use of "career guidance" has resulted in an International Handbook of Career

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Guidance (see Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008b) to clarify this expanding field to some extent. In 2010, Sweden established a research network<sup>6</sup> that embraced the use of the term “career”. Most professionals in career guidance practice, however, are still called educational and vocational guidance counsellors in Sweden (Lindh & Lundahl, 2008) as well as in other countries (Van Esbroeck & Athanasou, 2008). There are other titles as well: career coach, career counsellor/career guidance counsellor, and educational and career guidance counsellor.

In this work, “career guidance” refers mainly to activities/practices that involve educational, vocational/career guidance counselling by trained professionals. There are, though, some important distinctions between concepts used over time that need to be clarified and that motivate the conceptual use in this work. During the early 1900s, *vocational guidance*, was particularly used. When choice of a vocation became more linked with educational choice, the conceptual use of educational and vocational guidance emerged. During the 1960s, separate concepts were used within separate agencies: the National Labour Market Board<sup>7</sup> used *vocational guidance*<sup>8</sup>, while authorities within the school system<sup>9</sup> used *educational and vocational orientation*<sup>10</sup> and *educational guidance*<sup>11</sup> (Nilsson, 2010). *Educational and vocational guidance* was used as an overall concept and referred to all kinds of guidance support offered by society. An important distinction was then made by Lindh (1997) between educational and vocational guidance in its *broadest sense*, and educational and vocational guidance in its *narrow sense*. The broad sense refers to all kinds of activities offered as preparation for future choice of education, vocation, work and manner of living. The narrow sense is personal and conducted within an institution/organization, where a professional guidance counsellor supports individuals and groups (Lindh, 1997).

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<sup>6</sup> KAV (Karriärutveckling och vägledning – Career development and guidance)  
<http://www.edusci.umu.se/forskning/ungas-utbildning-karriarutveckling-och-valfard/pagaende-forskningsprojekt-ukv/karriarutveckling-och-vagledning/>

<sup>7</sup> Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen

<sup>8</sup> Yrkesvägledning

<sup>9</sup> Skolöverstyrelsen, Universitetskanslerämbetet

<sup>10</sup> Studie- och yrkesorientering (SYO)

<sup>11</sup> Studievägledning

Guidance counselling processes can be called educational guidance, work guidance, and/or life guidance, as well as career guidance, depending on the focus of the interactional process (Lindh, 1997). However, in my experience, these processes are often intertwined with each other, as peoples' educational and vocational choices are often concerned with short-term and long-term dreams and goals, present and future careers, present and future vocation and work life, and wishes of how to live their lives. These intertwined processes make it difficult to regard them as separate, especially when dealing with adults' issues and transitions from work to education, from education to work, from work to work, in continuous training at work, etc. In the rapidly changing world of work, distinctions between education, vocation, and career therefore seem increasingly difficult to make, given their frequent recurrence in life. Clearly, guidance counselling constitutes the pedagogical, interactional processes in a practice that is conducted in dialogue between a client and a professionally trained guidance counsellor, and career thus constitutes the common, bridging object in that practice. Therefore, I use the term *career guidance practice* as the overriding, bridging term when referring to the supportive practice, which comprises various types of guidance counselling processes, as they all directly or indirectly deal with people's various career issues in life. Problems related to changes in working life, issues in organizational contexts, and the field of education and training in working life thus all find their way into career guidance practice. This practice is considered essentially educative, and in Sweden the profession is regarded as being an educational practice<sup>12</sup>. The practice is concerned with support of clients' understanding of themselves (Kidd, 2006, p. 68), their self-awareness and awareness of alternatives and decision-making (Lindh, 1997; Lovén, 2000), but can also involve clients' feelings of disappointment after redundancy, unemployment, work relationships balancing of life roles (Kidd, 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> Employment Service's Professional Presentation. Downloaded 2013-01-28, <http://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/For-arbetssookande/Yrke-och-framtid/Yrken-A-O.html?url=1119789672%2FYrken%2FYrkesBeskrivning.aspx%3Fi-YrkeId%3D378&sv.url=12.78280711d502730c1800072>



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Lovén (2000) describes the complexity in the guidance counselling meeting between client and guidance counsellor, where they both carry their own specific contexts, values and experiences into the meeting. The meeting is also carried out in a surrounding, societal context characterized by global and economic influence and national and regional regulations (Lovén, 2000). Career guidance counselling is described here as an educational practice located at the crossroads of the individual and society. Career guidance counselling is thus viewed from an interactional perspective that takes into account the contexts and relations between the parties involved in the educational situation (Bron & Wilhelmson, 2004) and that embraces the various expectations and perspectives that might be in contrast with each other. Individual needs and societal needs are often considered to be complementary rather than at odds (Plant, 2005), but this complementary perspective is seldom explored. Moreover, for a long time an intense debate in the career guidance field has separated those representing psychological perspectives from those representing sociological perspectives, and few attempts have brought these two positions together (Lovén, 2000). The utility and importance of career guidance counselling processes might be discussed from the client's perspective or from society's perspective and there are tensions between the two perspectives (Lovén, 2000). Whether career guidance counsellors should function as representatives of societal interests or as representatives of their clients' needs has been debated for decades (Lovén, 2000; Nilsson, 2010), and the issue puts guidance counsellors in a difficult position. These tensions were the main reasons for formulating the Declaration of Ethics (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989) for guidance counsellors in 1989: it aims to support guidance counsellors who deal with various ethical dilemmas in practice.

Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an increased interest in lifelong learning strategies occurred on the European level of policymaking (Jarvis, 2009), followed by an increased attention towards guidance counselling policy making in European countries (cf. European Commission, 2004). It is noteworthy that this professional practice has received so much attention, while career has been pointed to as a dead phenomenon (cf. Hall, 1996). Such attention towards guidance counselling certainly in-

fluences the professional practice since policies are formulated by authorities and politically governed agencies based upon certain problems that need to be solved (cf. e.g. Öhman-Sandberg, 2014). The way policies are formulated therefore directs how certain problems are expected to be solved. Policies legitimate and privilege certain interests and visions and, spoken with authority, they initiate praxis in certain contexts (Öhman-Sandberg, 2014).

Given that people bring career-related problems into the career guidance counselling meeting, career functions as a *bridging issue*, as *the common object*, between the person who seeks and the guidance counsellor who provides support. Both carry their own specific contexts, values and experiences into the meeting, which also is carried out in a societal context (cf. Lovén, 2000). This would imply that both client and guidance counsellor carry their own views about career, which are based upon their own specific contexts, values and experiences, into the meeting, which occurs in a further context of global trends, economic influence, and regulations. Since the bridging object, career, is most certainly influenced by societal and organizational changes and trends, I find it necessary to explore the meaning of career within relevant contexts. The increased attention from European policy making influences career guidance practice on both the international and national levels, which makes it relevant to explore the meaning of career as communicated in the relevant policy texts. According to Savickas (2008), career supportive methods in society change when the social organization of work changes. This would imply that career guidance practice is influenced by the changes in working life over the past few decades. Consequently, it is important to explore the meaning of career among a triad of parties involved who all share interest in the object of career.

Inspired by the model that shows complexity in the guidance counselling meeting (see Lovén, 2000), I provide an illustration (figure 1) of how career as the bridging object finds its way into career guidance practice. The illustration here further includes the changing working life and career contexts, European policy making in the surrounding societal context, and a person who seeks career support.

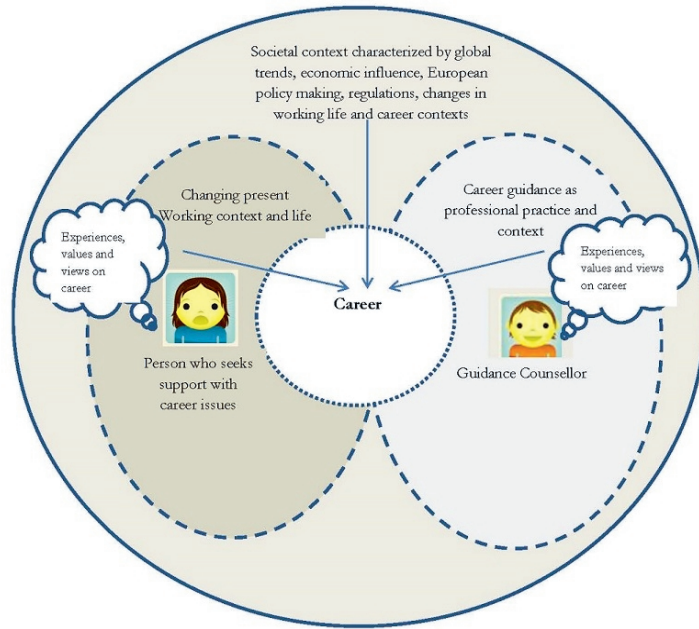


Figure 1. *The bridging object career in the encounter carried out in the career guidance practice, surrounded by a societal context*

## CHAPTER 2

### AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

It has been suggested that career is a fruitful concept for trans-disciplinary debate (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989a). This work attempts to explore what meaning is ascribed to career among sections of a triad of parties with a common interest in career as the object; it also explores and interprets in what sense meanings of career influence career guidance policy and practice. Three parties are identified as especially relevant to explore in order to cover at least some major subsections of the parties involved in this comprehensive area. This work is therefore divided into four different studies, all of which have their own specific purpose that derives from, and ultimately helps to answer, the following overall question:

In an era of rapid changes in working life, what meaning is ascribed to career a) in European policy documents on guidance, b) by adults who are affected by changing working life, and c) by educational and vocational guidance counsellors?

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The overall research question will be answered by the results of the four articles included. It is not possible to examine the involved parties with full representativeness, but the selection of texts and informants are intended to serve as examples of how meanings ascribed to career emerge in each context among sections of the parties involved. Thereafter, all articles' findings are explored in order to interpret the sense in which meanings of career influence policies and practices of career guidance. Given that career, identified as the fundamental issue for career guidance (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a), is localized in working life's career contexts and is brought from there into the career guidance encounter by people with experiences from career contexts of work life, two areas of interest are relevant to further explore. Two separate yet intertwined educational fields of practice surround and contextualize career phenomena. The *field of education and training in working life*<sup>13</sup> is relevant because it represents the contexts in which people's careers occur and also because it represents the contexts that are subjected to the current transformations of working life in today's world. The *educational field of career guidance counselling* is relevant because it is within this practice that career becomes the bridging object that intertwines these two fields, when it is brought into the agenda of guidance by people subjected to changes that occur in their career contexts.

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<sup>13</sup> The field of Education and training in working life – in Swedish: *Pedagogik i arbetslivet* (Pommer Nilsson, 2003)

## CHAPTER 3

# BACKGROUND

Below, an outline of a wider societal background is provided. I seek to contextualize the research object career in a changing organizational landscape and changing working life. I discuss the dominating discourses – trends and debates in Sweden and internationally the past decades – in which two educational fields presented above are closely linked with each other by their common interest in career as object.

## CAREER IN A CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The transition from the industrial age towards a knowledge based, globalized society has caused an emergence of a new labour division because of structural change in labour division and economic systems. Organizational changes in both private and public sectors impose management challenges for organizations as well as for the workforce (Ekstedt &

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Sundin, 2006a, 2006b). The traditional industrial organization is now argued to be no longer in focus in the global organizational landscape; hierarchical structure and stable, secure conditions in organizational systems have been continually challenged since the beginning of the 1980s (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012; Ekstedt & Sundin, 2006a; Savickas et al., 2009). But the concept of career and theories and models within the career field originally developed in the context of traditional organizations based upon 20th century working conditions (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Savickas, 2008; Savickas et al., 2009). Hierarchical organizational structures were already being challenged in 1985, as exemplified by suggestions that pyramids in organizational systems should be demolished (see e.g., Carlzon, 2008) and by the *hara-kiri* of hierarchy in favour for networks (see e.g., Johnson, 1995). The previously prevailing ideas of hierarchical organizational systems rooted in the industrial era (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009) became influential for how organizations would be designed in the early 20th century. At this time, thinkers such as Max Weber, Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henri Fayol, all emphasised the hierarchical order of organizations (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012). In 1922, Max Weber developed his early ideas of bureaucracy and the rational principles of organizations (see e.g., Weber, 1987), while Frederick Winslow Taylor, in 1920, launched his ideas of horizontal and vertical division of labour and scientific management (see e.g., Taylor, 2008). In 1923, Henri Fayol inspired with his ideas of general and industrial management and line organisation (see e.g., Fayol, 2008/1916).

The organizational landscape that has emerged during the past 30 years is now characterized by a variety of organizational forms (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012). The effects of globalization have resulted in new conceptualizations, such as flexibility, rapidity and change, as tendencies toward recurrent reorganizations and decentralizations of responsibility and authority emerged in organizational systems. A transformation towards more flexible conditions in working life has been highlighted in recent research (cf. e.g., Hansson, 2004). How to organize in a more market-oriented approach became a key issue (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012), in line with increasing uncertainty due to ever-growing global competition. Uncertainty is pointed to as the foundational problem

that needs solving within complex organizations (Thompson, 1967), and therefore the fundamental task is to cope with uncertainty and unpredictability deriving from both internal and external conditions. Most actions in organizational systems – such as reorganizations; competence development strategies; changes in direction, positions and vision; and decentralization of power – can therefore be explained as “reactions to uncertainty” (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012, p. 20). The renewed interest in life-long learning and its subsequent trends, which derive in particular from business and industry toward the end of the 20th century (see e.g., Jarvis, 2009), might therefore be understood as reactions to uncertainty in organizational contexts.

## CAREER IN A FIELD OF TENSION

Debates and trends in Swedish working life contexts as well as internationally during the past decades exemplify reactions to organizational uncertainty (cf. e.g., Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012; Thompson, 1967). They paint a picture of an insecure working-life context in which companies and workplaces, together with political actors, develop various strategies to manage the effects of increased global competition and uncertainty. Such trends, debates and strategies can be described as a number of dominating discourses, where their dominance depends on the needs that are in primary focus at any given time. The dominating discourses since the early 1980s are illustrated by Söderström (2011, pp. 28-29), who locates in a field of tension when they have come and gone, the ways they have influenced and dominated at different times, and how they have sometimes met and sometimes transformed. These discourses are summarized below in relation to debates and trends of relevance for the contextualization of career in this field of tension.

*The discourse of planning (1)* can be traced to the early analysis of positional function (cf. e.g., Gestrelus, 1970, 1989) and of educational needs for such positions and to the ensuing evaluation of results and the effects of such (Söderström, 1981). These issues resulted in tense debates



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between various educational ideologies and perspectives among practitioners, which then led to the *educational-ideological discourse* (2), where contradictions between the fundamental ideas of teaching technology and new ideas of dynamic education and learning organizations appeared (Söderström, 2011). Such ideological tensions are rooted in dramatic changes in the school system during the 1960s, combined with a strong technological development (Andersson, 2001). Thereafter appeared the *competence discourse* (3), which treats of individual and collective needs simultaneously and in which themes of individual development related to business development arose (Söderström, 2011). The competence discourse's increased focus on effects and utility led to a transition towards *the human capital discourse* (4), where employees' competencies and potential for development were regarded in terms of investments for increased economic growth, on micro and macro levels (Söderström, 2011, p. 28). Eventually followed *the quality discourse* (5), where the foundations of organizational culture were built upon values of competence and relations (Söderström, 2011). The *education and/or learning discourse* (6) also emerged, with a shift in focus from education towards learning in working life contexts (cf. e.g., Ellström & Hultman, 2004).

It is particularly in relation to the *competence discourse*, *the human capital discourse*, and the *education and/or learning discourse* that the object of career begins to be challenged by the changing organizational landscape in an uncertain global context. Examples of reactions to uncertainty are evident in the societal, political and management interest in utilizing individuals' knowledge; in the questioning of whether Swedish employers really utilize available competence; as well as in the claims of necessity for raising competence levels (Lindén, Kvarnström, & Rådet för arbetslivsforskning, 1999). These debates are examples of the dominating competence discourse and human capital discourse, where the risks of employers losing valuable resources and the risks of failing to optimally stimulate and motivate employees are highlighted. High basic competence does not seem to have any notable impact on salary or benefits for people, which provides them with less stimulus to move on to other workplaces where their competence would be better utilized (Sverige. Näringsdepartementet, 2000). It is questioned whether education really

pays off (Rolfer, 2006; Tåhlin, 2004, 2007; Tåhlin, Le Grand, & Szulkin, 2002, 2004). Tåhlin, le Grand and Szulkin (2004) argue that it is not working life that is speeding past individuals but rather individuals who are speeding past working life. Overeducation is emphasized as an important issue that may lead to tangible economic consequences for people if they do not obtain jobs compatible with their educational levels (Rolfer, 2006; Tåhlin, 2004, 2007). Several studies describe a situation of imbalance between existing educational levels among the workforce and new work requirements (Lindén et al., 1999; Sverige. Näringsdepartementet, 2000; Tåhlin et al., 2004). Human capital is underutilized among workplaces, and at the same time, companies indicate that the workforce is lacking in required competence (Sverige. Näringsdepartementet, 2000). Such contradictory messages reveal clear matching problems. Embedded in this matching difficulty are people's career-related issues.

The dominating *education and/or learning discourse* (Söderström, 2011) is exemplified by the renewed interest in lifelong learning strategies driven by organizational needs, by globalization, and by social and economic conditions, which demand a knowledge economy with knowledgeable workers (cf. Jarvis, 2009). However, this interest differs from the original character of the discourse as being humanistic and idealistic and which emphasized the individual educational process as liberating and leading to self-realization when it was first introduced by UNESCO in the late 1960s (Rubensson, 1996). Since the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1996) formulated a lifelong learning strategy in 1996, the attention toward lifelong learning has increased in many countries over the years. Lifelong learning has now become a taken-for-granted concept in educational and business settings (Jarvis, 2009). In the footsteps of this lifelong learning trend, as part of this educational and/or learning discourse, has come increasing interest in career guidance. This is evident in European guidance-policy making (see e.g. European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2005; Jütte, Nicoll, & Salling Olesen, 2011; Watts & Fretwell, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004). As a response to increasing matching problems, career guidance is assumed to contribute to improvement in this

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area; lifelong guidance is seen as important in order for European countries to become competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economies (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2005). EU Council Resolutions (2004, 2008) stress the development of citizens' lifelong, life-wide learning and management skills; guidance is considered to support people's lifelong career transitions. The need for reforming career guidance practice is also reinforced and emphasized (Council of the European Union, 2004; European Commission, 2004). Recent development of the career guidance field has resulted in the perception that career guidance is an integral part of human resource development strategies (Watts & Fretwell, 2004). An extension of practitioners who populate the field has emerged, where human resource development practitioners, among others, are examples of this trend in several countries (cf. e.g. Van Esbroeck, 2008). Through this attention towards career guidance, career phenomena becomes visible as the interlacing object between the field of education and training in work life, the human resource area with their need to solve matching issues, and the educational field of career guidance practice.

Lifelong learning has principally been promoted by intergovernmental organizations such as OECD, UNESCO and the European Union (Field, 2001). The original humanistic and idealistic ideas behind lifelong learning, however, contrast with the idea of recurrent education promoted by the OECD (Tuijnman & Boström, 2002) and the European commission (2000). Policy debates have been driven particularly by the OECD's view of promoting economic growth and tied to interest in and supported by arguments from human capital theory (Hansson, 2004; Rubenson, 2009; Schuller, 2009). The basic idea behind lifelong learning has transformed into a strategy driven mainly by technological and economic interests. This would imply that two completely different ideological approaches collide as the renewed interest in lifelong learning deriving from organizational needs finds its way into people's lives and careers and, from there, into adult education and career guidance practice, which are fundamentally based on humanistic principles (cf. e.g., Jarvis, 2009; Kidd, 2006; Rubenson, 2009; Tuijnman & Boström, 2002). Hence, a second form of *educational-ideological discourse* (cf. Söderström, 2011) has made

entrance. This is exemplified by the development of various strategies, instruments and methods for testing and measuring competence<sup>14</sup> that followed in the trace of lifelong learning.

Validation and recognition of prior learning in the European arena have achieved much attention in the form of strategies, establishment of authorities<sup>15</sup>, and projects<sup>16</sup>. Such development exemplifies efforts to deal with matching issues in working life (cf. e.g., European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training -Cedefop, 2008; Valideringsdelegationen, 2008). Ideological differences in interpretation and conceptualization, in intentions, methodology, motivations, purposes behind and understandings of validation have been highlighted (Anderson & Fejes, 2005; Chaib & Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2010; Valideringsdelegationen, 2008), which clearly exemplifies a new form of the educational-ideological discourse. Intertwined with ideas of lifelong learning and validation, workplaces have shown an increased interest in learning activities and knowledge and competence development as sources of competitive advantage (Von Krogh, Ichijo, & Nonaka, 2000). Knowledge management (KM) consequently emerges as an employer strategy for lifelong learning in enterprises (cf. Villalba, 2004, 2006) where information systems and human resource management (HRM) have been central to the operationalization of global knowledge processes (Sparrow, 2006). These strategies are clearly developed for the purpose of companies' competitiveness, while the effects of such trends on people's careers are not extensively explored. Employees' participation in learning activities has been explored (cf. e.g., Baumgarten, 2006), as well as how to make the best use of available knowledge among employees, often in terms of validation or recognition of prior learning (RPL) (see e.g., Berglund, 2010; Berglund & Andersson, 2012). The concept of *skills supply*<sup>17</sup> received extensive interest in reports from the Swedish Ministry of Industry (Sverige. Näringsdepartementet, 2000, 2002) and emerges as yet another strategy

<sup>14</sup> (PISA), (IALS), (ALL), (PIAAC) (cf. Schuller, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Valideringsdelegationen (2004 – 2007) (cf. Valideringsdelegationen, 2008), thereafter Myndigheten för yrkeshögskolan: <https://www.valideringsinfo.se/Om-validering/>

<sup>16</sup> The Observal project (2008-2010) involved 24 European countries. See: <http://observal.eu/en/content/project>

<sup>17</sup> Kompetensförsörjning

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for companies to deal with increasing uncertainty due to global competition. During autumn 2008, the Swedish government presented measures<sup>18</sup> to strengthen the competitiveness of Swedish enterprises. Governmental propositions, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise<sup>19</sup> and research projects initiated<sup>20</sup> all focused on companies' abilities to adapt to societal changes and on providing companies with the competencies required for the future. At the same time, a questionnaire survey among business leaders reveals employers' perplexity over why many employees seem to have abandoned their efforts to improve their performance (Lindgren, 2009). One could assume that peoples' lives and careers are most likely influenced by changes in career contexts, but it is unclear how. From the employers' side, measures are proposed to deal with resignation among employees: increased opportunity to dismiss such workers and reforming the employment protection act<sup>21</sup> and its priority rules have been highlighted, as current rules are considered to restrict companies' skills supply strategies (Karlsson, 2011). Frozen wages, extended working hours and a higher retirement age are other examples being debated (see e.g., Johansson, 2012).

