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# **What career and life design interventions may contribute to global, humane, equitable and sustainable development?**

Most of the career and life design interventions designed since the end of the 19th century were only employability guidance. Given the extent of contemporary crises (threats to our ecosystem, increased wealth inequality, decent work deficit, mass emigration, etc.) produced by the current forms of work organization and exchange, interventions supporting the design of active lives, contributing to global, humane, equitable and sustainable development, must now be created. Their objectives would stand in accordance with the programmes of major international organizations (notably the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). They would refer to the fundamental ethical imperative of “directing one’s active live in such a way that it helps all human beings to live well, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth”. From this imperative one may derive a principle of ecological subsidiarity consisting of giving priority to local or regional productions having a smaller ecological footprint than more distant ones. These interventions would take the form of a new career education for young people, workshops for collectives wishing to establish local exchange systems and counselling dialogues supporting the reflections of individuals on their construction of active lives based on such ethical principles. Such a programme, however, can only succeed if it is supported by the institution of an international law regulating the issues of work and exchange of its products.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, decent work, social justice, human dignity, career education, counselling dialogues, active life, imperative of responsibility, LETS

## **Introduction**

The conjunction of the liberal economic system (Smith, 1776) and impressive technological progress has, among other consequences, transformed industria-

lized nations into societies of individuals (Elias, 1987), that is, collectives where each individual is supposed to be responsible for the conduct of their active life.

From the second industrial revolution on (an outcome of the use of oil and electricity), this task was considered so complex that some interventions begun to be designed for helping people face it (Richards, 1881; Parsons, 1909). These interventions, however, did not focus on the fundamental existential question: "By what kind of active life might I give a meaning and a perspective to my existence?" They translated this question into the language of the dominant forms of work organization (for example, "What occupation would be right for me?"), thus reducing the issue of future planning aimed at the attribution of meaning to one's active life to a problem of professional inclusion. Since the very beginning and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most career and life design interventions were only employability guidance (Guichard, 2018a, this issue).

The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by the conjunction of important technological advances (following, in particular, the development of Information Technology) and the formation of financial capitalism (based on the search for quick and considerable profits, and not, like "classic" capitalism, on generating medium term income based on sustainable investments) (Marazzi, 2010; Hudson, 2012). This conjunction led to an economic globalization that profoundly changed not only employment in the industrialized societies, but also the societies themselves. They became "liquid" (Bauman, 2000): i.e. societies where transformations were (and are) so diverse and rapid that social representations, collective beliefs, large value systems, etc., no longer have time to solidify. As a result, individuals no longer find stable benchmarks to which they could refer to direct their lives. Uncertain (Bauman, 2007) and apprehensive (Beck, 1992; Palmade, 2003) about the future, many of them wonder about what could give meaning and direction to their active life. In this context, life design interventions began to be developed in order to support the individuals in their reflection (Savickas et al., 2009; Savickas, 2011; Guichard, 2008, 2018b; Guichard et al., 2017).

The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by a growing awareness of the serious global crises threatening our ecosystem: global warming, extinction of natural species, pollution, sea level rising, increased inequality of wealth, development of non-decent working conditions, etc. (ILO, 2001, UN, 2015, OECD, 2015). This awareness is manifested by questions formed by a growing number of citizens of the richest nations about the contribution of their lifestyles (including their professional activities) to the development of these crises (Arnsperger, 2009, 2011; Bourg et al., 2016; Hunyadi, 2015). Such questions are at the core of the reflections which some people have during life design dialogues.

These dialogues, as well as other life design interventions, do not presuppose that an active life necessarily takes the form of incorporation into the currently dominant systems of work organization and exchange. As a result, they allow people to reflect upon the forms of work organization and exchange in which

they wish to engage and thus to focus their reflection on the question of their contribution to the resolution of serious current global crises. They allow it, but do not make it an ethical imperative. Is it enough, given high stakes of these global crises? Would not it be appropriate to go beyond this simple possibility, given the scale of these crises and the urgent need for solutions? Is it not essential to design and implement career and life design interventions that support people in building active lives that contribute to global, humane, equitable and sustainable development?

