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**Book Review: *Handbook of Life Design:  
From practice to theory and from theory  
to practice*. Ed. by Laura Nota, & Jerome Rossier  
(Toronto: Hogrefe, 2015), pp. 297**

*Life design* is a relatively new paradigm in career counselling, responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century. It departs from the person-environment fit models and models based on developmental theories. Instead, it focuses on the narrative approach and aims to find meaning in individual stories. Life design assigns a key role to identity and to the search for clients' "selves." The client-counsellor relationship is based on interaction and co-constructing realities (Duarte, 2014).

Life design puts an emphasis on the individual's active role in a world in which the only constant is constant change, and one needs to respond quickly to social, economic and political transformations. Interestingly, the direction in which our society would develop was foreseen already in the early twentieth century, for instance, by Elbert Hubbard, who stated that "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it" (Esar, 1951).

Uncertainty and instability are associated with a loss of the sense of security but may also prompt an optimistic belief in the possibilities and opportunities for development waiting just around the corner. Career no longer consists of a predictable sequence of events. It is rather a complicated process, full of sudden twists and difficult decisions to be made repetitively. It is inherently connected with other spheres of the person's life, and it is embedded in a certain social, family, cultural or economic context. Hence, there is a need to develop and strengthen clients' universal competences, which would help them not only to construct careers and respond to changes in the labour market, but also to "construct life" so that its various spheres interact harmoniously.

Since the Life Design paradigm was first described in a widely quoted article by Mark Savickas and colleagues (Savickas et al., 2009), it has been reflected in the work of career counselling researchers worldwide. An interest in this subject is also

evident in the works of Polish authors. Specific suggestions on how to include the Life Design paradigm into practice, adapted to Polish realities (e.g. Minta, 2012), seem most valuable to me.

For a few years, however, there was no study that would synthesise all the theoretical concepts underlying the paradigm of Life Design and comprehensively discuss the still very fresh movement in career counselling. The reviewed volume perfectly fills this gap.

*Handbook of Life Design: From Practice to Theory and from Theory to Practice* was published in 2015 by Hogrefe Publishing. The volume, collecting works of over twenty-five leading researchers working in the Life Design framework, was edited by Laura Notes and Jerome Rossier.

Laura Nota is a professor at the University of Padova, Director of LaRIOS, President of the Italian Association of Counselling (SIO), member of the Executive Boards of prestigious scientific associations (ESVDC, division 16 of IAAPA) and of the Steering Committee of NICE (University Network for Innovation and Guidance) as well as a scientific coordinator of the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling.

Jerome Rossier is a full professor at the University of Lausanne. He has extensive international experience in, primarily, vocational counselling psychology, psychological assessment, personality and cross-cultural psychology. He is the editor of *Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance* and member of the editorial boards of several other major scientific journals.

The reviewed handbook is an outcome of untiring work performed by the Life Design International Research Group – an international group of scholars focused on research and development of training models and interventions aligned with the Life Design paradigm, established in 2006.

The authors of the handbook aim to present a conceptual framework of Life Design paradigm and to demonstrate its practical applications.

The book consists of three parts. In the first one, titled “The Life Design Paradigm” the theoretical background of the trend is discussed.

In the first chapter of this part, Jean Guichard outlines the economic, cultural and social perspective of past decades and explains how global changes necessitated a paradigm shift in career counselling. The author points out that every person has a certain “capital of competencies.” Individuals decide whether to invest it in one or another professional development project. They actively construct their lives and manage them. Guichard presents three types of interventions: information, guidance and dialogue. He considers life design dialogue the most valuable method of developing reflexivity and giving meaning to one’s life.

The second chapter, authored by Andreas Hirschi and Jean-Pierre Dauwalder, addresses the dynamics of career development both from an individual’s and an organisational perspective. The authors note how complex the present professional reality is and how rapid and unexpected changes may it go through. Therefore,

they recommend interventions based on the Life Design model, which indeed take this dynamics into account. They are focused on the individual in context and aim to work on the relationship between the person and the environment.

In the third chapter Maria Eduarda Duarte and Pablo Cordoso explore the gap between the rapidly changing theories and counselling practice. They highlight the complexity of the counselling process and dilemmas experienced by practitioners. The authors encourage reflecting on and looking for links between theoretical models and their practical application.

The fourth chapter of the first part, authored by Jacques Pouyaud, is a synthesis of four complementary concepts (Savickas's theory of career design, Malrieu's active socialisation approach, the Contextual Action model by Young and colleagues and the self-constructing career model by Guichard). The author tries to integrate these approaches, proposing a common model of career construction, which can be a basis for guidance activities. He also presents an interesting metaphor of professional identity construction.

In the fifth chapter, Mark Watson and Mary McMahon draw attention to the fact that recent theoretical concepts in career counselling are derived from well-established constructivist models. They analyse the convergence between the Life Design paradigm and the Systems Theory Framework (STF) and propose to integrate them in counselling practice.