Societal debates and trends have clearly been characterized by labour market matching problems, companies' needs and strategies for skills provision, and adaptability in order to handle global competition and uncertainty. Lifelong learning, recurrent education, validation/recognition of prior learning, skills provision and career guidance are examples of policy strategies developed under the umbrella of the competence discourse, the human capital discourse, the education and/or learning discourse. Clearly, these discourses are intertwined with each other, while such intertwining also seems to create ideological differences when the discourses meet, collide or transform. One cannot ignore the fact that in the middle of these discursive debates and trends are people, located in their jobs where they try to orientate themselves and their career issues.

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<sup>18</sup> Swedish Government, Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, Press releases 29 of October, 2008; 27 of November, 2008)

<sup>19</sup> Svenskt Näringsliv

<sup>20</sup> See VINNOVA, investment in ten research projects: <http://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/pressroom/vinnova/pressrelease/view/45-miljoner-till-forskning-om-omstaellningsfoermaaga-och-kompetensfoersoerjning-372726>

<sup>21</sup> LAS – Lagen om anställningsskydd

Summarily, career is found localized between several discourses in a field of tension characterized by various and shifting needs and ideological differences. Although not in primary focus in the above outlined trends, debates, strategies and discourses, it is clear that career as a phenomenon is undergoing tremendous change.

## CHAPTER 4

# PREVIOUS RESEARCH

This chapter, divided in three sections, discusses previous research. The first section concerns the meaning of career. A description of contrasting views of career and the transitional trends in the career field will be given, followed by a description of how career has been defined and understood throughout time, from traditional definitions towards a gradual widening of definitions of career. The second section concerns education and training in working life as an expanding research area. Here, previous research that exemplifies and illustrates a shift from educational planning towards a focus on learning is presented. In addition, two professions in different arenas have been found relevant for career. Therefore, the second section also provides a description of the development of the human resource profession. The third section concerns the educational field of career guidance and provides research that exemplifies and illustrates a shift in focus from educational/vocational choice and decision-making towards lifelong guidance for continuous reshaping of careers. The third section

finally presents the emergence of the career guidance profession, as the other profession of relevance.

## THE MEANING OF CAREER

When people speak about career in everyday life, they seem to have a tacit agreement about what career is. Everyone *knows* what career is (Collin, 2007). This statement suggests that there exists some kind of everyday knowledge among people that governs human thoughts on the subject of career. Nevertheless, there are also multiple meanings of career, given that it is understood differently in various disciplines and among various professionals in different institutional settings (Collin, 2007; Kidd, 2006), and there seems to be a tension due to the different ways of speaking about these issues.

## CONTRASTING VIEWS ON CAREER

The broad field of career studies exhibits internal differences in what is emphasized and in how career is viewed (Arthur et al., 1989a; Collin, 2007; Inkson, 2004; Kidd, 2006). According to Kidd (2006), the term “career” receives a different focus and interpretation by those working in the field of labour economics than by counselling psychologists. Different methodologies and languages are used to study careers. The term is also used as an everyday term (Collin, 2007), with much potential for confusion. Such differences create difficulties for all parties involved to gain a common understanding of career. For instance, Inkson (2004) cites a lack of coherence between how career is viewed within the counselling field and how it is viewed in the organizational and business field. Inkson shows how two separate definitions of career development contrast with each other. The first definition, by Brown and Brooks (1990, p. xvii), is as follows:

Career development is ... a lifelong process of getting ready to choose, choosing, and continuing to make choices from among the many occupations available in our society



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This first definition “locates the career as being the property of the individual” (Inkson, 2004, p. 107). Moreover, this definition only implicitly recognizes the context as providing a set of occupations, and this definition does not recognize the connectedness with organizations in which careers are usually developed. The second definition, given by Byars and Rue in their book *Human Resource Management* from 2000, is as follows:

Career development is an ongoing formalized effort by an organization that focuses on developing and enriching the organization’s human resources in the light of both employees’ and the organizations’ needs (Inkson, 2004, p. 107)

This second definition represents human-resources thinking, emphasizes stakeholders other than the individual, considers the mutual relationship between individual and employer, and cedes the “construction of and control over career...to the employing organization” (Inkson, 2004, p. 107). These two fields, that is, the guidance counselling field and the organization and business field, are of special interest here because of the increasing links between the two in this time of transition in working life. I agree with Inkson’s reasoning that both views have much to offer each other. However, as noted by Collin (1998), the development in occupational settings, the approaches emphasized in organizational and business areas, and the choice-decision sphere in which career guidance counselors are trained, all fail to recognize each other. However, from previously having been more clearly divided in the guidance counselling field, and in career development in organizations, the rapid change in career contexts seems to result in increasingly shared contexts between these two fields.

Another overview of various views on career (see., Arthur et al., 1989a) includes social science positions on the concept, where career, from a psychological perspective, is regarded as (a) a vocation, (b) a vehicle for self-realization, or (c) a component of the individual life structure. The view of career as a vocation accepts the position of stability of personality in adulthood and is intended to guide individuals, organizations and society. The view of career as a vehicle for self-realization is humanistic, focusing on the opportunities and benefits a career can provide individuals, organizations and society. Career regarded as a component of

the individual life structure sees transitions as predictable. Social psychology considers career as an individual response to external role messages, while sociology considers career as (a) the development of social roles in the social order, or (b) as social mobility, where titles indicate people's social positions. Anthropology and functional sociology overlap and regard career as status passages. The economic perspective considers career as a response to market forces; political science focuses on career as the enactment of self-interest; history views career as a correlate of historical outcomes; and geography views career as a response to geographic circumstances (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989b). In summary, it is clear that the understandings and definitions of career vary between different perspectives and disciplines and that multiple meanings are used for various purposes among different groups of people, disciplines and perspectives (see, e.g., Arthur et al., 1989b; Collin, 2007; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Because of this multiplicity, the concept of career has been suggested to be a fruitful point of departure for trans-disciplinary debate (Arthur et al., 1989a).

## TRANSITIONAL TRENDS IN THE CAREER FIELD

In line with the changing working life conditions, where concepts such as globalization and lifelong learning have influenced since the early 1990s (see e.g., Jarvis, 2009, 2009b; Rubenson, 2009; Torres, 2009), several researchers began to study what possible impact these changes might have on the career field (see, e.g., Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larsson, 1996; Collin, 1998; Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Nicholson, 1996). Hall (1996) pointed at the mixed messages that followed with the transformation of working life with his statement "The Career is dead – long live the career!" (Hall, 1996, p. 8). Other authors termed the trends as *boundaryless careers* and announced this trend as the new employment principle (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Paradoxically, career-related issues have gained more interest than ever before, among policy actors in particular (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Watts, 2005; Watts & Fretwell, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004), while career is simultaneously pronounced to be a "dead" phenomenon (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). These trends of new conceptualizations of career have resulted in a

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shifted focus from organizational pathways towards an inward focus (Collin, 1998). However, these new conceptualizations are difficult to operationalize, and Collin highlights the moral dimension of management when discussing what kinds of changes people need to make to create such new forms of career. For instance, people need to develop their employability and their social capital through networking, and they need the practical support of career guidance in order to construct their identities in such boundaryless careers (Collin, 1998). In addition, Collin argues that employers need to take such needs into consideration in work contracts and that these new conceptualizations will result in new ways of responding to the changes in the world of work. Collin also notes that, with these trends and new conceptualizations, the study of career has entered an uncomfortable phase, as old traditions continue alongside new developments (Collin, 1998). A shift in conceptions from career development to career management is evident in writings on management (see e.g., Drucker, 2007a, 2007b). New models of career construction have been suggested as a response to these new demands emerging, arguing that key-concepts within the career field need to be reformulated (Savickas et al., 2009).

## BROADENED UNDERSTANDINGS OF CAREER

Several definitions of career can be found throughout time. Below I seek to describe how career has been defined and understood throughout time, from traditional definitions towards a gradually widening of definitions.

### **Traditional views of career**

Ever since Frank Parson published his pioneering work, *Choosing a vocation*, in 1909 (Parson, 1909), the terms career, vocation and occupation have been used synonymously, and traditional definitions have restricted career to a professional work life, including advancement (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Traditional views on career are rooted in hierarchical structures of organizations (Hall & Chandler, 2005) and the development after World War II, where advancement and progressive improvement

and “climbing the ladder” became the metaphor for career (Savickas, 2008, p. 105).

### **Definitions that emphasize the centrality of work**

Patton and McMahon (2006) describe how the centrality of work and time is emphasized by several authors (see e.g., Arthur et al., 1989a; Nicholson & West, 1989; Thomas, 1989). For instance, “working lives” is suggested by Thomas (1989), and “work histories” is suggested by Nicholson & West (1989), who also recommend use of the neutral term “work histories” to denote sequences of job experiences and that the term “career” should be reserved “for the sense people make of them” (Nicholson & West, 1989, p. 181). Other authors define career as “the evolving sequence of a person’s work experience over time” (Arthur et al., 1989a, p. 8) and maintain the centrality and focus on the relationship between work and time.

### **Definitions that gradually broaden the meaning**

Several researchers have gradually proposed a broadening of the traditional views on career, exemplified with the statement that “everyone who works has a career” (Arthur et al., 1989a, p. 9). This description provides career to be applied to all occupations (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Work is defined broadly by Richardson (1993) as human activity that is initiated “for individual success and satisfaction, to express achievement and strivings, to earn a living...to further ambitions and self-assertions...and to link individuals to a larger social good” (Richardson, 1993, p. 428). Other attempts strive to move further beyond the centrality of work where the involvement of voluntary and unpaid work has been emphasized (Richardson, 1993). By building on the work of Richardson (1993), Blustein (2001) argues for including the work lives of all citizens, not only the well-educated, as such a view fosters a more inclusive psychology of working which focuses on issues of gender, social class, family background, cultural characteristics and their impact on career development. A broadened definition that exemplifies how the concept of career broadens to include both time, life, pre-vocational, post-vocational activities

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and also other life roles and contexts is provided by the Department of Education and Science in 1989 (Patton & McMahon, 2006, p. 4) as

the variety of occupational roles which individuals will undertake throughout life...[including] paid and self employment, the different occupations which a person may have over the years and periods of un-employment, and unpaid occupations such as that of student, voluntary worker or parent .

Consequently, work-related roles such as those of student, employee, and pensioner are included, together with complementary, civil, vocational and familial roles (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Kidd (2006) argues for the term “employment related”, as an attempt to move beyond the traditional views, as it is broad enough to cover different positions without reference to certain types of occupations or increasing status. The concept of lifecareer, suggested by Miller-Tiedeman (1988), and further developed by Miller-Tiedeman and Tiedeman, (1990) integrates career and other aspects of life. The emphasizing on life emerges further with alternative suggestions to career, arguing for the conception *life path* instead (Lindberg, 2003). Career is defined by Patton and McMahon as “the pattern of influences that coexist in an individual’s life over time” (2006, p. 5). Inkson (2004) argues that in line with an economic environment with less stable conditions, the traditional image of the secure, status-driven “organization-man” (cf. Whyte, 1956), is being replaced by influential academic concepts expressed in metaphorical ways; “boundaryless careers” (cf. Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and “protean careers” (cf. Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996) and “career construction” (see e.g., Savickas et al., 2009). Inkson also states that not all career metaphors have equal status, as they differ in where and from whom the reference is made and in what they refer to (Inkson, 2004). As described by Inkson (2004), matching thinking has been a fundamental cornerstone in career theory ever since the introductory work of Parson (1909). The popular term “protean career”(cf. Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996) is seen by Inkson as shape-changing as “a means of adjusting fit to suit changing circumstance” (Inkson, 2004, p. 103). Another view observed by Inkson line with restructuring and downsizing in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, is the strategic management that emphasizes a resource-based view on career. Inkson

notes some difficulties with this way of thinking on career as it may “steal your career from you”, and it may transform careers for organizational purposes (Inkson, 2004, p. 105). Another way of defining career, is based upon ideas that some aspects of career success are objective, and some aspects are more subjective (Kidd, 2006). “Objective career success consists of observable career outcomes such as hierarchical position in an organisation, status, social reputation, salary and work-related skills. Subjective career success depends on one’s values, but may include job satisfaction, career commitment, self-efficacy and moral satisfaction” (Kidd, 2006, pp. 45-46). Objective and subjective career success and the relationship between them will be one of the most important challenges for theory and research in a time of transition in the world of work (Kidd, 2006). With attempts to broaden the understandings of career beyond the traditional views, in particular concerned with the objective career success, ideas of psychological success have been suggested (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Based upon these two different views, initially identified by Hughes (1958), Hall and Chandler (2005) argues for *psychological success* based on career as a calling under which the subjective career precedes objective outcomes. Other researchers argue that the subjective career is secondary to the objective career (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). The attempts to broaden the understandings of career all serve as examples of how the field strives to move beyond the traditional views.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN WORKING LIFE

Collin (1998) reasons that new conceptualizations of career and transitional trends in the career field will most likely result in new ways to respond to changes in the world of work. These changes are in particularly notable in the field of education and training in working life. Participants involved in this field are adults, and employees in these contexts, where education, learning and development are part of their work, often connected with specific business interests (Söderström, 2011). It is in these contexts that peoples’ careers are directly influenced by organizational strategies and needs and influenced by ideas about human resource strat-

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egies. Previous research in this field clearly relates to such trends and outlines an expanding research area in which a shift from focusing on functional skills development in educational planning for positions towards focusing on workplaces as learning arenas and on people's learning to adapt to changes can be observed. These trends also influence the human resource practice, as involved in employees' career issues.

## A SHIFTING FOCUS FROM PLANNING TO LEARNING

Below, I seek to describe an expanding research area and previous research that exemplifies and illustrates the shift from early educational planning towards a focus on learning, in line with discourses in which career begins to be challenged by the changing organizational landscape in an uncertain global context. The shift takes its point of departure in the discourse of planning and gradually involves the competence discourse and the education and/or learning discourse (cf. Söderström, 2011) .

### **An expanding research area**

During the past decades, from the 1970s onwards, the interest in educational issues in working life has increased tremendously in terms of practice, research and higher education, particularly in the Nordic context (Söderström, 2011). A comprehensive review of the field of education and training in working life is given by Ellström, Löfberg and Svensson (2005). The authors analyzed the emergence and rapid development of this field of research in Sweden and Scandinavia. A more recent overview of the development of this field indicates what seems to be a meeting-point between two areas of interest: a) established educational science and b) the more unknown area of working life (Söderström, 2011). An increase in scientific writings on educational issues in working life can be observed from the 1970s, and during the 1980s and 1990s several dissertations directed towards working life have been defended in the Nordic countries. Issues of concern have been labour market training, vocational education and training, leadership and management training, personnel training, learning organizations and team building (Söderström, 2011). The educational practice is thus found within the frames of employment

services, and educational areas at workplaces. Other issues of concern have been different views on education in working life, methods for analyzing educational needs, various educational methods and forms, educational economy and evaluation (Söderström, 2011). Research interests can, according to Söderström (2011), be divided into the following areas: selection and recruitment, work requirements and educational needs, competence development and personnel training, leadership training, change and development processes in respect of groups and organizations, work and educational experiences, informal learning, and workplaces as learning contexts.

### **Educational planning for functional skills development for positions**

The discourse of planning (see Söderström, 2011) is exemplified by research on educational planning for certain positions and certain target groups through specific analytical methods (Gestrelus, 1970, 1989). A distinction between education for personal development and education for the function of a certain position was highlighted several decades ago (Gestrelus, 1970). As hierarchical, stable and secure conditions in organizational systems were gradually challenged in the early 1980s (Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012; Ekstedt & Sundin, 2006a; Savickas et al., 2009), research on competence development and educational planning (Ellström, 1992; Söderström, 1981, 1990) seems to have gradually shifted its focus because of the difficulties of planning in increasingly uncertain and changing contexts. Here, traces of the competence discourse (cf. Söderström, 2011) can be seen. Positional changes, competence requirements and the educational needs resulting from such changes and requirements were of special interest in research about changes in work and organization and about development opportunities for employees in several companies (Gestrelus, 1989). This interest is exemplified by Gestrelus (1989) who explored how to bridge the gap between already existing competencies among employees and the future competence required by the companies.



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## **Workplaces as learning arenas**

Exploration of organizations and workplaces as learning contexts represents a large field of research that exemplifies the education/learning discourse (cf. Söderström, 2011). An expansion of interest in work-place and work-based learning, especially the past decade, has resulted in several studies in Sweden and internationally. Such studies focus on specific working contexts and groups of professionals, such as IT employees, teachers, and nurses in clinical practice (Chang, Chang, & Jacobs, 2009; Ellström, 1996; Felce, 2011; Krauss & Guat, 2008; Williams, 2010) as well as on specific models for learning (Yeo, 2008). Interest in work-based learning is also evident in research concerned with transitions between educational contexts and professional practice (Cameron, Rutherford, & Mountain, 2012) and in research that focuses on learning and creation of knowledge in various professions and occupations (Chatenier, Verstegen Jos, Biemans Harm, Mulder, & Omta Onno, 2009; Söderström, 2005).

## **Organizational changes and learning as adaptation to such changes**

Organizational changes have gained increased interest among researchers. Effects of organizational changes on working conditions have been explored (Härenstam, 2010; Härenstam, Bejerot, Leijon, Schéele, & Waldenström, 2004). Those studies indicate that organizations that did not undergo change provided the best work conditions, whereas market-adjusting patterns of change had deleterious effects and increased differentiation of working conditions (Härenstam et al., 2004). The concept co-workership has gained increased interest and focus since the early 1990s, and is clearly influenced by the use of empowerment as a management strategy (Kilhammar, 2011). Decentralization processes as change have been explored among Swedish companies and work life (Södergren, 1992) after influential ideas from the middle of 1980s of demolishing hierarchical systems in favour of networks (cf. Carlzon, 2008; Johnson, 1995). Södergren (1992) explored the effects of decentralization processes on different actors in companies and revealed a clear break from traditional

views on career, where established paths of promotion, status and rewards became challenged and the view of career as alternative paths emerged. This is a clear example of research that did not focus primarily on the meaning of career related to change but managed to disclose effects of such change on people's careers. The education/learning discourse (cf. Söderström, 2011) is also exemplified by an increased interest in organizations' ability to adapt to surrounding changes and by term "learning organizations", which rose to prominence during the 1990s (Senge, 1995, 2006). This is evident in previous research focusing on the meaning of learning organizations (Birdi, 2007), industrial organizations (Mattsson, 1995), explorations of how organizations learn (Ekman, 2004; Söderström, 1996; Örténblad, 2009), and also explorations of *for whom* organizations learn (Örténblad, 2009). It is also evident that lifelong learning emerges as an employer strategy of knowledge management in small companies (Villalba, 2004, 2006).

## THE HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSION

Given the increasing perception that career guidance is an integral part of human resource development strategy (Watts & Fretwell, 2004) and recent development of the guidance field, which is increasingly populated by human-resource practitioners (Van Esbroeck, 2008), a look at this profession is required. Below, I provide a short description of how the personnel profession has developed towards human resource development issues and, further, towards being a part of human resource management strategy.

Söderström and Lindström (1994) provide a historical contextualization of the early personnel profession towards today's conceptualization of HRM (human resource management). According to Söderström and Lindström (1994), the early personnel profession is rooted in the industrial age, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The modern personnel profession takes further shape particularly after the Second World War, in line with the expansion of the industrial sector. In the middle of the 1970s, the conditions for personnel work changed due to reduction of employment in industry. At that time personnel work took on other tasks,

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such as reassignment, retraining and settlement. In the 1980s changes in society, together with the emergence of information technology and the transformation from the industrial age to the knowledge based society, resulted in implications for leadership and organizational thinking. That was when the concept of HRM became relevant (Söderström & Lindström, 1994). HRM mirrors the changes in our surrounding world and can be regarded as a perspective, an ideology and a strategy (Söderström & Lindström, 1994). HRM is described by Söderström (2011) as being a transformed concept, deriving from the more development-oriented approach called human resource development (HRD). HRD regards employees' opportunities to learn and develop as foundational for the development of the company; Lindmark and Önnévik (2006) define it as being composed of actions and activities that positively impact both the development of the individual and the productivity and profits of the organization. HRD is thus about how organizations work with staff development, based on four key areas: learning, skills, culture and change (Lindmark & Önnévik, 2006). However, the HRD approach, according to Söderström (Söderström, 2011), has gradually transformed to also involve the exchange between management, leadership and personnel work in order to strengthen organizations' competitiveness. Clearly, such transformation from HRD to HRM indicates an increasing involvement of economic points of view, in line with increasing organizational changes and relate to the competence discourse, the education/learning discourse, and the human capital discourse (cf. Söderström, 2011).

A description of the development of the personnel profession in Sweden is given in 1993 by Damm, who highlights four distinct eras that Söderström & Lindström (1994) summarize as follows: 1) "*The becoming*" covers the period 1910–1949, when the profession was characterized more as a passion. 2) "*From social work to personnel administration*" covers the period 1950–1969, during which time a contradiction arose between the individual, socially oriented personnel work and the striving to integrate personnel issues within the administrative organization of the company (Söderström & Lindström, 1994). 3) "*In the service of democracy*" covers the period from 1970–1979, when personnel work was influenced by reforms

in labor law. Finally, 4) Finally, “*management services*”, covers the 1980s, when personnel work became more business and competence oriented under a management perspective (Söderström & Lindström, 1994, pp. 11-12). This summary is further developed and discussed and a shift in focus is described: first the individual was in focus; then the organization was in focus; then there was a mutual focus on the organization and the individual; and finally, from the end of the 1980s, the focus was exclusively on the organization (Söderström, 1997). Such development reveals a shift in focus that would indicate implications for how career is viewed in organizations as well. The psychological perspective on career as humanistic and focusing on mutual benefits for the individual and the organization (see., Arthur et al., 1989a) seems challenged by the exclusive focus on organizations. According to Söderström and Lindström (1994), the personnel work can be regarded from an economic production perspective, a professional perspective, and a welfare perspective. The economic production perspective mirrors international trends, and Söderström and Lindström reflect on the work of Peter Drucker who in 1993 predicted that the future management of companies would be characterized by managing competence development as the primary resource. Here, the human capital discourse (Söderström, 2011) clearly emerges as dominant. In line with this perspective follows the human capital perspective on education in its broadest sense, as investments and development of knowledge capital for economic production. Similar to the career guidance profession, the human resource profession is also located in a field of tension where professionalization processes collide with ideological trends influencing the profession.

## THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD OF CAREER GUIDANCE

According to Söderström (2011), a picture of a meeting-point between the established educational science field and the area of education and training in working life can be observed. Such meeting-point was outlined above and also involves the field of career guidance as an educational

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practice. Previous research in this field outlines a shift in focus: such research used to be mainly concerned with guidance for youth in schools systems, choice and decision making, and transitions to work; however, the research now increasingly also identifies educational and guidance policy as an area for research as well as research in related fields concerned with adults affected by change. When the world of work is changing, so are society's ways of supporting people to navigate and make vocational choices (Savickas, 2008). Therefore, this section ends with a description of how the career guidance profession has emerged.

## TOWARDS LIFELONG GUIDANCE FOR CONTINUOUS RESHAPING OF CAREERS

Below, I seek to describe previous research concerned with career guidance practice that exemplifies and illustrates a shift in focus: from guidance for youth, vocational and educational choice and decision-making, and transitions to work towards a focus on educational and guidance policy, and from there to a focus on adults affected by change.

### **Guidance for youth in schools, choice and decision-making and transitions to work**

Research that address educational and vocational guidance has traditionally been concerned with choice and decision-making (Kidd, 2006), often focusing on youth and guidance and counselling in schools (Lindh, 1997; Lovén, 2000; Sandell, 2007). Young adults' transitions from school to work, in an increasingly uncertain future for youth, have been a focus within the framework of a larger research project in Sweden<sup>22</sup>, with numerous publications (see. e.g., Lidström, 2009; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). Swedish national school-to-work transition policies and local transition strategies have been explored in order to search for explanations

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<sup>22</sup> Research project: Unsafe transitions. School-to-work transitions of young people at risk in a longitudinal perspective, funded by the Swedish Research Council, 2010-2013

for Sweden's problems with school dropout rates and youth unemployment (Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014). Educational and vocational guidance in schools has been analyzed from a governing perspective (Nilsson, 2005a). Related research on transitions from higher education to work concern transitions to specific professions, professionalization and employability (see e.g., Axelsson, 2008; Johansson, 2007; Löfgren Martinsson, 2008) but only indirectly touches themes of career and career development. Studies focusing on the significance of different factors for the educational career and on gender and social background for the selection to higher education and work concern educational choice related to background variables (Erikson & Jonsson, 2002; Hammarström, 1996).

### **Research on educational and guidance policy**

Researchers in areas other than career guidance have paid attention to lifelong learning (Lindh & Lundahl, 2008). This is evident in both the area of education and training in working life (cf. e.g., Villalba, 2004) and in adult educational research (cf. e.g., Fejes, 2006). However, the constantly recurring requirements for raising the level of competence and the recurring choice situations and career transitions also place demands on lifelong guidance. Hence, the evaluation of career guidance policies have gained increased interest, and research and guidance policies have received increased attention among researchers (cf. e.g., Bengtsson, 2011; Plant, 2005; Watts & Sultana, 2004). An international evaluation of career guidance policies in 37 countries, initiated by OECD, European Commission and the World Bank (Watts & Sultana, 2004), pointed out a need for systematic knowledge development on career development and career guidance. European career guidance policy has been analyzed from a Foucauldian governmentality perspective, where it is concluded that political strategies of career guidance work as a technology to govern people's participation in the invention of human capital (Bengtsson, 2011). Educational policy represents an area of research in which the deregulation and privatization of the public school system have gained increased research interest in several countries in recent years (Erixon Arreman & Holm, 2011; O'Neill, 2011), together with the privatizing of educational policy and educational research (Ball, 2009). Swedish educational policy over a

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25 year period, from the 1990s through the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, has been explored with regard to how education politics relate to socio-economic changes (Lundahl, 2002). The study concludes that access to education has increased at all levels over the 25 year period, while young people's transition to the labour market occurs later and has become more complicated, requiring successful completion of at least an upper-secondary education. Education politics appears to have reinforced social division and exclusion, rather than counteracting such tendencies (Lundahl, 2002). As noted by Lindh and Lundahl (2008), the area of policy strategy, together with its influences on and connections and contradictions between education, working life, and the societal supporting system need to be further explored. They state that there is a huge need for further knowledge about adults' career development related to changing external conditions. The need to provide career guidance support to people in employment has also been emphasized by the European Union (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2008).

### **Related research concerned with adults affected by change**

Even though career guidance research concerned with youth (cf. e.g., Lidström, 2009) has recognized and highlighted the uncertainty that characterizes today's working life, research concerned with adults in mid-life, who experience other types of transitions or changes within their workplaces, is not extensive. Research that treats of related issues but does not have a specific career or career guidance focus is found, rather, within the area of adult education and learning. For instance, work transitions and job loss are explored (Hallqvist, 2012); Hallqvist's research also serves as an example of today's insecure and changing working life, where novel career decisions and horizontal career moves are highlighted. Other examples of changes in working life that affect adults – examples that indirectly touch on career themes – are given in research framed by lifelong learning and are concerned with validation/recognition of prior learning related to the adult education field (see e.g., Andersson, 2008; Andersson & Fejes, 2005a, 2005b; Andersson & Fejes, 2011; Andersson, Fejes, & Hult, 2003; Andersson & Osman, 2008; Chaib & Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2010; Sandberg, 2012). This area of research has expanded over the past

few years, but the relevance for career and career guidance is not primarily in focus. Validation and recognition of knowledge and skills at workplaces have also been highlighted in research with a particular focus on the employer's perspective (Berglund, 2010; Berglund & Andersson, 2012). Some research is indirectly concerned with the changing demands on adults to continuously learn but focuses on the infrastructure of providing possibilities for adult learning through cooperation projects among various actors and learning centres (Jakobsson, 2007; Lögdlund, 2011) through the Adult Education Initiative<sup>23</sup> (Lumsden Wass, 2004) or focus on teachers' educational practice and conditions in adult education (Henning Loeb, 2006; Håkansson, 2007). The effects that the changes in working life have on the educational practice of career guidance are neglected, however. Related research on work-life learning and work-place learning addresses, in various ways, the changing needs for adults to learn, but mostly related to organizational conditions and issues of employers' and leaders' ways of managing employees' competence (Augustinsson, 2000; Bennich, 2012; Berglund, 2010; Berglund & Andersson, 2012; Bredin, 2008; Ericsson, 2007; Nilsson, 2005b; Olsson, 2007; Ström, 1997; Villalba, 2006). However, such research represents good examples of the changing working life conditions.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE CAREER GUIDANCE PROFESSION

When the world of work changes so does society's ways of supporting people to navigate and make vocational choices (Savickas, 2008). To understand how the career guidance profession, which is involved in such supporting methods, has developed alongside significant changes in the world of work over time, a chronological description of the profession's development from the 1850s to today is provided below. Some crucial

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<sup>23</sup> The Adult Education Initiative (AEI) was a five year program for adult education in Sweden, established in July 1997, by the Government as part of their strategy to halve unemployment by the year of 2000 and to contribute to the reform of adult education.



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phases of significance for the development of the profession internationally have been identified (Savickas, 2008), and the Swedish development of this profession (see Nilsson, 2010) is related to these.

### **The transition from agricultural communities to industrial society**

The early emergence of vocational assistance, described as a mentoring activity in agricultural communities, took place during 1850–1899 (Savickas, 2008). Since most people lived on farms, there were not many specialized jobs. Choosing a vocation for life was not a problem for most people, as the traditional society offered few occupational choices. The second phase occurred during the years 1871–1949, when the industrial revolution took place. The transformation from agricultural communities to the industrial society created a need for people to choose one major work activity. People moved to cities and worked individually in wage jobs, which created new problems caused by reorganization of the social order. Cities provided increasing occupational alternatives and opportunities, but people were lost in disorientation in the cities because of the lack of stable community. These problems required the attention of experts to help people choose among alternatives and vocations. The changes also caused unemployment, crime and alcoholism. To handle these problems, society began to offer mentoring provided by so called *friendly visitors* (USA) and *voluntary visitors* (England) (Savickas, 2008, p. 99); the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA<sup>24</sup>) was founded and led to the emergence of a *Find Yourself* program (Savickas, 2008, p. 100). It was in the transition to the industrial society, in the early 1900s, that the development of the career guidance profession in Sweden took place. The transition to industrial society created a division of labor, with occupational differentiation and separation of education and employment. The belief that education of all children is a public duty, the recognition of individual differences, and a new conceptualization of adolescence as a

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<sup>24</sup> The YMCA offered courses, opened libraries and employment bureaus, and provided mentoring to help young workers, especially boys, immigrants and rural youth who had moved from villages to cities. The YMCA's work was pioneering in that it offered vocational advice to youth based on character education and new educational psychology.

new life stage emerged. The interest in peoples' educational and vocational choice increased in Sweden and in other countries (Nilsson, 2010; Savickas, 2008). In many countries, the school personnel and social workers needed to find out how to help adolescents making vocational choices. This led to the development of early vocational guidance, which arose within either the educational system or the social welfare organization in many countries. According to Savickas, the earliest antecedents to the formation of modern vocational guidance occurred in 1871, when Cestari, in Venice, published a classification of occupations, occupational information, and how to evaluate individual aptitudes. However, the profession of vocational guidance marks its origin with the influential work by social reformer Frank Parsons (1909), who coined the term "vocational guidance". In Sweden, Einar Neymark is regarded as a pioneer of vocational guidance; he was the head of the youth mediation and counseling unit established by the State Labour Commissioner in 1939 (Nilsson, 2010). The establishment of professional educational and vocational guidance began to take shape in Sweden in the 1940s.

### **The development of traditional views on career**

The phase after World War II, from 1950 to 1999, referred to as high modernity (Savickas, 2008), enabled the emergence of what is today known as the traditional notions of career. Educational and vocational guidance was established in earnest in Sweden with the introduction of compulsory school in the 1960s. Growth of national and multinational companies created hierarchical structures, and images of the ladder evolved, where each step up represented more responsibility and pay. This development enabled possibilities for advancement and progressive improvement, and "climbing the ladder" became the metaphor for career (Savickas, 2008, p. 105). A tremendous expansion of theory development concerned with theories of career decision, career development and client- or person-centered counselling emerged. Savickas (2008) highlights a shift between guidance and counseling<sup>25</sup> during this period. Guidance

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<sup>25</sup> The shift from guidance to counseling was also marked symbolically as the leading US journal changed its name from the earlier *Vocational Guidance Quarterly* to the *Career Development Quarterly* (Savickas, 2008, p. 108).

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focused on matching individuals to positions based on individual differences, while counselling focused on differences within an individual over time. The difference between directive guidance and non-directive counselling, now called person-centered counseling, emerged. Vocational guidance is rooted in the psychological view of the stability of personality traits and abilities. Career counseling, in turn, “is rooted in a psychosocial view of people” (Savickas, 2008, p. 107). Savickas says that these two models explain, together, how people remain the same and how they may change and that the models also highlight the difference between vocational guidance, which is concerned with the content of occupations, and career education in schools, which is concerned with the process of development. During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, career development became the dominant helping model. The shift from guidance to counselling has most certainly influenced the debates in Sweden as well. However, there are still conceptual confusions between these differences, as the profession still includes the word *guidance* (in Swedish: *vägledning*), and sometimes both *guidance* and *counselling*, while the profession has also emphasized the non-directive approach (cf. e.g., Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989). Ever since its establishment in Sweden, educational and vocational guidance has been an area of contradictions and debates between various politics of goals and purposes of practice, without being analyzed in any real depth. In whose interest career guidance practice is primarily conducted remains unclear (Nilsson, 2010). According to Nilsson (2010), different ideological trends have characterized the Swedish professional. In the 1940s, perspectives of genetic predisposition and talents (Trait and Factor Theory) dominated the matching perspective, whereas the necessity for objective information was emphasized in the 1960s. This trend revealed mixed messages, as such goals communicated a non-directive character of practice and, at the same time, contained presuppositions that guidance would result in a directive effect. In the 1970s guidance counsellors were supposed to function as agents for change, to address injustices of inequality, but this trend caused a lack of focus on the individual. In the 1980s, the goals and purposes of the Swedish practice were difficult to grasp, as there were various documents regulating the practice. This caused different expectations from various stakeholders, and guidance counsellors often experienced criticism for not directing students to the

“correct” educational programs (Nilsson, 2010, p. 183). As a consequence of such tensions, the initial declaration of ethics for educational and vocational guidance in Sweden was formulated (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989), and in 1993, Sweden established an academic degree of educational and vocational guidance (Nilsson, 2010, p. 187).

### **The transition towards career guidance today**

In the year 2000, *career guidance* as a concept was introduced and became more common in Sweden, in line with the use of the concept internationally (Nilsson, 2010). This professional practice is primarily conducted in educational areas—such as public schools, adult education and universities—and in employment services, but the field broadened during the 2000s in Sweden to also involve private actors (Nilsson, 2010). The professional practice is now populated by a range of practitioners in other countries as well (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a). Various evaluations, investigations and policies have emphasized the importance of career guidance, in Sweden and internationally during the 2000s (cf. e.g., Nilsson, 2010; Van Esbroeck & Athanasou, 2008; Watts, 2005; Watts & Sultana, 2004). However, even though career is identified as the core issue for career guidance practitioners (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a), a deeper analysis of the meaning of career within this area is hard to find. Several authors have noted that the effects of globalization on the organization of work influence career, its possibilities and its meaning (cf. e.g., Ekstedt & Sundin, 2006a, 2006b; Herr, 2008b; Savickas et al., 2009; Van Esbroeck, 2008), but it is still unclear how. Clearly, we now observe changes similar to those that occurred when industry overwhelmed the agricultural period, and one could conclude that there will be effects on the meaning ascribed to career and the continuing development of the career guidance practice (cf. Van Esbroeck, 2008).

## CHAPTER 5

# THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The above-outlined contextualization of the research object localizes career between several discourses between which there is some tension. Two separate yet intertwined educational fields share interest in career phenomena. Career is thus framed by different conditions and contexts, which are assumed to intersect. As noted by Söderström (2011), all work-life research needs to pay attention to context. Given that several contexts are clearly intertwined, with career as their common object, a framing of different types of contexts appears relevant. Söderström (2011) speaks of four separate types of context: structural context, cultural context, historical context, and the context of the surrounding community. According to this reasoning, career phenomena is surrounded by a *structural context*, which includes terms, conditions, policies and economics. This structural context has also been noted to surround the career guidance encounter (Lovén, 2000). Furthermore, we find the distinctive *cultural context* – ideas, values, ways of thinking, symbols and codes – as well as the *historical context*, which includes historical developments that underlie the discourses.

Finally, the context of the *surrounding community* includes the nature of different workplaces and organizations. Career as phenomena is naturally associated with each individual's pathway, aspirations, dreams and goals. When situations in people's lives require them to make new decisions, to act, to choose, and to handle new dilemmas, career converges with the abovementioned contexts in working life education at a point of intersection with the educational field of career guidance. Given that career phenomena is thus located in a field of tension, at the crossroads of the individual and society, there is a need for an overall theory that is able to embrace the abovementioned four contexts and bridge the gap between the individual and the social. In addition, because of the tremendous change in the organizational landscape, which influences people in everyday life, there is a need for a theory that deals with issues of change. Moreover, as described by Collin (2007), everybody seems to know what career is, yet there are multiple meanings of career, communicated differently in various contexts. This indicates that there exist both consensus and conflict about how career should be understood. On the one hand, since it appears that people have a common understanding of career, there is a need for a theory that takes into account how everyday knowledge is socially formed into ways of common thinking and communicating with various symbols and codes among people in certain groups in various contexts. On the other hand, since there are multiple meanings and ways of communicating about career, indicating differences in people's understanding, an interactional and communicative perspective is appropriate in that it focuses on contexts and relations between the parties involved (Bron & Wilhelmson, 2004).

## SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS THEORY (SRT)

Social representations theory (SRT), initially proposed by Serge Moscovici (1961, 2008) and further developed by others, responds well to both the theoretical and the methodological needs of this thesis, which is concerned with the understanding of career as commonly formed, everyday social knowledge. In addition, SRT draws upon both psychological and sociological frames (Chaib, 1991; Moscovici, 2000a). As noted by Lovén

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(2000), few attempts have been made to reconcile these frames. SRT is relevant in that it represents such an attempt and contribution, especially given the contextualization and localization of career.

SRT is a social-psychological theory about social, everyday knowledge, or common sense knowledge in particular—that is, that knowledge which differs from scientific knowledge (Chaib, Danermark, & Selander, 2011). The theory is also about how such knowledge is produced in and by everyday life (Jovchelovitch, 2007). SRT is therefore relevant as a theoretical framework, given this study's interest in examining everyday knowledge about career and the meaning that is ascribed to career, which is formed and communicated among people in different groups and contexts. Everyday knowledge is transmitted and transformed from generation to generation, while scientific knowledge is mainly provided, transmitted and transformed through scientific research (Andersén, 2011). Social representations theory thus explains how knowledge is transformed, the way knowledge is communicated between different groups and parts of society, and how different subjects create a collective idea of a certain object in order to have a common understanding about it in a common, socially constructed reality. The way we speak about certain phenomena, such as career, is determined to a large extent by the social representation we have about that phenomena.

A social representation is described by Moscovici (1973) as a socially and intellectually produced value system, a system of ideas and practices (1973), that supports people's construction of the world as they believe it is or should be (cf. Andersén, 2011). Through these values, ideas and practices, social orders are established, enabling people to orient themselves and master their social reality. The system of values, ideas and practices therefore provides people with linguistic codes that help them name and classify social phenomena in their surrounding contexts (Chaib et al., 2011; Moscovici, 1973). Social representations are described as being expressions of relations with a certain object, and therefore social representations differ from the object itself. Rather, social representations make people aware of a certain object. This does not mean that people, as subjects, are aware of their own social representations about a certain object (cf. Andersén, 2011), but only that the social representations create

awareness about that object. It follows that people are not necessarily aware of their social representations of career—only that those social representations create an awareness about what career is.

When Moscovici (1961, 2008) formulated SRT, he based its foundation on the concept of collective representations, originally formulated by Durkheim (1898/1974). Subsequently, SRT has its origin in a sociological perspective. Durkheim found the concept of collective representations useful for studying the symbolic elements of social life. Ideas of an object shared among people – regardless of the object itself – constitute symbolic elements. Durkheim distinguished between individual representations and collective representations. He argued that individual representations are more changeable, whereas collective representations are more stable and are also shared by all members of a group. These shared representations, according to Durkheim, are passed on from generation to generation. Social representations theory, as developed by Moscovici and Marková (1998), moves beyond this: it focuses on the collective representations as socially formed and shared and, importantly, as including individual representations. In SRT, the importance of communication and interaction is central. A social representation is a form of socially shaped and shared everyday knowledge with the practical function of constructing a common reality in order to shape human behaviour and communication among a social group of people (Jodelet, 1989; Moscovici, 2008). The purpose of all representations is to make something strange into something familiar. This occurs through two specific processes central to the formation of social representations: *anchoring and objectification* (Moscovici, 2000a, 2001). Anchoring is the process in which certain events and uncertain objects find their way into peoples' social reality, as they are considered to be significant and meaningful in peoples' social relations (Chaib & Orfali, 1995a; Granbom, 2011). Through this mechanism people strive to anchor and reduce ideas that appear strange or unfamiliar to ordinary images and categories, that is, to place them into a familiar context. Moscovici further describes anchoring as classifying and naming something. When we classify something, we ascribe to it a combination of certain attributes which together dictate what is and what is not in it. When we categorize someone or something, we thus choose



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a paradigm from those that have been stored in our memories (Moscovici, 2001). Objectification, in turn, is the process in which the individual transforms certain ideas into concrete experiences, wherein something abstract becomes something concrete (Granbom, 2011). Through objectification, the unfamiliar thought becomes a familiar essence of reality. When people discover the iconic character of an unclear idea or being, they reproduce the concept into an image (Moscovici, 2001). Bauer and Gaskell (1999) also explain this process as an abstract and potentially threatening idea being made tangible when people use images, models and verbal metaphors in everyday life as a way to grasp and understand the world. These two processes illustrate the way in which psychological concepts are introduced in the theory of social representations. Social representations are thus to be seen as products based upon relations with a certain object (here, career) and based upon communication with others about the object (cf. Andersén, 2011). Moreover, Moscovici (2008) states that each group creates knowledge based upon its own interests, and that, therefore, social representations need to be understood in relation to those contexts that made the social representations possible in the first place (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Such contexts include the social, historical, economic, societal and political contexts. In line with this reasoning, people in various contexts have produced different views, symbols, stories and realities about career as a social phenomenon.

According to Purkhardt (1993), a dialectical relationship between culture and the individual results in social representations as products of that relationship. As noted by Andersén (2011), different cultures are linked with certain ways of knowing, thinking and communicating. Consequently, this means that when a person is born into a culture in a specific societal context, that person acquires certain cultural codes related to specific everyday knowledge (cf. e.g., Andersén, 2011; Marková, 2003). As shown by several authors, the theory describes how a triangular relation is established between two or more individuals towards a certain object (cf. e.g., Andersén, 2011; Chaib et al., 2011; Granbom, 2011). This triangular relation is described by Markova (2003) as based upon dialogicality between *ego*, that is, *I/me* as the subject, *alter*, that is, *others*, and the

*object*, that is, the object towards which the ego and the alter produce relations expressing social representations about the object (here, career). The ego is the subject that has a specific social representation of career. At the same time, the ego communicates with others, i.e., alter, about career. These others are, for instance, other people. However, as Purkhardt (1993) argues, communication is not all about interpersonal verbal and nonverbal communication between two or more people. Communication arises in several ways, through pictures and written words in magazines, media, books, film, art, and so on. Therefore, *alter* also comprises such communication that can be found in textual communicative practices, such as the newspaper, as explored by Moscovici in his original work (Moscovici, 1961, 2008), research material, and context-specific documents, as explored by Andersén (Andersén, 2011). When a dialogue occurs between ego and alter, they both carry social representations about the object. In order for communication to take place, a shared context is necessary, that is, that both ego and alter have social representations about the same object (Andersén, 2011). However, as further highlighted by Andersén, it is also necessary that there exist differences in views and perceptions—otherwise there is no need for communication. It is the presence of tension that makes Moscovici's idea of a semiotic triangle dynamic (Marková, 2003).