This article develops an argument in favour of a positive answer to this question. It supports the idea of an in-depth renewal of career and life design interventions. They would no longer be based on the final purpose, which most of them had since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (economic growth of current production and exchange systems), but on a new one – namely, the one defined by the major international institutions (UN, 2015): a universal, humane, equitable and sustainable development. Moreover, this paper investigates the objectives and methodology of some of the career and life design interventions designed for this purpose. The argumentation is organized in three stages. First, the article presents an overview of the crises of today's world. Next, it describes the contribution of the currently dominant forms of work organization and exchange to the origins of these crises; a reminder of the critique of these work organization and exchange systems formulated during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries indicates, that they are still relevant, but must now be supplemented with a new critique based on the principle of universal, just and sustainable human development. Finally, the article outlines the ideas of constructing career and life design interventions which, taking into account these critiques, will help individuals and collectives to design and build active lives contributing to such development.

## **1. The world in crisis**

The main crisis of today's world – the crisis of our ecosystem – is the product of the conjunction of the significant growth of the world's population and the overconsumption of certain subpopulations. This combination leads to the depletion of natural resources and to generation of such amounts of waste that nature cannot regenerate in the time equivalent to the pace of their production. This phenomenon can be illustrated with a couple of figures. It was only in 1850 that the Earth's population reached the first billion of people. But only two centuries will be necessary for this number to increase tenfold: the world's population is expected to have reached around ten billion by 2050. Today, half of it consists of young people under thirty. In 2012, nine out of ten of them lived in “developing” countries, that is, in the parts of the world that usually offer little hope for their future.

The increase in the world's population is combined with overconsumption by the richest. As a result, the exploitation of natural resources has increased considerably. According to the non-governmental organization the Global Footprint Network, since 1987, the needs of mankind have exceeded nature's annual capacity to replenish natural resources and absorb waste (especially CO<sup>2</sup>). According to this organization, the situation is deteriorating year by year. Thus, on August 2, 2017, humanity consumed all the resources that the planet could generate that year and produced as much waste as it could regenerate in the same amount of time. In other words, the survival of the human species in the remaining five months of 2017 was based on the consumption and destruction of our ecological capital. The carbon dioxide which could not be absorbed, continued to accumulate in the atmosphere.

However, there are considerable differences in terms of (over)consumption depending on the regions of the world. The 2017 Global Footprint Network report notes, for example, that if all humans lived like Luxembourgers or Qatari, human species would need to use the resources of more than 7 "Earths". Conversely, if the way of life of all humans was that of the Indians, 0.6 of the Earth would suffice (Garric, 2017). These dissimilarities are related to considerable differences within these populations: the richest Indians live like the richest Luxembourgers; the poorest Luxembourgers live like average Indians.

The problems posed by these inequalities of wealth, and especially by their strong growth, have resulted in the publication of many alarming books and official reports over the last decade: Piketty, 2013; Badie, Vidal, 2015; Stiglitz, 2015; OECD, 2015; OXFAM, 2017, 2018; FAO, 2017; World Wealth and Income Database, 2018; etc. Polarization of the distribution of wealth produced through work is manifested, to an extreme extent, by the increase in the number of malnourished people in the world. For example, 2017 report of the United Nations Agriculture and Food Organization (FAO, 2017) notes that "global hunger is on the rise again, affecting 815 million people in 2016 (...), 38 million more people than in the previous year". In 2016, 11% of the world's population was starving.

At the other extreme, studies point out that

Since 2015, more than half of this [world] wealth has been in the hands of the richest 1% of people. At the very top, this year's data finds that, collectively, the richest eight individuals have a net wealth of \$426bn, which is the same as the net wealth of the bottom half of humanity (OXFAM, 2017, p. 9).

The 2018 OXFAM report (presented on January 22, at the Congress of Political and Economic Leaders in Davos) is titled "Reward work not wealth". It focuses on the following issues:

The richest 1 percent bagged 82 percent of wealth created last year – the poorest half of humanity (3.7 billion people) got nothing. Billionaire wealth has risen by an annual average of 13 percent since 2010 – six times faster than the wages

of ordinary workers, which have risen by a yearly average of just 2 percent. The number of billionaires rose at an unprecedented rate of one every two days between March 2016 and March 2017. It takes just four days for a CEO from one of the top five global fashion brands to earn what a Bangladeshi garment worker will earn in her lifetime. In the US, it takes slightly over one working day for a CEO to earn what an ordinary worker makes in a year. It would cost \$2.2 billion a year to increase the wages of all 2.5 million Vietnamese garment workers to a living wage. This is about a third of the amount paid out to wealthy shareholders by the top 5 companies in the garment sector in 2016.