The second part, titled "Life Design Across the Lifespan" presents suggestions on how to apply Life Design counselling models to different age groups. The authors discuss a number of possible interventions tailored for children (Chapter 1 by Paul Hartung), adolescents (Chapter 2 by Gudbjorg Vilhjamsdottir), young adults in the school-to-work transition (Chapter 3 by Jon Masdonati and Genevieve Fournier) and adults (Chapter 4 by Mark L. Savickas). The authors analyse specific needs arising from the social and developmental circumstances accompanying different stages of life. They pay attention to the processes and competencies that should be promoted in various phases of career construction. Theoretical considerations are augmented with case studies and examples from the authors' professional experience.

This part of the book will be, in my opinion, of particular interest to practitioners who want to refresh their toolkits or to look at their practice from a different perspective. They will find in it not only conceptual considerations but also practical tips.

The third, last part ("Life Design Interventions and Activities") contains descriptions of Life Design interventions that lead to enhancing certain universal competences both in clients and in counsellors. The chapter describes also how to apply Life Design when working with groups at risk of exclusion.

In the first chapter, Jerome Rossier introduces the construct of career adaptability as a set of resources that help individuals deal with uncertainty and professional problems, make decisions and adapt to their environments. The author

insists that effective interventions should focus on fostering and promoting these competencies.

The second chapter is written by Raoul Van Esbroeck and Marie-Therese Augustijnen. It points out some practical aspects of applying Life Design and notes that the practice of counselling in line with this approach often requires changing the way of thinking and using familiar tools differently. The authors also analyse coaching as a widely used working method and postulate that it should be considered a separate type of intervention, located between education and counselling. They describe two interesting examples of such applications in career counselling practice.

The third chapter by Laura Nota, Maria Cristina Ginevry and Sandra Santilli presents the ways of employing the Life Design paradigm in preventive interventions, which focus on preparing clients for future changes, crises and career decisions. The authors propose some counselling activities that can be carried out with children, their parents and their families as well as at schools.

The authors of chapter four – Annelies Van Vianen, Jessie Koen, Ute-Christine Klehe – focus on counselling activities addressed to the unemployed clients. The Conservation of Resources Theory and the Life Design approach provide a starting point for identifying the assets and values that help clients cope with unemployment stints, career changes or uncertainties. The authors offer also some suggestions on how to work with clients to develop these resources.

In the next chapter, Lea Ferrari, Teresa Maria Sgaramella and Salvatore Sorelli insist that Life Design can be a useful approach when designing interventions aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market. They point out how important it is in such interventions to take into account all aspects of the clients' functioning (family, friends, environment, relationships) rather than only those directly related to career. The authors highlight the importance of promoting diversity and changing irrational beliefs about work activities of people with impairments.

The author the sixth chapter – Jacobus G. Maree – goes beyond the confines of the Western world, presenting an intervention programme that was successfully realised in the impoverished province of Limpopo (South Africa). The Life Design project, based on the development of career adaptability and coping with change, turned out to be helpful in re-constructing the local community's life.

The seventh chapter analyses the Life Design paradigm from a multicultural perspective. Hsiu-Lan Tien indicates which counselling competencies are crucial in working in the Life Design approach and which are particularly relevant when working with in culturally diverse communities.

The theme of professional competencies is continued in the last chapter of this section, in which Peter McIlveen describes the core competencies: the ethic of critical reflexivity and the dialogical interpretation. The author underscores the need

for continued training and updating the knowledge of Life Design counsellors and recommends developing widely available training programs.

The handbook is consistent and intelligibly written. The understandable, clear and well-organised construction of particular sections makes it easy for the reader to find interesting content. In my opinion, the volume meets the goals indicated by the authors. It presents the Life Design paradigm in a broad perspective. The authors do not limit themselves to conceptual analysis of this approach but also show examples of practical interventions addressed to diverse client groups. I think the *Handbook of Life Design* is definitely a worthwhile reading for, primarily, career counselling researchers and students. However, it will also be useful to practitioners who want to keep up with the latest theoretical concepts.

Both reading a whole book and focusing on selected chapters will help better understand the newest trends in modern career counselling. The handbook will surely inspire practitioners to update and expand their tools and methods. It shows the possibilities of using the Life Design approach in a variety of contexts. It encourages reflecting on one's own practice, verifying the methods used and working on the relationship with the client based on authenticity and reciprocal exchange of experiences. Case studies, descriptions of methods and precise guidelines make the new paradigm in career counselling clear and understandable.

*Handbook of Life Design* is certainly a recommendable reading to all those who want to keep up-to-date with the latest trends in career counselling. It offers readers a solid theoretical basis, some interesting research findings and descriptions of practical applications. I think it will satisfy both researchers and students interested in vocational guidance as well as career counsellors who want to develop their work, adapting it to the necessities of modern times.

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