The dialogical triad between the ego-alter-object is described by Marková as a triangle where the *object*, or *what* someone has social representations of, is placed at the top of the triangle. *Ego* – the *person/persons* who have social representations of the object – is placed at the left corner of the triangle. Finally, the *alter* – such as a *group, society, or other significant others* – is placed at the right corner of the triangle (Marková, 2003, p. 152). Based upon this figure, recent research by Granbom (2011) illustrates how the object of pre-school as an educational practice is related with the ego, or subject, represented by each of the teachers involved in the study, and the alter, or significant others, described as other participants in the study as well as previous and current colleagues, policymakers, parents and children. Applied to the present study, the relation between object–ego–alter would be described as in the figure below:

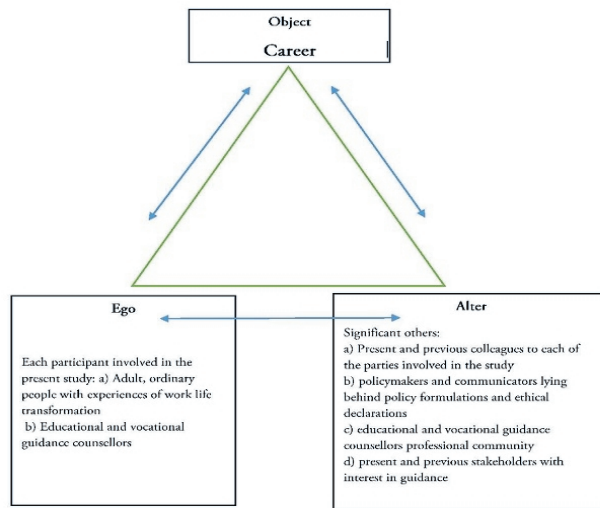


Figure 2. *Relation between Ego – Alter – Object in the present study (cf. Marková, 2003, and Granbom, 2011).*

As further illustrated by Bauer and Gaskell (1999), the minimum system involved in a social representation is a triad of two subjects with an interest in an object. Their model is graphically illustrated as a toblerone-model, which takes into consideration that the triangular relation embraces both the past and future. By adding this time dimension to the triadic relation, the parties, or subjects, are linked with an implied or supported project, which in turn links the subjects via mutual interests, activities and goals. Within such a project, one must therefore take into consideration both how the project has been characterized in the past and

how the project is characterized in the future in order to disclose and understand the meaning of common sense knowledge.

SRT is described by Moscovici (1976) as a science concerned with “the conflict between the individual and society” (Prado de Sousa, 2011, p. 68). As shown by Duveen (2001), Moscovici (1993) has revealed how modern social theory declares its opposition to psychological explanations. Moscovici therefore argues for the necessity for sociologists to introduce some reference to psychological processes when producing social explanations for social phenomena, as well as the necessity for social psychologists to introduce some reference to sociological concepts and processes when searching for explanations of social phenomena. Social representations are described by Moscovici (1988) as being at the crossroads between a variety of sociological and psychological concepts, and the theory strives to make representations “a bridge between the individual and the social world” and to “link representations with a changing society” (Moscovici, 1988, p. 219). Given the elements of both sociology and psychology in SRT, and given the contextualization of my research interest as located at the intersection between the individual and the collective and as concerning the relation between human thought and social structures, I thus find the theory of social representations to be an appropriate overall theoretical approach.

In summary, SRT provides an overall framework for this thesis. It is able to bridge the gap between the individual and the social, which I find relevant given the contextualization of my research interest. With SRT as an overall framework, it becomes possible to more deeply analyze the exploration and results of the separate studies that derive from the overall research question. SRT also emphasizes the crucial influence that the collective creation of knowledge has on the way a person perceives the world (Chaib, 1991). Moreover, SRT deals with the relationship between thinking and social structures and also explains how our thoughts, our social representations of a particular phenomenon, are socially constructed in interaction and communication. With its complexity, SRT therefore offers both a possible way of approaching my research interest and also ways to analyze it. In conclusion, SRT allows us to embrace career as a phenomenon to be understood among all parties involved in this

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thesis: among communicators behind the formulations in the European policy documents on guidance; among individuals, or ordinary adults influenced by the changes in working life; and among educational and vocational guidance counsellors, who are located in the intermediate contexts, wherein career issues are such that the career guidance field intertwines with the field of working-life education.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Social representations theory has been considered relevant for studies of professional practices – such as teachers’ work (Prado de Sousa, 2011) and pre-school teachers’ work (Granbom, 2011), the complex natures of which are similar to that of the subject of the present study. Research on social representations comprises various issues and phenomena studied. Since Moscovici (1961) introduced the theory of social representations in his thesis “*La psychoanalyse, son image et son public*” in 1961, the theory has been established by both theoretical and empirical research in European countries, particularly in France, Italy and in some Scandinavian countries. The theory is also strongly represented and widely used throughout the Latin America. In 2008, Moscovici’s original work was published in English translation (Moscovici, 2008). In his thesis, Moscovici explored public perceptions of psychoanalysis as communicated and transmitted by the mass media—the newspaper at that time (Moscovici, 1961, 2008). Research that applies the theory of social representations as a theoretical framework covers studies in social psychology, anthropology, ethnology, behavioural science, communication science, health science, and cultural science (Chaib & Orfali, 1995a). The theory of social representations is also commonly used within the field of educational research, as well as within the field of professionalization studies (Chaib et al., 2011). Empirical research in which the theory of social representations has been applied includes several disciplines, such as social psychology, history, pedagogy, sociology, and health science. Several studies focusing on a range of research objects can be mentioned such as health and illness (cf. e.g. Herzlich, 1973; Jovchelovitch & Gervais, 1999), social representations of belonging among pre-school children (Hägglund & Löfdahl, 2011), adult learning (Chaib & Chaib, 2011) and teachers (Alvez-Mazzotti,

2011).

The theory of social representations made its breakthrough in Sweden through a work presented by Chaib and Orfali (1995b). During the last decade, several dissertations applying social representations theory have been produced. Recent dissertations (see e.g., Andersén, 2011; Davidsson, 2002; Germundsson, 2011; Granbom, 2011; Lindroth, 2013; Lukkertz, 2014; Ohlsson, 2009; Stierna, 2007; Tornberg, 2006) applying the social representations theory focus on various research objects with various methods for data collection and data analysis. For instance, Germundson (2011) explores teachers' and social workers' perceptions about each other, about children at risk, and about their interprofessional collaboration. Empirical data was collected through an association study, and the data analysis follows a quantitative approach with similarity analysis. The associative method for collecting data was also used by Andersén (2011) in her exploration of folk high school participants' social representations of university, while the data is analyzed using a qualitative approach. Teachers' social representations of pre-school as an educational practice is explored by Granbom (2011), with focus group interviews as the data collection method; the data is thematically explored and analyzed using a qualitative approach based upon a dialogical perspective. Dialogical construction of meaning about mental illness is explored by Ohlsson (2009), also with focus group interviews as the data collection method. Clearly, recent explorations in the areas of education and health have been attracted by social representations theory. Together with Andersén (2011) and Granbom (2011), Davidsson (2002) also focus on education, exploring educational integration between pre-school teachers and school, alongside with Tornberg (2006). Dissertations in areas of health have focused on vulnerability and sexual health among youngsters in youth detention (Lindroth, 2013), on mental illness (Ohlsson, 2009), and on beliefs about food and eating (Stierna, 2007). Lukkertz (2014), on the other hand, crosses the areas of education and health as he explores perspectives on sex education among secondary special-school teachers and habilitation staff. Moreover, it is clear that researchers on interprofessional collabora-

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tion, integration of different professional perspectives, and professionalization in certain professions have shown interest in an SRT approach (cf. e.g., Davidsson, 2002; Germundsson, 2011; Granbom, 2011; Lukkertz, 2014). A list of theses using SRT as the theoretical approach, published in Sweden during the period 2002–2015 is presented in appendix 1.

## CAREER AS SOCIAL REPRESENTATION

As noted by Farr (1993), “a theory often enables us to see familiar phenomena in a new light” (Farr, 1993, p. 17). The theory of social representations helps us understand the familiar and yet unclear phenomena of career in such a new light. SRT is concerned with the creation of different beliefs and how they become ways of thinking and common sense knowledge, further creating a common reality among people (Chaib, 1991; Jodelet, 1989; Moscovici, 2008; Purkhardt, 1993), SRT provides a framework that allows us to grasp such everyday knowledge of career—such common sense knowledge that exists among ordinary people and that, further, helps them to know what career is (cf. Collin, 2007) and to communicate what they already “know” or think they know. According to Purkhardt (1993), social representations are the basis for how we view the world, how we act. In the theory of social representations, naming and labeling things and persons play important functions in the expression of social representations. Social representations of different phenomena are manifested and given life through the names and labels people provide them with. Moscovici wrote: “Once a name is called for, what we say necessarily depends on what we represent, not the other way around” (Moscovici, 2000b, p. 21). That is why we can assume that when people speak about a specific phenomenon such as career, they give that phenomenon names and labels that express their social representations of that phenomenon (Moscovici, 2000b). The way in which a person understands a particular object is dependent on his or her social representations of that object. In terms of my research interest, this means that the way a person understands career is due to the person’s social representations about career. Social representations are described by Moscovici (1988) as “ways of world making” (Moscovici, 1988, p. 231) and defined as:

...a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function; first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual group history (Moscovici, 1973, p. xiii)

Based upon this definition, it is thus assumed here that social representations of career phenomena consist of socialized expressions that organize ways of communicating with images, language, symbols and codes because they represent, symbolize and identify situations and actions that are common among people and groups of people (Moscovici, 2008). This reasoning, furthermore, embraces both the *cultural* and *historical contexts*, which contain ideas, values, ways of thinking, symbols and codes, together with the historical developments that underlie framing discourses (cf. Söderström, 2011). As described by Jovchelovitch (2007), social representations involve a symbolic labour that derives “from interrelations between self, other, and the object–world” (Jovchelovitch, 2007, p. 11), and as such, social representations have the power to construct meaning and create reality. However, social representations are not to be understood as simplified mirrors of the outside world or as mere mental constructions. Rather, it is important to note that social representations shall be understood “as social processes embedded in institutional arrangements, in social action, in the active dynamics of social life, where social groups and communities meet, communicate and clash” (Jovchelovitch, 2007, pp. 11-12). According to this reasoning, knowledge of career phenomena is socially constructed in institutional settings, such as workplaces, different research communities, and various professional communities. In addition, such knowledge most certainly influences the *structural context*, depending on the dominating discourses, or ways of communicating about the phenomena, at structural level at the time. It is also noted by Jodelet (1995) that communicative networks of institutions, informal groups and public media contribute to the formation of social representations, both through social influence and also through manipulation. Socially constructed knowledge of career also influences the *context of the local*



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*community* (cf. Söderström, 2011) that surrounds people in different workplaces and organizations. Given the interrelations between, self, other, and the object-world (cf. Jovchelovitch, 2007), it is assumed that people are part of social groups and communities: people in working life; people responsible for developing terms, conditions, policies and economics at the structural level (here, specifically, the European policy level); and people who are members of a certain professional community (here, specifically, career guidance counsellors). People in these social groups and communities meet, communicate, and perhaps even clash (Jovchelovitch, 2007) concerning the common object of career.

SRT provides a perspective that describes how certain knowledge might be continuous and stable over time (Moscovici, 2000a; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005). As stated by Moscovici (2000a), nobody's mind is free from the effects of earlier conditions that have been imposed upon us through social representations, through language and culture. Once social representations have been created and further established by human beings, they will influence social interaction and human behaviour by imposing themselves upon us. This implies that once they have become "fossilized" in earlier conditions, they become part of collective practice, and furthermore, they are taken for granted in account for the stable and continuous character of social representations. Given this reasoning, it is assumed here that earlier conditions in working life have formed and shaped our thinking and social representations of career phenomena. As noted by several authors (Patton & McMahon, 2006; Savickas et al., 2009), career and career development as concepts, together with theories and models in the career field, have been developed in earlier working life conditions. Career guidance practice has also been formed within such earlier conditions and is therefore based upon earlier concepts, theories and models. However, the practice now faces a crisis in its supportive systems as those systems are regarded to be insufficient in today's society and working-life conditions (Savickas, 2008; Savickas et al., 2009). Career guidance practice is regarded here as a professional community, with a certain group of people trained to perform a certain profession, and it is therefore assumed that this professional group estab-

lishes a professional order, according to the definition of social representations by Moscovici (cf. 1973). Such order provides this professional community with a specific group history and with codes for social exchange, naming and classifying various aspects of their professional practice, as when professionals identify career phenomena, for instance, as the core issue of their profession (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a). Given this, the professional practice of career guidance is assumed to be based upon common ideas and values in training and upon certain research disciplines that, altogether, form the group into a professional state, which in turn structures representations of objects in this professional field (Ratinaud & Lac, 2011). In addition, professional activities are described as being regulated by professional, conceptual maps (Ratinaud & Lac, 2011). These maps in turn present ideas that constitute a professional reality, a shared sense within this community (cf. Billig, 1993) that differs, however, from social thoughts (Ratinaud & Lac, 2011). Conceptual maps are perceptually and cognitively formed iconic pictures that are socially transformed through communication and interaction into social representations shared in a specific group.

SRT also provides elements for describing how changing conditions influence common sense knowledge (Marková, 2003; Moscovici, 2000a). Such elements are of particular interest here, given the transformation of working life in today's changing career contexts. As stated by Voelklein and Howarth (2005), social representations are created by people, so they can also be changed by people. It is within the processes and the context of *anchoring and objectification* (cf. Moscovici, 2001) that the impact of change becomes important. As long as there is consensus concerning a social representation that is socially constructed, the social representation functions as a tool of thought, which helps people relate to reality. However, as a group – or the pictures and thoughts shared within a group concerning a certain phenomenon – undergoes change, peoples' everyday knowledge is challenged. What has hitherto been an objectified social representation is now challenged. In the explanation of the objectification process, Moscovici (2001) considers that not all concepts are treated with equal favour and that they therefore do not undergo the same transformations. For instance, if an object is taboo, it will remain abstract.

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Given this reasoning, Moscovici concludes that it appears that a society, based upon its beliefs and its pre-existing images, makes a selection of those concepts to which the society has acknowledged figurative power. However, this does not imply that changes never occur. Changes take place when familiar outlines gradually transform and respond to recent intake. When a society adopts a paradigm because it has a strong framework, its acceptance depends on its ability to translate ordinary situations and also its similarity to more current paradigms (Moscovici, 2001).

Given the changing conditions in career contexts, together with the increased focus from the European policy level on lifelong learning and guidance, career as a phenomenon is undergoing change, as is career guidance practice. According to Moscovici (2000a), the character of social representations is especially revealed in times of upheaval and crisis, when a certain group or the group's images and expressions that surround a social representation are undergoing change. When conditions change, people are more motivated and more willing to talk, and therefore their images and expression are more vivid because they need to understand an increasingly unfamiliar world and re-master something that now seems unfamiliar to them (Moscovici, 2000a, 2001). People's common sense knowledge is challenged when tensions arise between the language of concepts, ways of communicating about a certain object, and that of their social representations. The necessity of understanding change in relation to stability has been pointed out by Gustavsson and Selander (2011); it is of great interest here in order to understand both how social representations are formed and become stable and also how and why they might change. According to Marková (2003), social representations are regarded as dynamic and open phenomena, as conceptual and communicable; she defines them as thoughts in movement. Given this, Markova (2003) highlights the dynamic elements of social representations, which enable objectified social representations to change. Together with Gustavsson and Selander (2011), who suggest social representations to be mediated meaning making in their discussion of issues of change related to stability, and similar to suggestions by Tateo and Iannaccone (Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012), who consider social representations as a space of negotiation of

meaning, these authors provide possibilities to consider the dynamic elements of change related to stability when exploring social representations.

SRT provides a perspective that allows us to understand the significance of communicative processes in the creation of common sense knowledge (Marková, 2003; Moscovici, 2001). Through communication, knowledge is transformed; social representations come into being through such transformative processes, irrespective of whether communication occurs through conversation, mass media or the acts of individuals (cf. Billig, 1993). According to Moscovici (1984), conversation is especially important because it is through conversation that “thinking is done out loud” (Moscovici, 1984, p. 21). As noted by Duveen (2001), social representations are considered to be both the product of communication and to underlie the communicative process. Because of this interconnection, social representations can also change, as described above. Their stability is dependent on the constancy in those patterns of communication that serve to sustain them (Duveen, 2001). When such patterns of communication change, this might result in the emergence of new representations, and the representations that achieved their stability from an earlier structure might gradually change with the new patterns of communication. The outlined discourses, which highlight societal trends, debates and strategies (cf. Söderström, 2011, pp. 28-29), are examples of typical how they can dominate and transform depending on what is in focus at a certain time. When a certain discourse becomes dominating, it is most likely that there are argumentative elements involved (cf. Billig, 1987, 1993). An argumentative discourse contains elements of persuasion and argumentation for certain points of view but it is also necessary to pay attention to counter-discourses; “Unless one understands what counter-discourse is being attacked, either implicitly or explicitly, one cannot properly understand a piece of argumentative discourse” (Billig, 1993, p. 41).

## CHAPTER 6

# METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter describes the methodological approach of the thesis. It begins with a description of the overall design, followed by the methods of data collection and analysis for each study. The chapter includes a discussion of the ethical considerations and measures taken to ensure the protection of human subjects. Finally, the chapter concludes with the measures taken to achieve a high level of trustworthiness.

## OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to explore what meaning is ascribed to career among the triad of parties involved in a common interest in career phenomena, the research design is divided in separate studies. In order to shed light on different aspects of the research object, different scientific traditions and methods have been used in the investigation of the phenomenon. The methods have been combined in the different studies to examine the phenomenon

in greater depth. The research design aims to detect each of the parties involved through separate analysis. These consist of a) formulations of European policies, b) people who are assumed to be influenced by changes in working life, and c) professional practitioners referred to in policy documents about career guidance, who are also the receivers of policy strategies in practice and who face people that are influenced by work-related changes in career contexts. The different character of these sources of data has led to the use of different data collection methods: a) document analysis, b) free associations, and c) an essay method combined with enquiry method. Together, these sources of data offer different perspectives and allow for a focus on different aspects of the research object. By exploring the meaning of career among these parties, it is assumed that the intertwined contexts – structural, cultural, historical and local community (Söderström, 2011) – in the fields of working life education and career guidance will be disclosed. Based upon social representations theory as an overall theoretical approach, the three types of sources are each assumed to have socially formed knowledge, or social representations of career that are, more or less, shared in each of the three sources.

## EMPIRICAL MATERIAL AND ANALYSIS

Four different studies have been conducted within the framework of this thesis. Below, each study's design and method of data collection and analysis are described. The studies' different approaches entails that the scope of the discussions vary: see the separate articles for more detailed descriptions.

### Study 1

The first study<sup>26</sup> aims to disclose how career is communicated in structural contexts in which there has occurred increased attention towards career guidance policy making in the European arena (cf. e.g., European

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<sup>26</sup> The methodological considerations in study 1 are fully presented in the article (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012)

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Commission, 2004; Watts & Fretwell, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004). The research questions in this first study are:

1. How does the language of European policy documents for career guidance characterize career and career development?
2. What does the language disclose about the underlying view(s) regarding career and career development conveyed by the texts?

European policies on career guidance are supposed to disclose the meaning of career in such structural contexts because they are formulated by authorities and politically governed agencies and relate to current social problems and legitimates and privileges certain interests and how certain problems are expected to be solved (cf. Öhman-Sandberg, 2014).

The selection of texts as empirical material for this study have been guided by the particular focus on European strategies to improve and direct the guidance field in implementing lifelong learning strategies in European countries (see, Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012). Therefore, documents published by European Union agencies that in some way expressed one or several of the following words in combination were traced: policy/policies, guidance, strategies, and lifelong learning. Through web searches alongside the reading of reference lists in articles and books that addressed career, guidance and issues of lifelong learning policy in various ways, documents were identified, selected and downloaded as empirical material for this study. The documents were produced by the Council of the European Union (2004, 2008), the European Commission (2004), and CEDEFOP (2005). These texts are assumed to communicate certain expressions and statements about career phenomena in today's working life conditions. Attention therefore needs to be focused on a sender-oriented perspective that will include the senders' ideas, values and ways of thinking and how they communicate about career.

To disclose the characterization of career phenomena in the texts, qualitative content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used as method to approach the subject in the

texts. An inductive development of categories was conducted with the intention to approach the subject in the texts as open-mindedly as possible. To then disclose the underlying view(s) on career as communicated in the texts, the analysis is based upon the textual model of Hellspong and Ledin (1997).

The texts were read to gain an overall understanding of their content. Thereafter, meaning units corresponding to formulations of career and career development were identified, inspired by other studies (e.g. Curtis, 2004; Wallengren, Segesten, & Friberg, 2010) which used questions aimed towards the texts to ensure that correct meaning units were included in the analysis. The search for meaning units is especially based on the only definition of career found in the texts: “Career refers to pathways in life in which competences are learned and/or used. The term covers life wide experiences both formal (education, work) and informal (home, community)” (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2005, p. 24). The meaning units were coded with synthesis key words or phrases. The material was reduced by bringing meaning units with the same or similar codes together. The reduced meaning units with codes and the inductively formed subcategories functioned in this process as tools with which to think. The subcategories were abstracted into four categories (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, pp. 160-163).