Many academics have studied the phenomenon of polarization of the work products distribution. For example, in 2013, Thomas Piketty demonstrated that this inequality grew year by year at such a speed that there emerged a considerable imbalance. The contemporary situation is summarized in the report of the World Wealth and Income Database (2018) published on December 14, 2017. This report includes the work of roughly 100 academic economists analysing data from 70 countries around the world. The two titles chosen by the newspaper *Le Monde* on December 15, 2017 summarized them in the following way: “Inequalities: a global threat. The gaps in wealth are widening everywhere”, “Inequalities explode. Political instability threatens”.

The threat of political instability is highlighted by some international organizations. For instance, on the website of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, one can read that

income inequality has reached record highs in most OECD countries and remains at even higher levels in many emerging economies. The richest 10 per cent of the population in the OECD now earn 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10 per cent, up from 7:1 in the 1980s (...) We have reached a tipping point. Inequality in OECD countries is at its highest since records began (...) By not addressing inequality, governments are cutting into the social fabric of their countries and hurting their long-term economic growth (OECD, 2015).

Moreover, OECD

highlights the need to address working conditions. An increasing share of people working part-time, on temporary contracts or self-employed is one important driver of growing inequality. Between 1995 and 2013, more than 50 per cent of all jobs created in OECD countries fell into these categories” (OECD, 2015).

These OECD observations of a causal relationship between the “working conditions” and the accelerated growth of increasingly acute inequalities between a small group of affluent people and a mass of poor people (in the richest OECD economies!) suggest, more generally, the role of these “working conditions” in other current global crises. Indeed, the “ecological” crises that are the centre of interest of the political arena appear to be the consequences of the previous ones, and, in particular, of the combination of the growth pattern of today’s industrial production and the extreme inequality in the distribution of goods and

services within a rapidly growing world population. The crises that threaten our ecosystem (pollution, global warming, sea level rising, extinction of natural species, increasing scarcity of drinking water, etc.) are intricate, as revealed by the so-called natural or industrial disasters in the form of which the crises frequently manifest themselves. In order to describe this entanglement, Ulrich Beck (1992) proposed the concept of the “risk society”. The risks result from the combination of geopolitical, economic and ecological issues. They may be, for example, a consequence of population groupings in regions threatened by the multiplication of the so-called “natural” disasters linked to climate change (floods, typhoons, etc.). They may also originate in industrial relocations in countries where regulations - notably labour law - are non-existent or loosely enforced. The disaster of the pesticide production subsidiary of the American company “Union Carbide” in Bhopal (India) in 1984 may serve as the prototype case here. Officially, it caused death of 7575 people. However, according to the victims’ associations, the total death toll amounted to between 20 000 and 25 000.

These different observations lead, therefore, to the formulation of the following hypothesis: What the OECD calls “working conditions” (that is, the current forms of work organization, its global distribution and that of the wealth it produces) plays a crucial role not only in the growth of inequalities of wealth and consumption, but also in all the problems that have just been mentioned and, especially, in those grouped under the heading of ecological or environmental crises. Therefore, examining this hypothesis implies developing new critical perspectives on work, its organization and its exchange, extending those conceived at the beginning of industrial societies, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2. Towards the third criticism of the dominant work organization and exchange systems**

Since the first industrial revolution (related to the invention of the steam engine), the system of work organization and the distribution of its products gave rise to the formulation of harsh criticisms of their impact on the lives of workers and their families. These criticisms were developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They formed what Alain Supiot (2002) called “the Spirit of Philadelphia”. As indicated in the subsequent paragraphs, this spirit is far from having lost its relevance. It neglects, however, the threats that current forms of work, as well as circulation and distribution of goods and services, pose for our ecosystem. Criticisms of the past two centuries must therefore be prolonged by a new one, constitutive of a renewed *Spirit of Philadelphia*. It is with reference to this final purpose, different from those pursued before, that new types of career and life design interventions can be designed.