## Study 2

The second study<sup>27</sup> pays attention to the receiving side of the ideational message communicated in the policy documents explored in the initial study (cf. Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012). Therefore, the contexts that surround the receiving career guidance practice are taken into consideration. This second study extends the analysis of the first study and focuses on significant key principles, the profession’s role and mission, and signifi-

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<sup>27</sup> The methodological considerations in study 2 are fully presented in the article (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014)



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cant changes between the initial formulation of the first ethical declaration and the revised ethical declaration for the profession. Structural, cultural and historical contexts of the receiving side of the EU policy documents are therefore represented in such ethical documents, and they are assumed to contain certain discourses as framing elements which surround this professional community. The following research questions are answered in the second study (cf. Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014, p. 5):

1. What is the essential understanding, or core meaning, of individuals' careers and career development that can be found in European policy documents' characterisations and perspectives on such phenomena and which shapes career guidance practice in the twenty-first century?
2. What significance and consequences will this have for the future role of career guidance practice?

Two documents, from the Swedish context, were located and serve as examples of how the role and mission of career guidance practice can be expressed in a country in a European context. The selected texts represent previous and current ethical principles and guidelines formulated by the Swedish Association of Guidance Counsellors (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989, 2007). The textual analysis in the second study was based upon the model of analysing texts developed by Hellspong and Ledin (1997).

Initially, the texts were read to gain an overall understanding of the content and then extracted into smaller textual units. Similarities and differences in ethical declarations were compared, combined with the first study's results as an interpretive frame for analysing what consequences and significance the core meaning/understanding of career at the structural level will have for career guidance practice. Through this way of working, the cultural and historical contexts (cf. Söderström, 2011) on this receiving side of ideational messages from structural contexts (cf. Söderström, 2011) of European policy documents will be disclosed.

### Study 3

The third study<sup>28</sup> (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) explores common-sense knowledge, that is, social representations of career, among a group of people influenced by changing conditions in working life. This exploration is assumed to implicitly capture various surrounding community contexts (cf. Söderström, 2011), providing examples of the nature of contexts in which people experience and socially shape their everyday or common-sense knowledge of career. These contexts are assumed to contain elements of both cultural and historical contexts (cf. Söderström, 2011) that include ideas, values, ways of thinking, and symbols and codes, alongside with the historical, societal developments that underlie discourses and framing elements. Based upon Moscovici's (2000a) reasoning, it is assumed that the character of social representations is especially revealed when a group or its images of certain phenomena are undergoing change as indicated through the results from the previous two studies (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, 2014). The third study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) will answer the following research questions:

1. In a context of changing working life conditions, what social representations, of both stable and dynamic character, do people have about career and career development?
2. Within which scientifically shaped thoughts on career do the representations appear to be reflected and anchored, and how does their anchoring and reflection in those particular scientifically shaped thoughts relate to thoughts currently dominating on the structural level?

The social representations theory is used as both theoretical and methodological approach. Methodological procedures are designed to uncover the constitutive elements of social representations (cf. e.g., Abric, 1995; Moscovici, 1973, 2000a, 2001) of career among the selected group of people.

To investigate people's common-sense knowledge of career, free association (see, e.g., Abric, 1995; Andersén, 2011; Germundsson, 2011)

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<sup>28</sup> The methodological considerations in Study 3 are fully presented in the article (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013)

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was chosen for collecting empirical data because of its associative character, which stimulates spontaneous and less controlled answers. This data collection method is assumed to provide space for the respondents to answer based upon their latent, underlying patterns of thought, which might otherwise remain concealed (Abric, 1995). A pilot study was done before the main data collection to ensure the contribution of identifying both stable and dynamic elements of people's common-sense knowledge. The main data collection was conducted among a group of university students studying in an independent course. It was assumed that several students might also have work-life experiences and/or be employees, as they were not participating in a full university programme. Among these students 15 of them met the criteria. Six employees from the pilot study were included in the final empirical material (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013). This yielded twenty-one respondents. The participants were asked for their spontaneous free associations of career based on the following specific words and phrases: career, career development and work situation in change. The first two words/phrases – identified as key concepts related to career (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a; Collin, 2007; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Savickas et al., 2009) – are concerned with the object. These were assumed to reveal whether there is stability in the common sense knowledge formed, while the final phrase aimed to grasp the object career in change related to changing conditions in working life. The data-collection of associations was conducted in two steps: to write down spontaneous associations to each word or phrase, and to combine the original word with each of their spontaneously produced associations (Abric, 1995). This procedure led to a total of 303 free associations in the first step and 305 free associations in the second step (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013, p. 11).

To answer the first research question, the analysis follows an inductive approach (Gustavsson & Selander, 2011; Marková, 2003; Moscovici, 2000a; Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005) and explores the content of the collected associations using qualitative content analysis (see, e.g., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Moscovici, 1961, 2008) as the basic method. Primary ideas, concepts and images expressed among the units of analysis were explored, and those with similar or identical content were brought together. Oppositional antonyms were

then explored and led to the (Arthur et al., 1989a) naming and composition of several pairs of opposites. Primary ideas and concepts expressed within the units of analysis that contained few oppositional thoughts and that appeared to be taken for granted in social practice (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005) were considered as being of stable character. Units of analysis which revealed a significant number of oppositional thoughts, as thoughts in movement (cf. Marková, 2003) related to more stable ideas and images (cf. Gustavsson & Selander, 2011), were considered to represent the dynamic character. The final exploration of what seemed to be common thinking among the units of analysis represents the generative function (cf. Moscovici, 2000a, 2001), and revealed four social representations, two of stable character and two dynamic. To explore and interpret within which scientifically shaped thoughts the empirical findings are reflected and appear to be anchored, relations between a) words, expressions and concept images within the units of analysis and b) scientifically shaped thoughts and statements about career phenomena, were explored. The exploration and interpretation of relations rests upon literature reviews of different disciplinary perspectives on career and career development (see e.g., Arthur et al., 1989a; Patton & McMahon, 2006) and of the transformation of the world of work (Ekstedt & Sundin, 2006a, 2006b; Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Södergren, 1992) combined with the empirical findings in the first study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012).

#### Study 4

The fourth study<sup>29</sup> explores career guidance professionals' thoughts, ideas and images of guidance counsellors' mission and of career therein among educational and vocational guidance counsellors in order to disclose the socially formed knowledge of career that is embedded in their professional order. The intention is to implicitly capture examples of career guidance practitioners' *surrounding local contexts* of the their professional practice (cf. Söderström, 2011), since they are also part of different work-

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<sup>29</sup> The methodological considerations in Study 4 are fully presented in the manuscript (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript)

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places and organizations. It is assumed that their *cultural and historical contexts* (Söderström, 2011) will be visible in their implicitly expressed ideas, values, ways of thinking, symbols, codes and certain framing discourses, as constitutive elements of social representations (cf. e.g., Abric, 1995; Moscovici, 1973, 2000a, 2001) of career. Based upon social representation theory as both theoretical and methodological approach, the fourth study aims to answer the following question:

What social representations do guidance counsellors have about their mission and how do they view the meaning of career therein?

Data was collected with a combination of the essay method (cf. Chaib & Chaib, 2011) and an enquiry method. The essay method had to be adjusted because of the need to ask more questions, which therefore would result in less detailed answers, so combining it with an enquiry was found to be the most appropriate data collection method. The open-ended questions intended to search for guidance counsellors' characterizations of their professional mission and of the meaning of career therein and was assumed to provide space for the respondents to reflect. Because of practical difficulties in collecting data on some particular occasions, data was mainly collected by e-mail. This approach made it possible for guidance counsellors to write down their answers directly in the responding e-mail, and they had the opportunity to respond when it was most convenient for them. This approach also made it possible to reach many guidance counsellors from various areas. The immediate contact through e-mail also establishes a continuously available channel for communication in case of further questions or explanations.

In order to more fully cover the meaning of career the investigation consists of a) *guidance counsellors' views and characterizations of their specific professional mission*, b) *guidance counsellors' experiences of other stakeholders' views on the guidance mission*, and c) *guidance counsellors' views on the meaning of career* was conducted. Open ended questions within these three basic areas were formulated to cover the implied object of career within guidance counsellors' area and mission. Since data was collected using a combination of the essay and enquiry method, with open ended questions, content analysis with an inductive approach seemed appropriate. In order to assure

that data collected would be based on the respondents' own thinking (Abrie, 1995) and not governed by the researcher, the questions were formulated in such way that they would stimulate the active thinking of each respondent.

A pilot study, with six questions, was conducted among a group of educational and vocational guidance counsellors at a network meeting in order to test and verify the data collection method with regard to trustworthiness. They all had experience of working with adults' career-related issues. The intention was to verify whether the formulated questions resulted in answers that would capture the three aspects described above and whether the questions were properly understood by the participants or needed to be reformulated. The six questions were then reduced to four questions and some small changes in formulations were made (see Table 1 in Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) because the answers sometimes overlapped and referred to previously given answers to the other questions. Data was collected on three different occasions among guidance counsellors in three different counties working in 15 different municipalities, which at that time covered 170 guidance counsellors in various sectors in that area. The pilot study was included in this empirical material as the respondents and their answers corresponded with the purpose as well as the required group for this investigation. The selection provided the breadth needed to adequately investigate the commonly shared knowledge in this professional community. Data collected resulted in fewer answers than expected, and an analysis of reasons was therefore conducted. Some cited lack of time due to heavy workloads their reason for not participating, so a second occasion for data-collection was arranged. Altogether, 41 guidance counsellors participated, with participants from the pilot study included. Most answers arrived by e-mail, and some answers were delivered on paper to me. Participation was voluntary, and all answers have been handled anonymously in the presentation of the results.

The answers were inserted into a table structure in a word document, initially sorted by question. Each respondent received a numerical code which was noted on each of their answers during each time for data-collection so that each answer could be related to the respondent during

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the analysis process. To inductively approach and explore the content of the meaning units, qualitative content analysis (see e.g., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Moscovici, 1961, 2008) was used as the basic method. Written replies cover from one or two sentences up to 43 sentences to a question. Some sentences consist of only a few words, while others consist of up to 69 words. Table 2 in the fourth study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) provides an overview of the empirical material, summarizing sentences and words analyzed related to each question.

It is generally admitted within the social representation theory approach (cf. e.g., Abric, 1995; Moscovici, 2000a; Moscovici, 2001) that a social representation is formed by its constitutive element. An element is a set of free utterances expressed by people towards an object. Utterances from each respondent were read several times to gain an overall understanding of their content. The meaning units were coded with synthesis keywords or phrases. The process aims to initially identify the elements that constitute a social representation, the content of the social representations (Abric, 1995) among career guidance counsellors. Meaning units with the same or similar codes were thereafter brought together, followed by an inductive formulation of secondary elements, in turn followed by a new inductive formulation of what emerged as primary elements that altogether disclose what constitutes the social representations. In line with the argumentative dimensions of thinking (Billig, 1993), utterances from the same respondent can occur within different categories, as they implicitly argue with themselves in their reflections, and contrast one sentence written with the following sentence. Therefore, an exploration of both coherence and contradictions in the utterances was conducted, with attention to the argumentative elements, the contrasts and the contradictions, as described methodologically by Chaib and Chaib (2011). The exploration of the content resulted in 26 secondary elements, which in turn led to the formulation of 9 primary elements. A final analysis was conducted focusing on the commonalities throughout the utterances and codes in each primary element, both in terms of professionally shared knowledge and professionally shared contradictions, which finally generated four social representations.

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## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the methodological procedures, ethical considerations have been made in line with the foundational individual protection requirements emphasized by the Swedish Research Council and concretized in four specific information, consent, confidentiality and use requirements (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). As the first and second studies are concerned with the textual analysis of documents, all available online, this section mainly concerns ethical considerations in the methodological procedures in studies 3 and 4. Respondents in studies 3 and 4 have been informed about the dissertation's focus and purpose as well as how data will be collected, and also that participation is voluntary and that their responses will be treated with confidentiality. In cases where data was collected at group meetings (study 3, and in one group in study 4), information about the purpose and implementation of data collection was initially given to the person who had been contacted before the group gathering. In the third study, 23 people arrived to the group meeting (a study group in a single course). Two of them chose not to participate in the data collection. The reason might be that they did not fulfill the selection criterion. The fourth study collected data both at a network meeting and by e-mail. All participants at the network meeting chose to participate, while participation from those asked by e-mail was low. In order to adapt the data collection time to a more convenient time for guidance counsellors to participate, a second time for data collection was arranged. Thus, both the information requirement and the consent requirement have been considered, and the respondents who chose not to participate have thus been able to make use of their right of voluntary participation without further pressure or questions about why they chose not to participate. When reasons were for non-participation were given, such was at the initiative of the respondents themselves in their responding e-mails.

Furthermore, the confidentiality requirement has been considered in that all respondents remain anonymous in the presentation of the results. Each respondent in each study received a certain code during the analysis process in order to be unidentified. Neither they nor their institutions can be revealed in the quotations that have been used in the



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presentation of their answers. In considering whether the quotations included would result in any negative consequences for anyone, no such risks were identified. Data collected by e-mail have been sorted into documents in which the respondents' names and institutional affiliations are not revealed, and all documents and e-mails are filed in password-protected computers. Moreover, it is clear that no empirical data will be used for any other purposes than research.

## TRUSTWORTHINESS

To assure the trustworthiness of the explorations in each of the articles included so that they each legitimately contribute to answering the overall questions, several considerations have been made in each data collection and each data analysis method. These considerations are described below. Thereafter, aspects of trustworthiness for the study's entirety are described in order to enable judgment of the study's quality.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Data collection in the first and second study was preceded by an initial focus directed towards the increased interest in lifelong learning, validation and career guidance, as noted by researches in several areas (Anderson & Fejes, 2005; Berglund, 2010; Patton & McMahon, 2006; Plant, 2005; Watts, 2005; Watts & Sultana, 2004). This directed focus resulted in a search for relevant policy texts regarding career guidance, which were assumed to influence and direct career guidance practice at national and international levels. Such texts were assumed to contain certain ideational messages (cf. Hellspong & Ledin, 1997) directed at guidance practice and to therefore contain certain ways and perspectives of communicating career. The selection of texts as empirical material was also verified at research conferences, where research colleagues from European countries confirmed the selection of empirical material as appropriate. To capture the underlying perspectives and particular ways of communicating about career in the texts, a guiding question aimed at the policy texts was used in order to identify those textual units that in some way communicate career, based upon a holistic approach towards the concept

(cf. Collin). By approaching the texts with a holistic view, the intention was to capture career formulations with the maximum open-mindedness possible and to ensure that correct textual units were included in the complete material for analysis in the first study. With the directing question aimed at the texts, it was secured that the textual units that were included for analysis contained expressions that concerned career as in the career of an individual.

Both the third and the fourth study were preceded by pilot studies, and the data collected from the pilot studies came to be included in the data material of the full studies. The pilot studies were conducted to examine whether the selected data collection method of each study, respectively, served its purpose in desirable ways and whether the questions and instructions were perceived by the respondents as desired. The aim of this was to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the data collection methods in the third and fourth studies. Both pilot studies were found to provide appropriate ways of collecting data in terms of the main words to be chosen in the associative method in study 3 and in terms of aspects guiding the open-ended questions to guidance counsellors in study 4.

The response rate by e-mail in the fourth study was not as high as desirable. Several guidance counsellors who declined to participate responded in their e-mails that because of time constraints they could not participate in the study. It is hard to find a good time for guidance counsellors to answer questions. This professional group has an intensive workload that depends on institutional schedules, application times, and deadlines for further studies. The open-ended nature of the questions, which were designed to foster respondents' internal reflection, may have contributed to the fact that some of the guidance counsellors felt they did not have the time to reflect and answer the questions. That the response rate was complete at the network meeting while low by e-mail may be due to the guidance counsellors at the network meeting having set aside time for the specific meeting. It is possible that data collection at the group meeting led guidance counsellors to answer the questions in a more spontaneous and associative manner than those who answered by e-mail. Replying by e-mail might have led the guidance counsellors to think and reflect on the issues a bit more and, consequently, some of their thoughts

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and ideas may have been lost while they were writing. This was obvious in some statements in which it seemed like a written response was prompted by a thought that was not written down.

Summarily, data collection from each of the four studies included in this work has resulted in empirical data consisting of 4 policy documents, 2 ethical declaration documents, 303 collected free associations (from the first step) and 305 collected associations (from the second step) from a group of people who have experienced changes in working life, and statements collected from professional guidance counsellors in career guidance practice. Altogether, six documents have been analyzed, and data has been produced by 62 respondents, of which 21 participated in the third study and 41 in the fourth. The textual units analyzed vary in the degree of length of sentences in the documents, of produced free associations and of sentences in written replies, as well as in the degree of detail in the answers given.

The document analyses, carried out in the first and second study, made it possible to access the content of the texts, which is described in the resultant categories. Policy documents are analyzed in the first study and ethical declarations in the second. Therefore, the resulting categories in the first study needed to be interpreted and understood from a sender-oriented interpretation with regard to underlying ideational thoughts and unaccounted-for perspectives (Hellspong & Ledin, 1997) that are implied in the formulations that built each category. The second study, on the other hand, needed to take into consideration the receiving context of the policy texts and thus make an interpretation of an interpretation from a receiver-oriented perspective (Hellspong & Ledin, 1997).

As noted by Abric (1995), content analysis requires a high degree of interpretation. In order to free the analysis process from any subjectivity, these processes have been verified and discussed with other researchers at seminars and research conferences, where initial working papers of each of the four studies have been presented and have thereafter received criticisms and suggestions for improvement. These research contexts have provided opportunities for continuous quality assurance of the selected methods for both data collection and data analysis. In addition, by

clarifying how the interpretation of the texts has oriented its analysis, i.e., sender-oriented in the first study and receiver-oriented in the second, the reader is offered the opportunity to consider the trustworthiness and credibility of the analysis. Similarly, it is made clear how the interpretative orientation is being conducted in order to deepen the understanding of the content's meaning, in line with a social representation theory approach.

### **Quality aspects of the study's entirety**

Based upon quality aspects described by Larsson (2005, 2010), I seek to describe how these have been considered in this work.

#### *Prior understanding and internal logic*

Initially, I have strived to clarify and make explicit the origin of my approach to the problem. In doing so, my intention has to provide the reader the possibility to understand my prior understanding. As noted by Larsson (2005), such prior understanding will change during the process of interpretation. I have strived to make the basic standpoint for interpretation of the result clear without withholding my original perspective. The internal logic of the study has been considered continuously throughout the procedure; each study is considered as a part designed to contribute to a whole that is itself intended to answer an overall question. The above description of considerations made in data collection and analysis clarifies the strivings to provide consistency between research questions, data collection methods and analysis methods. I have strived to make explicit how each study relates to and contributes to the research question. The investigation has led to a description involving multiple contexts, and where the object spans across different fields. Because of this complexity, I cannot claim to do justice to any of the fields in terms of providing a complete description for those fields. The intention has been to clarify how each of the reported parts fulfills a function in order to understand the big picture. Ethical considerations made are presented above.

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### *Structure and richness of meaning*

In the presentation of the results in each of the studies included and in the presentation of the results of this work's research question, the balance between structure and richness of meaning has been considered. Results are presented with the aim to provide a clear picture of the results, with reduction of complexity into clear categories and elements presented. The interpretation of the results has been made as explicit as possible in terms of detailed descriptions and accounts of how the analyses have been conducted, how patterns have been identified in data, and which theoretical premises underlie the interpretation. With social representations theory as the theoretical and methodological approach, the intention has been to portray the results in such ways that they might provide some new ways of understanding the meaning of career and some new categories for thinking about career related to the educational fields involved. Several guidance counsellors have expressed positive feedback on the study being conducted and have said that it was important and beneficial for them to reflect on and answer the questions. This indicates a need for the study's results among practitioners and may thus constitute some form of contribution to the career guidance field.

### *Generalizability*

The intention has been to describe patterns in data, in documents and in produced associations, and in guidance counsellors' utterances of their mission and of career therein. The numbers of texts and participants do not provide enough material to generalize the results in any statistical sense. However, as noted by Larsson (2010), one can discuss generalizability in other terms, when using a sample that maximizes variation by trying to cover variation that exists. By exploring career among different sources, with different data-collection methods, the aim has been to capture the variation that exists and to scrutinize the phenomenon using social representations theory as the theoretical approach.

## CHAPTER 7

# EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Together, the results of the four studies exploring the meaning of career among representatives of the triad parties involved answer the research question. The four studies provide examples of meanings ascribed to career by these representatives in the intertwined structural, cultural, historical and local contexts. Below, I present the main findings of the published articles and manuscript, structured according to the three sources. I then seek to interpret, in terms of social representations theory, the sense in which the empirical findings influence the social practice of career guidance.

## DIFFERENT MEANINGS ASCRIBED TO CAREER

Below, I present different meanings of career deriving from three different sources. The first meaning, derives from European policy documents on guidance and is based upon the findings of my first and second published articles. The second meaning, derives from the group of adults and

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is based upon the findings of my third published article. The final source consists of the group of guidance counsellors. This group express an uneasy relationship to career, and an implicit meaning of career in their professional practice emerges, presented under the third and four headings in this section. These meanings are based upon the findings of the second published article and the fourth manuscript.

## CAREER AS LIFELONG ADAPTATION TO MARKET FORCES

The meaning ascribed to career in European policy documents is revealed with the help of the first and second studies, with their sender-oriented and receiver-oriented interpretations. The initial exploration of language regarding career in European policy documents on guidance resulted in four characteristic categories: *contextual change*, *environment–person correspondence*, *competence mobility*, and *empowerment* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, pp. 160–163). The first category, *contextual change*, is derived from two sub-categories: 1) instability and 2) preparation for instability. Career is characterized by instability and as preparation for instability. The texts depict that people need to be constantly prepared for multiple transitions and recurrent life changes at any time in their lives. Career phenomena include preparation for change, instability and constant learning, and people shall manage their own learning and their access to work. People shall foresee and be prepared for professional and geographical mobility, and the texts communicate expectations that people respond to demands created by surrounding unstable conditions. The second category, *environment–person correspondence*, is derived from two sub-categories: 1) adaptation, adjustment and readjustment, and 2) transition learning. This category depicts the need for people to adapt their careers according to the requirement of preparation for instability. The meaning of career consequently implies that the need for preparation imposes on people the demand that they adjust and adapt their pathways in life to the reality of contextual change in order that they be adaptable and employable. This means that people need to adapt, develop and relate their capabilities and abilities to fit with labour market requirements. The texts also depict expectations that people recurrently engage in learning opportunities, as this is expected to increase their adaptability, employability and motivation. Here, a certain

type of transition learning is required, and the texts depict the necessity for individuals to learn about the surrounding economic, business and occupational conditions as well as to evaluate themselves and describe their abilities, interests and skills in order to identify transferable skills. Thus, people's multiple transitions require them to adjust and readjust their careers according to market requirements. The third category, *competence mobility*, is derived from three sub-categories: 1) visibility, 2) recognition, and 3) utility. Here, the character of career development is depicted as improved matching, where people are expected to recurrently identify and describe their competencies to make them visible. They are expected to verify their non-formal and informal learning to identify their transferable skills to be utilized in new contexts. The fourth category, *empowerment*, conveys expectations that people independently self-manage and control their careers, or their life paths, in all types of contexts. Certain "career management skills"—learning to learn, social and civic skills, and a sense of entrepreneurship—are depicted as the foundation for the empowerment of the autonomous individual. People's autonomy—their independence and responsibility—is conveyed as essential for personal fulfilment, professional development and social inclusion. People who are autonomous in their roles as students, staff and trainees will be more able and motivated to access and benefit from learning. The texts emphasize that people are responsible for planning and managing their learning, work pathways and transitions in accordance with their life goals, while simultaneously relating themselves to the market effectively.

The sender-oriented exploration (cf. Hellspong & Ledin, 1997) of the categories is captured by the common theme *conditions and responses to these conditions* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, p. 163). The category *contextual change*, with its subcategory *instability*, refers to the context of changing economic and social conditions, which govern people's careers or, implicitly, their life prospects. The unstable conditions can be regarded as effects of globalization processes and the transition to a knowledge-based society. The category of *environment–person correspondence* and its subcategories of *adaptation*, *adjustment*, *readjustment* and *transition learning* appear as required responses to these conditions. Contextual change and environment–person correspondence are closely related, where the sub-category



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*preparation* appears as a prerequisite for the required responses. Clearly, these categories reveal senders who represent labour market needs and senders who represent enterprise and workplace needs. These underlying views on career thus derive from an *economic perspective* that regards career as *a response to market forces* (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a), alongside with a career management focus based upon adjustment to changes (cf. Manninen, 1998), whereas transition learning addresses a *learning perspective on career*, recognized as related to career by later authors (cf. Merrill, 2009; Patton & McMahon, 2006). Because of the emphasis of the matching perspective on the part of senders, transition learning appears to embrace adjustment, adaptation and readjustment. Altogether, the economic perspective and the adaptive learning perspective relate to the increased interest in lifelong learning driven by business and industry (cf. Jarvis, 2009) and by ideas of globalised capitalism (Rubenson, 2009). The category of *competence mobility*, with its subcategories of *visibility*, *recognition* and *utility*, and the category of *empowerment* emerge in the sub-theme *tools and behaviour with which to respond for the purpose of utility* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, p. 164). The needs of the senders—business and industry—are clearly disclosed here. People need to continuously highlight their capacities and competences and identify their interests so business and industry can utilize and benefit from them. Combined with the economic and learning perspectives as underlying views, people thus need to respond to economic and social conditions by adapting, adjusting and readjusting their interests and by validating their capabilities in order to be mobile. The category of *empowerment* appears to communicate a *political science perspective on career* that regards career as the enactment of self-interest and emphasizes autonomy as the driver of behaviour (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a). However, contradictions emerge between the formulations of individuals as independent and self-managing and as being required to respond to the labour market. Given the global context in which the texts analysed have been produced, the emphasis on autonomy can be seen as related to the current dominant neo-liberal political agenda in Europe, which has been underpinned by agencies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, UNESCO and OECD, which have also clearly influenced the area of lifelong learning (cf. Ouane, 2009; Rivera, 2009; Schuller, 2009; Torres, 2009). The sender-oriented exploration discloses that the underlying views on career in the

texts analysed derive from disciplinary positions intertwined in the texts' formulations: an economic perspective, a learning perspective and a political science perspective. Given the implied demand on individuals to correspond with market needs, people and their careers are subordinated to market forces<sup>30</sup>. The second study's (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014)<sup>31</sup> receiver-oriented interpretation (cf. Hellspong & Ledin, 1997) of the first study's results, combined with the comparison of Swedish ethical declarations for the guidance profession, revealed that the most apparent implication of EU policy for career guidance practice seems to be an implicit shift of emphasis in the mission of career guidance practice regarding, specifically, *on behalf of whom* the guidance counsellor is really working. Guidance counsellors have traditionally worked on behalf of their clients, but the current formulations of ethical principles have made this less clear, resulting in uncertainty regarding *for whom* they are primarily working. Because the meaning of career that is communicated through policy documents influences regulations of career guidance practice, this uncertainty becomes clearer. Given the characterization and underlying perspectives on career from a sender-oriented exploration and interpretation (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012), career in the structural context exemplified in the analysed policy documents can be understood as 'a lifelong, recurrent, self-managed adaptation of life path in response to surrounding market forces' (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014, p. 12).

## CAREER AS A GAME OF EXCHANGE ANCHORED IN PAST CONDITIONS

The third study's exploration<sup>32</sup> of social representations of career among the group of 21 adults affected by the changes in working life generated two stable and two dynamic representations of career which exemplify

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<sup>30</sup> The empirical findings of the first study are fully presented in the article, and an illustration of the perspectives on career found in the texts analysed is provided in Figure 1 in my 2012 article (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, p. 166).

<sup>31</sup> The empirical findings of the second study are fully presented in my 2014 article.

<sup>32</sup> The empirical findings of the third study are fully presented in my 2013 article.

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the meaning of career among this group. The stable social representations depict *career as individual project and self-realization* and *career as social/hierarchical climbing*. Career as individual project and self-realization is generated with support from the thema of personal meaning. This social representation contains associations constituted by primary ideas of the desire to focus on oneself and one's aspirations, to realise one's goals and dreams, to do something one is passionate about; it expresses the meaning of career as personal significance and self-realization. The social representation of *career as social/hierarchical climbing* is generated with support from the thema of social meaning, which clearly expresses another type of meaning, one that is related to social importance and ranking. This representations consists of very clear primary concepts and images of career as relating to upward mobility, hierarchical climbing towards higher positions, and roles with status such as leadership and management positions. The key concept images here are those of "status" and "ladder". The meaning of success is clearly related to increased status as judged by others. Such success can be regarded in both a positive and a negative sense—positive in that success results in higher positions and greater responsibility and authority, and negative in that climbing the ladder is seen as something "bad". These two social representations appear both stable and coherent and seem to be part of an established order wherein certain codes for social exchange and codes for naming and classifying the meaning of career have become "fossilized" (Voelklein & Howarth, 2005) due to former conditions in working life. The two dynamic social representations are both generated by several themata. *Career as a game of exchange* is constituted by, among others, the themata *expected effort—expected outcome* which illustrates that education is considered an expected effort and that career is regarded as the outcome. Expected efforts are hard work, good co-worker relations, performance and experience, and loyalty and greater responsibility, and career development is supposed to be an outcome of such efforts. Among outcomes are those of better or new work tasks, challenges and broader possibilities. However, responsibility also emerges as an expected effort. Efforts are expected to result in rewarding outcomes, as expressed in the themata *internal reward—external reward*, where external rewards are most emphasized. Financial reward, higher social ranking, and recognition in terms of higher status and position all emerge

as primary ideas and concept images here. Ambiguity regarding whether the individual creates or is offered the desired outcome is expressed in the themata *created outcomes—offered outcome*. There is also ambiguity expressed about who is in charge of deciding the value of an individual's outcomes, as in the themata *individual assessment of value—social assessment of value*. The second dynamic social representation, *career as an uncertain outcome*, is also constituted by several themata. It clearly illustrates career as an ambiguous or uncertain outcome due to changing conditions, as in the themata *environmental influence—individual powerlessness*. Here, individuals' changing work situations are related to external conditions such as profitability requirements, competitiveness, cost focus, outsourcing, technical development and globalisation. The pressure for change leads to work being demanding, tiring, and challenging, and the individuals consider themselves powerlessness, with no ability to influence. The themata *predictability—unpredictability* clearly illustrates the need for transparency, to be able to foresee and plan towards future goals, and anxiety about not knowing what will come as well as fear of leaving the known. Similarly, the themata of *security—insecurity* illustrates people's feelings of security when they know what they have and insecurity when the future is unpredictable, and the themata of *control—lack of control* illustrates the uncertainty of not knowing who really governs. The themata *improvement—deterioration* clearly illustrates how change leads on the one hand to hopes for improvement, and on the other, to fear of deterioration. These dynamic social representations clearly disclose an ambiguity concerning career, and they create a space of negotiation of the meaning of career as they stand in relation to the simultaneously held stable social representations.

The exploration and interpretation of which scientifically shaped thoughts on career reflect and anchor these social representations show that the first stable representation—*career as individual project and self-realization*—clearly reflects the psychological perspective that regards career as a vehicle for self-realization (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a). The second stable social representation—*career as social/ hierarchical climbing*—reflects the perspective of sociology intertwined with the perspectives of anthropology and functional sociology, which regard career as social mobility, where titles indicate social positions and where career is seen as status passages

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(cf. Arthur et al., 1989a). The dynamic social representation *career as a game of exchange* reflects the psychological perspective that views career as a component of the individual's life structure with predictable transitions (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a), and it overlaps with the second dynamic representation, *career as an uncertain outcome*, in revealing people's need for transparency and predictability, as they need to know what efforts to make and what outcomes to expect. *Career as a game of exchange* and *career as an uncertain outcome* also contain expressions of such outcomes that clearly reflect those perspectives apparent in the stable social representation of social/hierarchical climbing; thus, they relate to the established order of career in social exchange that is rooted in the earlier contract between employer and employee and those reward systems that have influenced the world of work for a long time (cf. e.g., Hall, 1996; Savickas, 2008; Södergren, 1992). Moreover, the psychological perspective is also reflected in expressions that objectify career in working contexts (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a). The dynamic representation of career as an uncertain outcome discloses a tension between objectified common sense knowledge and the influence of new conditions that emerge with change. People's common-sense knowledge of career is located on the boarder of stability and change. Peoples' common sense knowledge of career appears to be reflected in, anchored by and objectified within psychological, social-psychological, functional-sociological and anthropological scientifically shaped perspectives on career (cf. Arthur et al., 1989a). The social representations of career appear to be anchored in previous working life conditions characterized by the hierarchical nature of organizations from which the career concept originally developed (cf. Patton & McMahon, 2006). People's common sense knowledge of career is also influenced and challenged by changes in working life, and it is in conflict with especially two underlying views on career disclosed in European policy documents on guidance, as presented in the first study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012). There, the economic and political science perspective dominate, together implicitly communicating career as a response to market forces wherein the person is left with the sole responsibility for responding to such. The responses, in turn, are built upon an adaptive learning perspective. Consequently, people's common sense knowledge of career is found an-

chored in precisely those perspectives and previous working life conditions that are now challenged (see e.g., Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009). That is, the participants' social representations of career are clearly anchored in the past and argue, or conflict, with the future.

## AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP TO CAREER IN AN ARGUMENTATIVE PRACTICE

The meaning of career among educational and vocational guidance counsellors is revealed with support from the results of the second study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014)<sup>33</sup> and the fourth study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript)<sup>34</sup>. The second study explored the receiving context, which the meaning of career as it is communicated in policy documents would influence, by striving to understand the ethics for this professional community. The exploration of ethical declarations for this professional community revealed some key principles and significant changes in the Swedish Declarations of Ethics of 1989 and 2007. The purpose of both texts is to promote and strengthen guidance in terms of good ethics and professionalism. Both texts also aim to support both applicants and practitioners. One difference between the texts is that the former says that practice is concerned with educational and vocational guidance, whereas the latter adds the word 'career' to the formulation. In addition, there is a difference concerning the contexts in which guidance counselling is conducted: the former emphasizes the educational system and employment services, while the latter includes a variety of public and private activities and areas in both the education and employment sectors. Consequently, the main difference is the expansion of areas and activities and the emergence of the private sector where guidance is conducted today. This change appears to be the result of the influence of the EU resolution on guidance (Council of the European Union, 2004) in which career guid-

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<sup>33</sup> The empirical findings of the second study are fully presented in my 2014 article.

<sup>34</sup> The empirical findings of the fourth study are fully presented in my fourth article (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript).

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ance is a term used with reference to a broader range of services and activities. Some common key principles over time are also revealed, apparent of which are those that focus on the mission for career guidance practitioners, how they conduct their professional practice, and what types of issues they work with in their encounters with clients. Career guidance practitioners work to support people to make carefully considered choices, to encourage them to develop self-awareness and self-knowledge, and to increase their awareness and highlight various options. Career guidance practitioners adapt their guidance activities to applicants' needs. They shall possess self-awareness, show respect for the unique and equal value of every human being, favour justice and equal opportunity, and also strive to oppose discrimination. They shall also strive for impartiality and to provide relevant, clear, objective information. The present declaration (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 2007) has added formulations such as understanding 'life', as part of self-awareness and to 'create motivation' in the applicant. The dialogue as central for guidance professionals is clearly more emphasized in the earlier declaration (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989). The wording of the new declaration is much more general and vague in its formulations, which consequently leaves room for various interpretations. It is emphasized in both declarations that guidance practitioners shall be uninfluenced by special interests, and conflicts of interest are also mentioned. However, as shown by Bergmo-Prvulovic (2014), the former statements are formulated more extensively, and the current declaration has reduced, or even excluded, some clarifications that were emphasized in the first declaration. To more fully explore the context of the professional community in which career is brought to the agenda and functions as an interlacing object, the fourth study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) explored guidance counsellors' social representations of their professional mission and of career as the object therein. The constitutive elements in the utterances revealed both coherence and consistencies and contrasts and contradictions as argumentative dimensions. Four social representations were generated through what is commonly shared professional knowledge, which forms their professional identity, and commonly shared oppositional and argumentative thoughts in this group comprising a professional community. Their social representations are given in two of oppositional, argumentative pairs: 1)

*impartial educational support on behalf of the individual* vs *a practice of matching on behalf of the business sectors*, and 2) *the common view of career as something bad* vs *career in the context of guidance as something other than the common view* (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript). Below, a summary of the two pairs of social representations and their constitutive elements is given.

The first part of the first pair of social representations, *impartial educational support on behalf of the individual*, concerns their professional mission and is constituted by three primary elements: *the guidance professions' unique ethical stance*; *profession-specific issues/objectives, working methods and specific nature*; and *inter-organizational and outer-organizational demands and conditions*. *The guidance professions' unique ethical stance* is emphasized in terms of the practice being 1) individual-based, 2) non-directive and non-advice-giving, and 3) value-free, or neutral/impartial. They all run as contrasting elements to the second part of this pair (discussed below), and together they clarify the non-governing, educational support of guidance as being conducted on behalf of the individual. The *profession-specific issues/objective, working methods and specific nature* emerged in terms of 1) awareness creation for personal development and about alternatives/possibilities and for choice and decision competence; 2) dialogue as the central working method; and 3) their approach in dialogue as individual-based, situational-based and future-oriented. The missions' object concerns 4) people's plans, next steps forward, continuing development, movement forward in present or toward future education/working life/life/adult life, hopes about future visions/goals/dreams; 5) expert knowledge in information giving concerned with education and the labour market. Dialogue is regarded as the main working method, while information is seen as subordinated dialogue. Difficulty balancing between *inter-organizational and outer-organizational demands and conditions* emerges as the third primary element in this social representation, with support from the following: 1) indistinct/changed organizational structure; 2) inter-organizational collaboration; 3) informal conferral/unequal division of responsibilities for the missions' broad sense; 4) increased attention/demands, for better or worse; and 5) social/societal influence on both clients and the profession.

The second part in this first pair of oppositional representations, *a practice of matching on behalf of the business sector*, is constituted by the primary



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element of guidance counselling as *a misinterpreted mission and profession* as expressed in surrounding actors' argumentative discourse and against which guidance counsellors argue. This element is derived from the following secondary elements: 1) ignorance of the professions' mission and expertise among actors; 2) other actors' misinterpretation of the mission as matching/recruitment/skills-provision based upon stakeholders' rather than individuals' needs, as well as other stakeholders expectation that guidance counsellors work in a steering, directing, persuasive, advisory and prophesizing way; 3) guidance counsellors' frustration that the guidance profession is a misused and untapped resource due to misplaced priorities on the part of leaders and principal organizers; and 4) difficult/unreasonable expectations coming from other stakeholders. Guidance counsellors clearly argue against this element, expressing 5) a professional belief in disregarding such unreasonable expectations, where they refer to their ethical ways of working; and also 6) professional desires for accurate expectations. Their professions' unique ethical stance—being individual-based and non-governing and value-free—clearly collides with surrounding actors' misinterpretation of guidance as governing based upon stakeholders' rather than individual's needs. This pair of social representations clearly reveal an oppositional and argumentative relationship in that guidance counsellors argue and negotiate their mission with support from these two oppositional social representations. The first representation in this oppositional pair illustrates how guidance counsellors have acquired a professional representation (cf. Ratinaud & Lac, 2011). This professional representation is further anchored in and objectified (Moscovici, 2000a, 2001) through social, communicative exchange in educational processes based upon the ethical declarations (Sveriges Vägledarförening, 1989, 2007) designed to strengthen and define the profession. The second representation in this pair of oppositional representations seems to be an articulation of an argumentative discourse (Billig, 1993), as communicated by surrounding actors. Guidance counsellors argue against this second representation and contrast it with their first—professional—representation, which they regard, in their socially formed “professional reality”, as the correct one—one which in turn differs from other social thoughts (Ratinaud & Lac, 2011), as in the second representation. Guidance counsellors feel that their first, professional representation is being attacked by

the second representation: their professional representation is the counter-discourse being attacked by the second representation as the dominant, argumentative discourse.

## CAREER IN GUIDANCE PRACTICE AS PERSONAL GROWTH

Through the findings of the fourth manuscript in particular, but also with support from the findings of the second published article, an implicit meaning of career in career guidance practice emerge, as presented below.

The second pair of social representations (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) concerns the meaning of career. The first part, *the common view of career as something bad*, represents others' general meaning to which guidance counsellors argue and contrast themselves. It is constituted by two primary elements: *the general everyday knowledge about career as something negative/bad* and *career as localized outside guidance practice*. The first primary element emerges with support from elements with reference to 1) positional climbing of the ladder as negative/value-laden; and 2) guidance counsellors' avoidance/desensitization of the word in dialogue with clients. Guidance counsellors reflect upon the meaning of career and reveal aversion to the word as well as difficulties clarifying their meaning of career. The second primary element emerges with support from 1) career seen as intertwined with education and work, where education will result in a vocation/career as a long-term goal, a vocational development; and 2) career seen as localized in work and working life.

The second part in this second pair of representations, *career in the context of guidance as something other than the common view*, is constituted by the primary elements of *career as something other than the general view*, *career as the movement process itself* and *career as the destination*. Guidance counsellors clearly contrast their own view of career as something other than the first, that is, as something other than the general interpretation among other people. At the same time, they reveal difficulties in really clarifying the meaning they ascribe to career. They argue that the word 'career' gives a

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misleading picture of what career really is and of what a guidance counsellor really does. However, they argue at that same time that career is something they have always worked with in guidance support. When they reflect and argue with themselves with the support of their first social representation regarding their mission and its constitutive elements, and in order to solve the meaning of career, they relate career to their main issue of guidance, and then the implied meaning of career is constituted by secondary elements of 1) career as personal growth and life-development, 2) career as movement towards a future goal, and 3) career as the goal itself. On the one hand, career is localized in the future, seen as the goal itself; on the other hand, career is also seen as the journey towards a goal. Guidance counsellors express an uneasy relationship to career in that they have difficulty clarifying and defining their own meaning of career. Rather, they implicitly express 4) their professional belief of career as something other—as personal growth and life-development. This is done with support from their first representation of their mission as a non-governing support on behalf of the individual.

## INTERPRETATION OF EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

In the following, I seek to interpret the empirical findings of each of the four studies in an overall way. With support from social representations theory, I seek to illuminate how the empirical findings exemplify parties in the contexts involved and how the parties emerge as sources who are bearers of social representations of career. These bearers and their meanings of career both meet and clash—they communicate and negotiate their meanings of career, as described in two sections below.

### A TRIAD OF CLASHING VIEWS ON CAREER

The empirical findings, altogether, provide a fragmented picture of how career is understood among the parties involved. The selected documents and participants are regarded as sources who are bearers of social representations of career that are socially formed in each of the specific con-

texts. The bearers of these value systems, ideas and practices in each context have established social orders that help them communicate and classify career as they believe it is or should be (Andersén, 2011; Moscovici, 1973). The framing structural context (cf. Lovén, 2000; Söderström, 2011) includes terms, conditions, policies and economics. The meaning of career in the selected European policy documents on guidance (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012) emerges as ‘a lifelong, recurrent, self-managed adaptation of life path in response to surrounding market forces’ (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014, p. 12). Such a meaning implies that careers belong to society, those stakeholders apparent in the texts, and their interests, rather than the individual. Given that policies are formulated by authorities and politically governed agencies and are based upon ideas of how certain problems need to be solved, these policies legitimate and privilege certain interests and visions (cf. e.g. Öhman-Sandberg, 2014). Since the meaning of career in the policy documents explored derives particularly from economic, learning, and political science perspectives (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012), these are the perspectives that are therefore legitimated and privileged. Formulators behind these documents are therefore assumed to be bearers of social representations of career that derive from these underlying perspectives. These perspectives therefore legitimate and privilege related interests and visions, such as ideas connected with the human capital discourse (Söderström, 2011). However, together they communicate contradictory messages, where both individual autonomy and an adaptive approach to learning communicate career as subordinated to market forces, and people’s autonomy emerges as mostly rhetorical. Through these policy-texts, the career guidance mission is implicitly emphasized as ‘a mission on behalf of society, prior to the individual’ (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014). These perspectives, in combination, communicate ideas of the “protean career” form, as a way to adjust its fit to changing circumstances (cf. Inkson, 2004), and, with the influence of an economic resource-based view on career, therefore lead to career as being stolen from the individual for organizational purposes (cf. Inkson, 2004). This meaning ascribed to career in this structural context clearly contrasts with the meaning ascribed to career among the group of adults affected by changes in working life (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013).