## 2.1 Two critical views on work in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century

Most critiques of the forms of work organization and exchange of its products that developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century originated in one of the most successful analyses of this mode of production and exchange: the theory of alienation that was developed, notably in the 1844 manuscripts, by Karl Marx (Marx, 1996). Marx based his critique on the observation that, in the capitalist mode of production, workers are mere agents of production in companies that do not belong to them. As a result, they lose much of their power to act as autonomous subjects. They are forced to comply with the production targets imposed on them. In return, they receive only a part of the monetary value of their work; the owners of the means of production retain what Marx would name in “the Capital” the “surplus value”. In the 1844 Manuscripts, Marx emphasized the concept of alienation. It included various dimensions, the main of which was that the capitalist mode of work organization dehumanizes the worker by depriving them of an essential characteristic of the human species: that of fulfilling themselves (=realizing their human nature) in the production of work that constitutes, in their own eyes, the objectification of what they are. In such a situation, work becomes only a means of subsistence, the object of which is estranged (*entfremdet*) from the worker. As an extension of Marx’s analyses, two main lines of critique of the dominant forms of work organization and exchange were developed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They focused on economic alienation (appropriation of the surplus value) or on the alienation of human development, though to a lesser extent than Marx did. The first current led to the definition of the notion of decent work. The second led to the construction of the concept of humane work and the current reflection on suffering at work.

### – Decent work

The current that, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, made it possible to define the concept of decent work, originated in the horrors of the First World War, or, more precisely, in the Treaty of Versailles (1919) by which the war ended. The thirteenth part of this treaty concerns work. It states that “the League of Nations [created by this Treaty] has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice” (p. 227). Since “conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship, and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled” (p. 227), “an improvement of those conditions is urgently required: as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness,

disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, organisation of vocational and technical education and other measures” (p. 227). Moreover, observing that “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries” (p. 227)<sup>1</sup>, contracting parties established a permanent organization – International Labour Organization (ILO) - in charge of further implementation of this project.

The development of this critical current was marked, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by several important events, such as the Declaration of Philadelphia adopted unanimously on May 10, 1944 at the 26<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the International Labour Organization. Its first article reminds that

labour is not a commodity; freedom of expression and of association are essential to sustained progress; poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere; the war against want requires to be carried on with unrelenting vigour within each nation, and by continuous and concerted international effort in which the representatives of workers and employers, enjoying equal status with those of governments, join with them in free discussion and democratic decision with a view to the promotion of the common welfare.

The Declaration of Philadelphia was reinforced in 1948 by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 23, which states that

everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment; everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work; everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection; everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24 specifies, in particular, that “everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay”. Articles 25 and 26 specify rights to social protection and education (and, specifically, to vocational training).

The main contemporary outcome of this critical trend was the ILO’s definition of the notion of decent work (ILO 2001, 2006, 2008, 2014a, b, 2015a, b, 2016, 2017). This expression appeared in 1999, in the report presented by the Director-General to the 87<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference. For the ILO, decent work

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<sup>1</sup> The original text of the *Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany* retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/must000002-0043.pdf>, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versailles.html> (4.03.2018).

sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO, 2015b).

All of these considerations about current forms of work and its exchange – and especially the definition of decent work – manifest the principle on which the critique of this current is based. It is the principle of the global social justice, considered as the necessary condition for establishment of universal peace. This principle can be summarized with the phrase that President Obama uttered in his final speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 20, 2016: “A world in which one percent of humanity controls as much wealth as the other 99 percent will never be stable”. The world peace presupposes the implementation of a universal social justice programme, where, on the one hand, the wealth produced by labour is distributed equitably, and, on the other hand, everyone can enjoy social security, as well as good working conditions and education. This idea was already at the heart of the Treaty of Versailles, written a century earlier, at a time when inequalities of wealth were less pronounced. This observation raises a triple question: Why, within a century, no progress seems to have been made? What should be done to make progress in this area? Can career and life design interventions contribute to this progress?

The following sections of this article will attempt to answer these questions. However, it seems important to first highlight the essential points of another critical look at the dominant forms of work organization and exchange.

### – Humane work

This critique was voiced by certain sociologists and psychologists of work, ergonomists and psychoanalysts. Among these authors we can cite, limiting ourselves to some of the French contributors to this trend, Georges Friedmann (1950, 1964), Pierre Naville (1956), Alain Touraine (1965), Andre Gorz (1988), Christophe Dejours (2000, 2009), Michel Lallement (2007). Relying more on Marx’s considerations of alienation than on the consequences of unequal distribution of labour products, these authors developed their analyses based on the concept of “humane work”. This expression was chosen as a title of a French leading scientific journal of occupational psychology. It was founded in 1933 by Jean Maurice Lahy and Henri Laugier. It is probably not a coincidence that the latter participated in the preparation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover, the work of Georges Friedmann, “*Où va le travail humain?*” (*Where is human work going?*), had a significant impact on a large audience when it was published in 1950.