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The group of adults exemplifies cultural and historical contexts which include ideas, values, ways of thinking, symbols and codes that explain how the understanding and meaning of career has been socially formed in their contexts (cf. Moscovici, 1973; Söderström, 2011). Their social representations of career are anchored in the past and based upon ideas and thoughts that were socially formed in past working life conditions. The stable social representations “career as social/hierarchical climbing” and “career as individual project and self-realization” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) guide their thoughts. These stable social representations exemplify definitions of career in terms of objective career success and subjective career success, respectively (Hughes, 1958; Kidd, 2006). In times of change, it is clear that the adults in the third study argue and negotiate their socially formed meaning of career with support from two dynamic social representations: “career as a game of exchange” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) clearly expresses that previously taken for granted working life conditions are changing, and “career as an uncertain outcome” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) highlights the unpredictability and insecurity regarding what outcomes to expect in the game of exchange. Clearly, the relationship between objective and subjective career success is revealed as unclear. Their stable social representations of career are still based upon traditional views of career (cf. e.g., Hall & Chandler, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009). The various broadened understandings of career that adjust career to changing circumstances, emphasized among theorists (Arthur, 1994; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Savickas, 2005), have not yet become stable among this group of adults. Rather, they still relate their experiences to the stable social representations, while they also are in the process of negotiating the meaning (cf. Gustavsson & Selander, 2011; Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012) of career with support from their dynamic social representations. Clearly, their minds are not free from the effects of earlier conditions that have been imposed upon them through social representations, language and culture (cf. Moscovici, 2000a). These social representations have become taken for granted, but are now challenged and therefore more vivid in times of change (cf. Moscovici, 2000a, 2001).

The meaning of career among guidance counsellors (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) reveals yet another contrasting perspective and exemplifies their cultural and historical contexts, which include ideas, values, ways of thinking, symbols and codes and the historical development of how the understanding of career has been socially formed in their local context (cf. Söderström, 2011) into a professional order (cf. Moscovici, 1973). The social practice of career guidance is influenced by its own meaning of career. Guidance counsellors in the fourth study express an uneasy relationship to career (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) with support from four social representations given in two oppositional, argumentative pairs. Guidance counsellors appear more comfortable with discussing what career is *not*, as well as when they argue what their mission is *not*. This becomes especially clear with the differences between the meanings of career exemplified in the structural context and the context of guidance practice's professional order as anchored in ethical declarations. Guidance counsellors regard their mission as "impartial educational support on behalf of the individual", which clearly argues with their second social representation, "a practice of matching on behalf of the business sector" (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript). Their second representation clearly expresses frustration that their mission is misunderstood among surrounding stakeholders. These differences in how career guidance is understood, alongside with the structural meanings of career as subordinated to market forces and as being for organizational purposes, creates a nearly impossible mission for guidance practitioners. According to guidance counsellors' ethics, they shall work in service of their clients, while the underlying structural perspectives legitimize ideas of guidance and people's careers as being in service of the market, organizations and society. This clarity regarding guidance counsellors' mission has decreased, however, in the newly formulated ethical declaration (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014). Thus, guidance counsellors' representations of their mission, which are anchored by and objectified in their ethics, become challenged. Guidance counsellors' social representations of career within their mission clearly reveal how this professional practice has established a professional order in which their professional practice is provided with certain codes for communicating about career (cf. Moscovici, 1973). This is exemplified by their second oppositional, argumentative

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pair of social representations of career: “the common view of career as something bad” and “career in the context of guidance as something other than the common view” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript). Clearly, guidance counsellors argue against other peoples’ general knowledge of career with reference to climbing the ladder. Guidance counsellors are most certainly influenced by the transitional trends in the career field since the early 1990s when career entered an uncomfortable phase (Collin, 1998) and the strivings to move from traditional views of career towards a gradually broadening view in the career field. Consequently, the social representation of “career as social/hierarchical climbing” among adults, as in the third study (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013), is in sharp contrast with guidance counsellors’ social representation. Guidance counsellors contrast this social representation with elements of their second representation in this pair. Guidance counsellors have difficulties clarifying the meaning they ascribe to career; rather they implicitly view career as internal personal growth (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript). Their social representation of “career as something other than the commonly held view” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript) corresponds better with adults’ social representation of “career as individual project and self-realization” (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013).

## CLASHING POINTS, MEETING POINTS AND NEGOTIATION POINTS

Based upon the illustration in Figure 1 (page 17), it is clear that various meanings of career among the parties involved circulate in the meeting between the client and the guidance counsellor in the context of career guidance practice. The object of career and its relation to ego and alter (Marková, 2003) reveal a practice in which clashing social representations of career are brought to the agenda. As clients, guidance counsellors and policy documents are bearers of social representations, these representations are understood as embedded in social action in the dynamics of social life and in institutional arrangements where these bearers both meet, communicate, and clash (Jovchelovitch, 2007).

The different meanings of career circulating in the guidance meeting appear to meet on those occasions when individuals' thoughts are guided by a social representation that emphasizes self-realization and individual projects. Such thoughts correspond with guidance counsellors' meaning of career as personal development, or internal personal growth. However, when clients' thoughts are guided by a social representation anchored in the past and referring to social/hierarchical climbing and expected outcomes or rewards in a game of exchange, it clashes with guidance counsellors' social representations of career. Clients are also unsupported in this view of career in their working lives, since the working life context clearly legitimizes ideas of career that move beyond traditional views of career. Such traditional views are seen as bad among guidance counsellors, and their own view of career is seen as something other than the commonly held view. When these representations clash, the bearers, *alter* and *ego* (cf. Marková, 2003), communicate about the *object career* in this shared context (cf. Andersén, 2011) and guidance counsellors appear to negotiate the meaning held by clients. In that sense, the meaning of career is not reserved for the sense people make of it (cf. Nicholson & West, 1989) among guidance counsellors. On the other hand, the adults' social representation of self-realization and individual project and guidance counsellors' social representation of career as internal personal development and growth clash with structural meanings of career as subordinated to market forces for the purposes of organizations, where people are expected to adapt and respond to the demands. The structural context also emphasizes peoples' autonomy, however, and this aspect is more easily combined with the ethically anchored, individual-based focus in the career guidance encounter. The professional community of career guidance is perceived to be a misinterpreted practice among surrounding stakeholders, which complicates the work situation of guidance counsellors with pressure from several directions. On the one hand, guidance counsellors meet expectations from people who base their thinking on traditional views of career while simultaneously having another view of the meaning of career than ordinary people. This leads the profession into negotiations of the meaning of career and to avoidance of the concept career. On the other hand, they are under pressure from surrounding stakeholders, who have hidden expectations of the profession to support



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the construction of an adaptive workforce for market purposes. Elements that describe an unequal division of responsibilities concerning career guidance in the broad sense (cf. Lindh, 1997) highlight what seems to be an imbalance in the relationship between objective and subjective aspects of career (cf. Kidd, 2006). Whereas guidance counsellors work with processes involving subjective aspects of career such as clients' values and personal goals, also closely linked with ideas of psychological success (cf. Hall & Chandler, 2005), it becomes clear that guidance counsellors see objective, observable career outcomes (cf. Kidd, 2006) as the responsibility of working contexts. Guidance counsellors express frustration that surrounding actors do not take full responsibility for doing their part by communicating objective, observable outcomes for people. This might be a consequence of the gradual broadening of the understandings of career beyond traditional views, which focused particularly on observable outcomes of objective career success. Such trends have most certainly influenced organizational contexts in their work with career issues. Arguments for *psychological success*, which in subjective career precedes objective outcomes (Hall & Chandler, 2005), correspond with guidance counsellors' social representations of career as internal personal development and growth and with people's social representations of career as self-realization and individual project. However, as other researchers argue, subjective career is secondary to objective career success (Nicholson & de Waal-Andrews, 2005). Adults' dynamic social representations of career as "a game of exchange" and as "uncertain outcome" (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) indicate an imbalance in the relationship between subjective and objective career, when no context provides support or communicates observable, objective career aspects.

## CHAPTER 8

# DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a section that discusses the plausibility, followed by a concluding discussion of the overall results.

## METHOD DISCUSSION

The result clearly shows that the meanings of career circulating in a career guidance meeting both clash and partially meet. The study does not claim to demonstrate complete representativeness of the parties involved as bearers of social representations of career; rather, it highlights examples of the meaning ascribed to career among a triad of parties involved. The selections of documents and participants have been made in relation to the purpose. The number of texts has been relatively few, but the texts are still considered relevant as examples for the purpose of the study. Data collection in the third study resulted in extensive material for analysis. The collection of associations in two steps made possible a deeper understanding of the meaning of each produced association. The group that responded to the selection criteria consisted of more women than men,

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which may have influenced the results. In the fourth study, the collection of data in a group at a specific occasion yielded a better response rate than did the data collection via e-mail. The number of responses received has been deemed sufficient to illuminate examples of how career is socially represented amongst this group of respondents.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

When career was called a dead phenomenon (Hall, 1996), this apparently referred to the traditional view of career, at least in the career field among writers, theorists and stakeholders connected to the organizational area. Nevertheless, the traditional view of career is still stable and alive in people's common sense knowledge of career and therefore still guides their thoughts of career, especially in times of change. However, it was also the issue of change, in particular, that seems to have influenced transitional trends in the career field (cf. Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Brousseau et al., 1996; Collin, 1998; Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Nicholson, 1996) and to have led to a movement beyond these traditional views. Given the changing organizational landscape in an uncertain global context, a renewed interest in lifelong learning strategies on the part of business and industry emerged as a way of addressing organizational needs driven by globalisation and economic conditions (Jarvis, 2009). This would mean that the structural context exemplified in European policy documents on guidance is influenced by organizational needs and, consequently, views and ideas of career. As noted by Söderström (2011), the competence discourse and the human capital discourse have been influential, and ideas of employees' potential to contribute to economic growth have been emphasized, in contrast to the meaning of career in guidance practice. For instance, Inkson (2004) shows the internal differences between guidance counselling thinking and human resources thinking, which have two different definitions of career development. The structural contexts' underlying view of career as a resource for market forces and for organizations can be understood as an underlying rhetorical manipulation (Jodelet, 1995). Through these policy texts, career shall

be understood as based upon the needs of business and industry to compete globally and as aimed to promote economic growth. Therefore, strategies and actions such as reorganization, downsizing, competence development, continuous learning, changes in direction and positions, and decentralization of power in organizations are examples of reactions to uncertainty (cf. Dalsvall & Lindström, 2012). This would also be an expression of argumentative elements of persuasion and argumentation for certain points of view (Billig, 1987, 1993). Clearly, the competence discourse, the human capital discourse and the education/learning discourse (Söderström, 2011) have been influential as dominating discourses in line with changes in the organizational landscape. Since these policies influence career guidance practice as the receiver of such ideas in the context of that professional community, guidance counsellors respond with expressions of being a misunderstood practice – that is, their counter-discourse is being attacked by the argumentative discourse (Billig, 1993). At the same time, there are ideas of *psychological success* (Hall & Chandler, 2005) in the organizational area, which argue for career as a calling, and ideas of the “protean career” (Hall, 1996) as driven by the person. These ideas correspond with guidance counsellors’ views on individual-based support for internal personal development and growth, but they clash and create confusion because the ideas are based upon organizational needs rather than individuals’ needs. Traditionally, the guidance counselling field has mainly devoted itself to the choice and decision making process at institutional break-points such as a person’s moving from one education level to another or from unemployment to work (Kidd, 2006, 2007). With the continuous changes in working life, guidance has become an increasing issue during repetitive transitions. The object career is thus placed between the traditional guidance counselling field and the organizational and human resources field in working life. In other words, it seems that people’s career issues cannot be separated to belong completely to one or the other field. The fields become more and more intertwined, with the result that different approaches might collide or, alternatively, meet. The fundamental differences between how these two fields treat career appears to be whether career is the property of the individual, as in the guidance and counselling field, or controlled by the employing organization,

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as in the organizational field, and whether career is self-managed or managed by organizations. Recent trends in the footsteps of lifelong learning strategies call for people to self-manage their careers, but this is in terms of keeping themselves employable and ready for change (cf. e.g., Collin, 1998; Hall, 1996), rather than in terms of their wishes or of the realization of their dreams. This indicates persistent differences in thinking about whom the career is for. It also raises questions of whether these various meanings of careers will ever meet and how they correspond with peoples' everyday knowledge of career. An explanation of how such a situation of clashing arises can be found in the developments that have led to the gradual intertwining of career guidance practice and the personnel profession in the human resource field (cf. Van Esbroeck, 2008; Watts & Fretwell, 2004). As described by Söderström (1997), the personnel work has emerged in phases, with a shifting of focus – first on individual needs, then on organizational needs, then on both individual and organizational needs, and finally, from the end of the 1980s, exclusively on organizational needs. Ideas of career guidance as an important part of human resource strategies (cf. Watts & Fretwell, 2004) therefore indicate that the career guidance practice is involved in a process of attempts to incorporate career guidance practice in the management service of organizations. When career – in its traditional meaning based on hierarchical structure and objective career outcomes – was called a dead phenomenon, one can assume that career shifted its focus from a relational form between the individual and the organization. Ideas of objective career success appear therefore to have become gradually neglected among both organizations and guidance counsellors (see Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript). Both organizations and the field of guidance counselling argue for ideas of psychological success, personal development and careers as driven by the person, but to completely different purposes. This shift seems to have led to an over-emphasis on psychological success at the expense of the objective outcomes that generate objective success. This could explain the imbalance revealed among guidance counsellors in their frustrations about other stakeholders and about workplaces not communicating how they provide possibilities for their employees. There seems to be a shift in the meaning of career from *external reward systems* – those emphasized

in objective career success (cf. e.g., Kidd, 2006), such as vocation, climbing the ladder, and status ranking – to *internal reward systems*, where the individual shall be satisfied just by enjoying the ride. This would mean that a shift has occurred from the goal to the journey itself, from career as the destination, the goal to reach, the dreams to realize, to simply the journey itself. This raises questions. For instance, how do workplaces pay and reward personal development and internal growth? Clearly, career development has shifted away from external rewards to a new type of internal career development. Alongside with these effects of and developments in the changing organizational landscape, *the attempts to broaden the thinking of career have also resulted in career as being related not only to working life but also to life itself*. This is evident in various research disciplines and in the policy texts and ethical declarations explored (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, 2014) as well as in texts from the guidance counselling field (cf. Lindberg, 2003). Here, career path and life path are treated almost synonymously. Career as a phenomenon is clearly in the middle of a transformation phase, where all parts involved are struggling with the meaning of career between their anchored and objectified social representations of career and the gradual broadening of the meaning of career. Until this transformative process has become stable and again taken for granted, the previous social representations in each group might function as traps of thoughts between the past and the future. In conclusion, it seems necessary for all parties involved in the interest in career to raise objective career success higher on their agendas. People appear to continue to relate their social representations of career to both subjective and objective career success. It is not a question of either–or; it is still a question of both.

# SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

I följande sammanfattning presenteras kortfattat avhandlingens innehåll under rubrikerna bakgrund, syfte och frågeställning, teoretiskt perspektiv, metod och resultat samt avslutande kommentarer.

## Bakgrund

I början på 1990-talet ansågs karriär vara ett fenomen, tillhörande det förflutna. Denna utveckling beskrevs med det paradoxala budskapet ”Karriären är död – länge leve karriären!” (Hall, 1996, p. 8), som formulerades i samband med argument för att ett nytt karriärkontrakt växer fram i takt med den turbulens och omvandling som sker i organisationssammanhang som en följd av globala förändringar. Denna avhandling motiveras av just detta budskap; att karriären är ett fenomen som tillhör det förflutna, men ändå ett levande fenomen. Studien tar sin utgångspunkt i min yrkespraktik som studie- och yrkesvägledare på ett vägledningssentrum under tidigt 2000-tal, där jag ofta mötte vuxna som uttryckte förvirring och frustration. I dessa möten stod det klart för mig att, trots deras skilda berättelser och behov, så hade flera av dem något gemensamt. De var anställda på olika arbetsplatser men delade en diffus förvirring som tycktes relatera till deras erfarenheter i arbetslivet i synnerhet. De talade om ökad arbetsbelastning, ökat ansvar, krav på kompetensutveckling, och brist på uppskattning. Flertalet forskare har också noterat att människor har behov av stöd i att hantera förändrade arbetssituationer och karriärrelaterade frågor också senare i livet, inte enbart vid tydliga utbildnings- och yrkesval (Kidd, 2006; Lindh & Lundahl, 2008). Karriär har identifierats som den centrala frågan i karriärvägledningens praktik (Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008a). Vid den här tiden ökade intresset för livslångt lärande strategier (Jarvis, 2009), följt av en ökad uppmärksamhet mot karriärvägledning på den europeiska arenan (se European Commission, 2004). Karriär framträder som ett överbryggande objekt, som särskilt involverar två pedagogiska fält, vilka ramar in och kontextualiserar karriär som fenomen. Det arbetslivspedagogiska fältet är relevant, eftersom det representerar de

sammanhang där arbetslivsomvandlingen blir särskilt påtaglig. Det pedagogiska karriärvägningsfältet är också relevant, eftersom det är inom dess professionella praktik, som objektet karriär blir en överbryggande fråga som flätar samman dessa fält när människor i arbetsrelaterade förändringar bär sina karriärrelaterade frågor in i vägledningspraktiken. Karriär ses således som det som övergripande objektet som hanteras mellan den person som söker stöd och den som ger karriärstöd. Båda bär sina tankar om karriär, som bygger på deras värderingar, erfarenheter från sina specifika sammanhang in i mötet, vilket sker i en omgivande kontext, influerad av globala och ekonomiska trender och styrning. En triad av parter framträder som relevanta att undersöka avseende vilken innebörd som tillskrivs karriär

### **Syfte och frågeställning**

Syftet är att undersöka den innebörd som representanter för de olika involverade parterna tillskriver karriär i denna tid av arbetslivsomvandling. Följande frågeställning avses besvaras:

I en tid av snabba förändringar i arbetslivet, vilken innebörd tillskrivs karriär a) i europeiska policydokument om vägledning, b) bland vuxna som påverkas av det förändrade arbetslivet, och c) bland studie- och yrkesvägledare?

Vidare tolkas hur den/de innebörder av karriär som framträder i de fyra studierna, influerar på rådande policy och karriärvägläsnings praktiken.

### **Teoretiskt perspektiv**

Eftersom flera kontexter är tydligt sammanflätade genom karriär som överbryggande objekt, görs en inramning av olika typer av kontexter: strukturell, kulturell, historisk och omgivande lokal kontext (jfr Söderström, 2011). Karriär som fenomen omges av en strukturell kontext, vilken inkluderar villkor, bestämmelser, politik och ekonomi. Det strukturella sammanhanget omger även karriärvägläsningsmötet (Lovén, 2000). Den kulturella och historiska kontexten omfattar idéer, värderingar, sätt att tänka, symboler och koder, vilken inkluderar den historiska



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utvecklingen. För att hantera hur vardagskunskap av karriär som fenomen socialt formas och blir till socialt delad kunskap, har teorin om sociala representationer (Moscovici, 1961, 2008) använts som teoretiskt ramverk.

## Metod

Den övergripande forskningsdesignen är indelad i fyra separata studier. För att undersöka fenomenet, har olika datainsamlingsmetoder använts: a) dokumentanalys, b) fria associationer, c) en kombination av uppsatsmetod och enkät metod. Sammantaget har dessa datakällor erbjudit olika perspektiv och möjliggjort att fokusera på olika aspekter av forskningsobjektet.

Fyra studier har genomförts. Den första studien<sup>35</sup> undersöker hur karriär kommuniceras i en strukturell kontext, mot bakgrund av det ökade policy intresset för karriärvägledning som visats på den europeiska arenan (jfr European Commission, 2004; Watts & Fretwell, 2004; Watts & Sultana, 2004). Fyra dokument, producerade av Europeiska unionen (Council of the European Union, 2004, 2008), (European Commission, 2004), (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), 2005), har använts i denna studie. Dessa texter antas förmedla visa uttryck och påståenden om karriärfenomen i dagens föränderliga arbetsliv. Uppmärksamhet riktas därmed mot texterna med ett avsändarorienterat perspektiv. Kvalitativ innehållsanalys (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) har använts som metod för att närma sig texterna, med en induktiv utveckling av kategorier. Analysen har därtill baserats på den modell att analysera texter som föreslagits av Hellspong och Ledin (1997).

Den andra studien<sup>36</sup> riktar uppmärksamheten mot den mottagande sidan av sådana idémässiga budskap som förmedlas och kommuniceras genom de policy dokument som utforskades i första studien. Studien två fokuserar härmed mot karriärvägledningspraktiken, utifrån ett

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<sup>35</sup> (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012)

<sup>36</sup> (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014)

mottagar-orienterat perspektiv. Studien utökar den första studiens analys genom att fokusera på huvudprinciper, roll och uppdrag för vägledarprofessionen och betydelsefulla förändringar i formuleringar mellan professionens första etiska deklaration och den reviderade etiska deklarationen. Dessa dokument antas innehålla diskursiva inramande element som omger denna professionella praktik. Två dokument, publicerade av Sveriges Vägledarförening 1989, och 2007, lokaliserades och tjänar som exempel på hur professionens roll och uppdrag kan uttryckas i en europeisk kontext. Likheter och skillnader i texterna jämfördes, kombinerat med den första studiens resultat som en tolkningsram för att analysera vilka möjliga konsekvenser och vilken betydelse den innebörd av karriär som kommuniceras på strukturells nivå, kommer att ha för karriärvägledningspraktiken.

Den tredje studien<sup>37</sup> undersöker vardagskunskap om karriär, vilka sociala representationer som framträder bland en grupp människor som påverkas av förändringar i arbetslivet. Denna studie avser att fånga sådana lokala omgivande kontexter (jfr Söderström, 2011) som exemplifierar hur människor erfar och socialt formar sin vardagskunskap om karriär. Dessa kontexter antas innehålla element av både kulturella och historiska kontexter, som inkluderar idéer, värderingar, symboler, koder och sätt att tänka (Moscovici, 1973) om karriär. Baserat på Moscovicis (2000a) resonemang, antas det här att karaktären på sociala representationer blir särskilt synliggjord när en grupp eller dess bilder av ett särskilt fenomen genomgår förändringar. Data samlades in med hjälp av fria associationer som metod (se Abric, 1995; Andersén, 2011; Germundsson, 2011) bland en grupp människor influerade av arbetslivsförändringar. Sammanlagt deltog 21 personer i studien. Deltagarna tillfrågades om sina spontana associationer kring orden/fraserna: karriär, karriärutveckling och arbetssituation i förändring. Utforskningen av innehållet i de insamlade associationerna baserar sig på kvalitativ innehållsanalys (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Moscovici, 1961, 2008), följt av en induktiv utforskning (Gustavsson & Selander, 2011; Marková, 2003; Moscovici, 2000a; Tateo & Iannaccone, 2012; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005) av primära idéer, koncept och bilder

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<sup>37</sup> (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013)

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som uttryckts i analysenheterna. Analysen mynnade ut i flera motsatspar, vilka i sin tur genererade vad som i analysen betecknas som två stabila sociala representationer och två dynamiska sociala representationer.

Den fjärde studien<sup>38</sup> undersöker studie- och yrkesvägledares tankar, idéer och bilder av sitt uppdrag och av karriär som objektet. Avsikten var att fånga exempel på karriärvägledares omgivande lokala sammanhang, deras professionella praktik. Det antas således att deras kulturella och historiska kontexter (Söderström, 2011) blir synliga implicit i deras uttryckta idéer, värderingar, koder och sätt att tänka (jfr Abric, 1995; Moscovici, 1973, 2000a, 2001). Data samlades in med hjälp av en kombination mellan uppsatsmetoden (Chaib & Chaib, 2011) och enkät som metod, och huvudsakligen med hjälp av e-mail. Öppna frågor formulerades utifrån tre grundläggande områden vilka tillsammans avsåg fånga karriär som objekt i vägledarnas uppdrag. Data samlades in vid tre olika tillfällen bland 170 studie- och yrkesvägledare i tre olika län, som arbetade i 15 olika kommuner. Sammanlagt valde 41 studie- och yrkesvägledare att delta i studien. För att induktivt utforska innehållet i deras svar, användes kvalitativ innehållsanalys (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Moscovici, 1961, 2008). Analysprocessen avsåg vidare att identifiera de element som konstituerar en social representation, det vill säga innehållet i en social representation (Abric, 1995). Utforskningen resulterade i ett antal primära och sekundära element, vilka genererade fyra sociala representationer, uttryckta i argumenterande motsatspar. De empiriska resultaten från samtliga fyra studier tolkas slutligen utifrån ett helhetsperspektiv, med stöd teorin om sociala representationer.

## Resultat

Nedan presenteras olika betydelse av karriär som härrör från tre olika källor. Den första betydelsen, härrör från europeiska policydokument om vägledning och baseras på resultaten av den första och andra studien. Den andra betydelsen, härrör från gruppen av vuxna och baseras således på

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<sup>38</sup> (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript)

resultaten av den tredje studien. Den slutliga källan består av gruppen studie- och yrkesvägledare. Denna grupp uttrycker en orolig relation till karriär och en implicit innebörd av karriär framträder, som redovisas under den tredje och fjärde rubriken i resultatavsnittet. Dessa innebörder baseras på resultaten av den andra och den fjärde studien.

### *Karriär som en livslång anpassning till marknadskrafterna*

Den innebörd som tillskrivs karriär i europeiska policydokument om vägledning, har blottlagts med hjälp av resultaten från den första och den andra studien.

Analysen av policydokumenten visade att de underliggande synsätten på karriär härrör från ett *ekonomiskt perspektiv*, som ser karriär som en respons på marknadskrafter (jfr Arthur et al., 1989a), tillsammans med ett *lärande perspektiv* som i huvudsak betonar ett övergångslärande utifrån idéer om anpassning och omställning, samt ett *statsvetenskapligt perspektiv* (jfr Arthur et al., 1989a) på karriär som betonar egenmakt och autonomi. På grund av en betoning på matchning baserat på näringslivets och industrins behov, framträder lärande perspektivet som att huvudsakligen omfamna ett anpassningslärande perspektiv. Den andra studiens mottagarorienterande tolkning (Hellspong & Ledin, 1997) av den första studiens resultat, i kombination med en jämförelse mellan svenska etiska deklARATIONER för vägledning, visade vad som verkar vara en implicit förskjutning av tyngdpunkten i vägledningspraktikens uppdrag, avseende för vem vägledaren huvudsakligen arbetar för. Vägledare har traditionellt arbetat på uppdrag av sina klienter, men nuvarande formuleringar i den etiska deklARATIONEN har gjort detta mindre tydligt. Karaktäriseringar av karriär och underliggande synsätt, med motstridiga budskap i policydokumenten, kommunicerar innebörden av karriär som "en livslång, återkommande, själv-styrd anpassning av livsvägar som en respons på omgivande marknadskrafter (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012, p. 12).

Innebörden av karriär bland vuxna som påverkas av förändringar i arbetslivet har blottlagts med hjälp av resultaten från den tredje studien. Analysen genererade fyra sociala representationer, två av stabil karaktär och två av dynamisk karaktär.

De stabila sociala representationerna skildrar karriär som ett *enskilt projekt och självförverkligande* och som *social/hierarkisk klättring*. Den första stabila sociala representationen innehåller associationer som konstitueras av idéer om önskan att fokusera på sig själv, sina egna ambitioner, realisera sina drömmar och mål, att göra något man brinner för och uttrycker innebörden av karriär vara av personlig betydelse och för självförverkligande. Den andra stabila sociala representationen betonar den sociala betydelsen, som relaterar till social status och ranking. Denna representation består av tydliga koncept och bilder relaterande till rörlighet uppåt, hierarkisk klättrande till högre positioner, roller och status, såsom ledarskap och ledarpositioner.

De två dynamiska sociala representationerna *karriär som ett utbyttesspel* och *karriär som ett osäkert utfall* har genererats av en mängd motsatspar. Den första dynamiska sociala representationen rymmer sådana motsatspar som förväntad ansträngning – förväntat utfall, som illustrerar att utbildning ses som en förväntad ansträngning där karriär ses som ett förväntat utfall. Vidare förväntas vissa ansträngningar resultera i belönande utfall, vilket exemplifieras av motsatsparet inre belöning – yttre belöning, där de yttre belöningarna betonas mer. Därtill framträder i motsatsparet skapat utfall – erbjudet utfall en tvetydighet om huruvida individen skapar eller erbjuds det önskade utfallet. Likaså framträder en tvetydighet avseende vem som avgör värdet av ett utfall i motsatsparet individuell bedömning av värdet – social bedömning av värdet. I den andra dynamiska sociala representationen framträder karriär som tvetydigt och som osäkert utfall på grund av förändrade villkor, i motsatsparet omgivningens påverkan – individens maktlöshet. Behov av transparens, att kunna förutsäga och planera mot framtida mål samt oro över att inte veta vad som väntar, framkommer i motsatsparet förutsägbarhet – oförutsägbarhet. Motsatsparet trygghet – otrygghet, illustrerar människor känsla av

trygghet när de vet vad de har, och hur de känner sig otrygga när framtiden är oförutsägbart. Motsatsparet kontroll – brist på kontroll, uttrycker en osäkerhet i vem som egentligen styr. Därtill uttrycker motsatsparet förbättring – försämring hur förändring å ena sidan leder till hopp om förbättring, å andra sidan, rädsla för försämring.

*En orolig relation till karriär i en argumenterande praktik*

Studie- och yrkesvägledare uttrycker en orolig relation till karriär. Det framträder vidare en implicit innebörd bland studie- och yrkesvägledare med stöd av resultat från den andra och i huvudsak den fjärde studien, som genererade fyra sociala representationer, vilka ges i två oppositionella argumenterande par: 1) *oberoende pedagogiskt stöd på uppdrag av individen* kontra *en matchningspraktik på uppdrag av näringslivet*, och 2) *den allmänna synen på karriär som något dåligt* kontra *karriär i vägledningskontexten som något annat än den allmänna synen*.

Den första frasen i första paret, *oberoende pedagogiskt stöd på uppdrag av individen*, berör vägledarnas professionella uppdrag och konstitueras av tre primära element: a) vägledningsprofessionens etiska utgångspunkt, b) professionsspecifika frågor/uppgifter, arbetsmetoder och särart, och c) inom-organisatoriska och utom-organisatoriska krav och villkor. Den andra frasen i denna första sociala representation, *en matchningspraktik på uppdrag av näringslivet*, konstitueras av det primära elementet att vägledning är en missförstådd, feltolkad praktik och ett missförstått uppdrag bland omgivande aktörer. Det är tydligt att vägledarnas unika etiska utgångspunkter kolliderar med omgivande aktörers feltolkning av uppdraget som en styrande praktik baserat på intressenters behov snarare än individens.

Den första frasen i det andra paret, *den allmänna synen på karriär som något dåligt*, uttrycker andra människors allmänna mening mot vilken vägledarna argumenterar och kontrasterar sin egen innebörd av karriär. Denna första fras bärs upp av två primära element: a) den allmänna vardagskunskapen om karriär som något dåligt, och b) karriär som lokaliserat utanför vägledningspraktiken. Positionsklättrande uppför stegen ses som något negativt och värdeladdat, vägledarna uttrycker en motvilja mot or-

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det, och tenderar att undvika eller bortse från ordet i dialog med sina klienter. Studie- och yrkesvägledarna uttrycker ett oroligt förhållande till karriär. Vidare ses karriär å ena sidan som sammanflätat med utbildning och arbete, där utbildning resulterar i ett yrke/karriär som långsiktigt mål, en yrkesutveckling. Å andra sidan ses karriär som lokaliserat i arbetslivet.

### *Karriär i vägledningspraktiken som personlig utveckling*

En implicit innebörd av karriär framträder bland studie- och yrkesvägledare, genom deras oppositionella representationer i den fjärde studien (Bergmo-Prvulovic, Manuscript).

Den andra frasen i det andra oppositionella paret, *karriär i vägledningskontexten som något annat än den allmänna synen*, konstitueras av det primära elementet av karriär som något annat än den allmänna uppfattningen. Studie- och yrkesvägledarna kontrasterar tydligt sin egen syn på karriär som något annat än den allmänt hållna uppfattningen bland andra människor. Samtidigt, visar de svårigheter i att kunna tydliggöra vilken mening de tillskriver karriär. Å ena sidan anses karriär ge en missvisande bild av vad det egentligen är och av vad vägledare verkligen gör. Samtidigt argumenterar vägledarna för att karriär är något som de alltid har arbetat med i vägledningstöd. De argumenterar med sig själva och relaterar innebörden av karriär till deras huvudsakliga objekt i uppdraget. Därmed framträder en implicit innebörd av karriär som 1) personligt växande och livsutveckling, och 2) som rörelseprocessen i sig, och 3) som målet.

### **Avslutande kommentarer**

Med stöd av teorin om sociala representationer försöker jag belysa hur de empiriska iakttagelserna i samtliga studier framträder som bärare av sociala representationer om karriär. Dessa bärare och deras idéer om karriär både delvis möts och kolliderar med varandra. Parterna kommunicerar och förhandlar sina innebörder av karriärer.

Policydokument formuleras av myndigheter och politiskt styrda organ, baserat på idéer om hur vissa problem ska lösas, vilket innebär att sådana dokument legitimerar och privilegierar vissa intressen och visioner

(jfr Öhman-Sandberg, 2014). Därmed legitimeras således de underliggande perspektiv på karriär, vilka är tydligt relaterade med humankapital diskursen (Söderström, 2011). Idéer om den omställningsbara karriärformen kommuniceras som ett sätt att anpassa karriärens passform till förändrade omständigheter (jfr Inkson, 2004) och med influenser av en ekonomisk resursbaserad syn på karriär, leder till att karriär blir stulen från individen till förmån för organisationers syften (Inkson, 2004). Människors sociala representationer är i sin tur förankrade i det förflutna och grundade i idéer och tankar som formats i tidigare arbetslivsvillkor. Stabila representationer vägleder dessa människors tankar om karriär och exemplifierar termer som objektiv karriär framgång och subjektiv karriärframgång (Hughes, 1958; Kidd, 2006). I tider av förändring argumenterar och förhandlar människor sin vardagskunskap om karriär med hjälp av dynamiska sociala representationer, när deras tidigare förgivettaganden om hur utbytesspelet ska fungera, utmanas. Således framträder en obalans i relationen mellan den objektiva karriären och den subjektiva karriären. Idéer om andra former av karriärer, som poängteras bland forskare (Arthur, 1994; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Savickas, 2005), har ännu inte blivit stabila bland den grupp vuxna som undersökts. Studie- och yrkesvägledarnas sociala representationer om karriär, påvisar ytterligare kontrasterande perspektiv. Medan strukturell kontext kommunicerar karriär som underordnad marknadskrafterna, där karriär är till för organisationers syften, har vägledarna en professionell identitet förankrad i etiska deklarationer som därmed utmanas. Vidare har studie- och yrkesvägledarna en professionell representation om karriär som något annat än den allmänna uppfattningen bland människor. Det är tydligt att skilda innebörder av karriär cirkulerar i mötet mellan klient och vägledare i karriärvägledningskontexten. De skilda innebörderna förefaller mötas i sådana situationer där en individs tankar vägleds av en social representation som betonar självförverkligande och individuella projekt. Däremot kolliderar innebörderna när en klients tankar vägleds av en social representation som är förankrad i det förflutna och relaterar till social/hierarkisk klättring och förväntade utfall eller belöningar i utbytesspelet. Således finner klienter inget karriärstöd i samband med en sådan social representation, vare sig i karriärvägledningspraktiken eller i arbetslivets kontext, eftersom arbetslivet i sin tur



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legitimerar idéer om den omställningsbara karriärformen. Vägledare arbetar i huvudsak med processer som involverar subjektiva aspekter av karriär, men det är tydligt att vägledare ser de objektiva, observerbara utfallen som arbetslivets ansvar. De vuxnas dynamiska sociala representationer i tredje studien, där karriär ses som ett utbytesspel och som ett osäkert utfall (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2013) indikerar en obalans i relationen mellan subjektiv och objektiv karriär, när varken karriärvägledningspraktikens kontext eller arbetslivets kontexter erbjuder stöd eller kommunicerar om objektiva karriär aspekter.

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## APPENDIX I

### Doctoral dissertations in Sweden using Social Representations Theory

- Davidsson, Birgitta. (2002). *Mellan soffan och katedern En studie av hur förskollärare och grundskollärare utvecklar pedagogisk integration mellan förskola och skola*. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Tornberg, Gunbritt. (2006). "Bara man ser till barnets bästa" *En studie av lärares yrkesetiska överväganden i en skola för alla* Umeå: Umeå universitet.
- Stierna, Marie-Louise. (2007). *Föreställningar om mat och ätande. Risk, kropp, identitet och den "ifrågasatta" maten i vår tid*. Stockholm: Pedagogiska institutionen, Stockholms universitet.
- Ohlsson, Robert. (2009). *Representationer av psykisk ohälsa. Egna erfarenheter och dialogiskt meningsskapande i fokusgruppsamtal*. Stockholm: Stockholms universitet.
- Andersén, Annelie. (2011). *Ett särskilt perspektiv på högre studier? Folkhögskoledeltagares sociala representationer om högskola och universitet*. Dissertation series No 13, Högskolan i Jönköping
- Germundsson, Per. (2011). *Lärare, socialsekreterare och barn som far illa - sociala representationer och interprofessionell samverkan*. Örebro: Örebro universitet.
- Granbom, Ingrid. (2011). "Vi har nästan blivit för bra". *Lärares sociala representationer av förskolan som pedagogisk praktik*. Dissertation series No.15. Högskolan i Jönköping.
- Lindroth, Malin (2013). *Utsatthet och sexuell hälsa: en studie om unga på statliga ungdomshem*. Faculty of Health and Society, Malmö University.
- Lukkertz, Jack (2014). "En tom arena". *Gymnasiesärskolelärare- och habiliteringspersonals perspektiv på sex- och samlevnadsundervisning*. Faculty of Health and Society. Malmö University. (Lic. Avh.).
- Bergmo Pruvlovic, Ingela (2015). *Social Representations of Career and Career Guidance in the Changing World of Working Life*. Jönköping: School of Education and Communication, Jönköping University.

## APPENDIX 2

**Doctoral dissertations****School of Education and Communication, Jönköping University**

1. Boström, Lena (2004). *Lärande och metod. Lärstilsanpassad undervisning jämfört med traditionell undervisning i svensk grammatik.*
2. Hugo, Martin (2007). *Liv och lärande i gymnasieskolan. En studie om elevers och lärares erfarenheter i en liten grupp på gymnasieskolans individuella program.*
3. Barkho, Leon (2009). *Strategies and Power in Multilingual Global Broadcasters. How the BBC, CNN and Aljazeera shape their Middle East news discourse.*
4. Eidevald, Christian (2009). *Det finns inga tjejbestämmare – Att förstå kön som position i förskolans vardagsrutiner och lek.*
5. Wahlgren, Victoria C. (2009). *Den långa vägen till en jämställd gymnasieskola. En studie om genuspedagogers förståelse av gymnasieskolans jämställdhetsarbete.*
6. Almers, Ellen (2009). *Handlingskompetens för hållbar utveckling. Tre berättelser om vägen dit.*
7. Ludvigsson, Ann (2009). *Samproducerat ledarskap. Hur rektorer och lärare formar ledarskap i skolans vardagsarbete.*
8. Möllås, Gunvie (2009). *"Detta ideliga mötande" – En studie av hur kommunikation och samspel konstituerar gymnasieelevers skolpraktik.*
9. Åberg, Karin (2009). *Anledning till handledning. Skolledares perspektiv på grupphandledning.*
10. Segolsson, Mikael (2011). *Lärandets hermeneutik – Tolkningens och dialogens betydelse för lärandet med bildningstanken som utgångspunkt.*
11. Otterborg, Annica (2011). *Entreprenöriellt lärande. Gymnasieelevers skilda sätt att uppfatta entreprenöriellt lärande.*

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12. Nordevall, Elisabeth (2011). Gymnasielärarens uppdrag som mentor. En etnografisk studie av relationens betydelse för elevens lärande och delaktighet.
  13. Andersén, Annelie (2011). Ett särskilt perspektiv på högre studier? Folkhögskoledeltagares sociala representationer om högskola och universitet.
  14. Adolfsson, Margareta (2011). Applying the ICF-CY to identify everyday life situations of children and youth with disabilities.
  15. Granbom, Ingrid (2011). "Vi har nästan blivit för bra." Lärares sociala representationer av förskolan som pedagogisk praktik.
  16. Maxwell, Gregor (2012). Bringing more to participation: Participation in school activities of persons with disability within the framework of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY).
  17. Falkmer, Marita (2013). From Eye to Us: Prerequisites for and levels of participation in mainstream school of persons with Autism Spectrum Conditions.
  18. Simmeborn Fleischer, Ann (2013). "Man vill ju klara sig själv." Studievardagen för studenter med Asperger syndrom i högre utbildning.
  19. Alnervik, Karin (2013). "Men så kan man ju också tänka!" Pedagogisk dokumentation som förändringsverktyg i förskolan.
  20. Hirsh, Åsa (2013). The Individual Development Plan as Tool and Practice in Swedish compulsory school.
  21. Fleischer, Håkan (2013). En elev – en dator. Kunskapsbildningens kvalitet och villkor i den datoriserade skolan.
  22. Lindqvist, Gunilla (2013). Who should do What to Whom? Occupational Groups' Views on Special Needs.
  23. Samuelsson, Ulli (2014). Digital (o)jämlighet – IKT-användning i skolan och elevers tekniska kapital.

24. Öhman Sandberg, Ann (2014). Hållbar programutveckling – en studie av betydelsen av expansivt lärande och delvis delade objekt.
25. Svensson, Carl-Johan (2014). Festligt, folkligt, fullsatt? Offentlig debatt om Historiska museets publika verksamhet från *Den Svenska Historien* till *Sveriges Historia*.
26. Hedegaard, Joel (2014). The production and maintenance of inequalities in health care: A communicative perspective.
27. Danielsson, Martin (2014). Digitala distinktioner. Klass och kontinuitet i unga mäns vardagliga mediepraktiker.
28. Bergmo Prvulovic, Ingela (2015). Social Representations of Career and Career Guidance in the Changing World of Working Life.

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# Social Representations of Career and Career Guidance

in the Changing World of Working Life

INGELA BERGMO PRVULOVIC

This thesis explores the meaning of career as a phenomenon and its implication for career guidance. In 1996, career was more or less considered an obsolete or even extinct phenomenon. Since then, career guidance has received increased attention alongside an increased interest in lifelong learning strategies. This thesis is motivated by the paradoxical message of career as an extinct yet living phenomenon.

Career is outlined as a bridging issue that involves several contexts and is characterized by a number of dominating discourses in tension with one another. Two educational fields linked by career are of particular interest: the field of education and training in working life and the field of career guidance counselling. The meaning of career is explored among a triad of interested parties in this time of transition in the world of working life, and it explores the sense in which such understanding(s) of career influence policies and practices of career guidance. The thesis is based upon four separate studies.

The first study explores, in order to disclose underlying views on career, how the language of European policy documents on career guidance characterize career and career development. The second study pays attention to the receiving side of the ideational message disclosed in the first study and extends the analysis of the first study with an exploration of ethical declaration documents for the profession. Similarities and differences between the initial and revised ethical declaration are compared, combined with the first study's results as an interpretive frame for analyzing the potential consequences and significance of the core meaning of career at structural level for career guidance practice. The third study explores common-sense knowledge, that is, social representations of career, among a group of people influenced by changing conditions in working life. The study also explores how people's anchored representations reflect scientifically shaped thoughts, and how they relate to currently dominating discourses on structural level. The fourth study explores guidance counsellors' social representations of their mission and of career therein.

The empirical findings of the four studies are interpreted as a whole in the final section of this thesis. With support from social representations theory, the empirical findings illuminate the sources as bearers of social representations of career that both meet and clash.



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