For researchers in this critical tradition, the fundamental opposition is not between “decent work” and “non-decent work”, but between work which either supports or, on the contrary, obstructs human development of the worker. Their fundamental questions concern the impact of forms of work organization on workers: Do some types of work organization promote self-realization (for example, by giving workers the opportunity to use and develop their talents)? On the other hand, do other modes of work organization tend to dehumanise people, reducing them to a quasi-animal condition? Do they put worker’s lives in danger? What types of representations of the world, of others, and of themselves do workers construct when they are employed in labour organizations of one kind or another? How do they cope with the demands of their occupational situation? Does it lead them to the construction of certain defence mechanisms? To summarize, it can be stated that the principle determining this critique is that of working conditions respecting human dignity, that is to say, providing each worker with the opportunity to maintain their health, to develop their human potentialities (in particular: their talents) and to build themselves as a citizen of a democratic, fully humane world.

## **2.2 Topicality of the concepts of decent and humane work**

The development of global financial capitalism (Marazzi, 2010; Hudson, 2012), the technological progress related notably to computer science (and to the growing robotization of production), as well as the development of inexpensive modes of transport (including container ships) had a significant impact on work, employment and our ecosystem in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Alain Supiot, the holder of the Collège de France Chair in *The Social State and Globalization: A Legal Analysis of Forms of Solidarity*, demonstrates in “The Spirit of Philadelphia: Social Justice Vs. the Total Market” that these developments were made possible through the global subscription, initiated by the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1980s, in an ultra-liberal economic doctrine (which some call the “Washington Consensus”, thus referring to the ideological agreement between the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the US President Ronald Reagan). This ultra-liberal doctrine has sought to systematically destroy what Alain Supiot calls the spirit of Philadelphia, that is, the concept of equal dignity of all human beings and global social justice that underpinned it, as well as the economic and social programmes they inspired.

Analysing various founding texts that constitute the spirit of Philadelphia (the 1944 ILO Declaration, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations), Alain Supiot demonstrated that all of them were based on the affirmation of the same fundamental principle: the “inherent dignity of all members of the human family is (...) the foundation of freedom,

justice and peace in the world” (Supiot, 2010, p. 22). This principle of dignity “obliges us to bind the imperatives of freedom and security. To be free to speak and believe, human beings must experience physical and economic security” (Supiot, 2010, p. 23). “This connection between freedom of the mind and security of the body leads to the subordination of the economic organization to the principle of social justice” (Supiot, 2010, p. 23).

It is against this subordination that one of the eminent representatives of the ultra-liberal ideology, Friedrich A. Von Hayek, advocated, notably in his work, published in 1981, “Law, Legislation and Liberty: A New Statement of the Liberal Principles of Justice and Political Economy. Volume II. The Mirage of Social Justice”. According to Von Hayek, as noted by Supiot (2010), it is appropriate to eliminate regulatory barriers to the free play of markets. The common good results from free international competition. This implies competition not only between workers but also between national laws and cultures. The definition of the rights of each individual would not need to refer to a principle of justice that transcends them, but could only proceed from the mutual interaction of the differences and conflicts (Supiot, 2010, p. 47). Therefore, the basic principles of the international law (equal dignity of all human beings and social justice) are to be banned. Supiot stresses that all international commercial treaties, as well as those reforming the organization of the European Union since the 1980s, have gradually replaced the legal concepts developed from the spirit of Philadelphia with those constituting the ultra-liberal doctrine (examples: the Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, as opposed to the Treaty of Rome, 1957; the Marrakesh Agreement of April 15, 1994, founding the World Trade Organization).

As for work organization and exchange, one of the central ideas of the ultra-liberal ideology is what Milton Friedman summed up in an article in the New York Times Magazine (September 13, 1970, p. 17), where he wrote, “There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits”. The spread of this ideology has led to the destruction of many jobs in countries with industrial traditions and a labour law ensuring protection of workers. The goods they produced (clothing, electronics, electrical appliances, etc.) are now manufactured in the parts of the world where the absence (or the lack of application) of such a law allows extremely competitive production costs. Daudin and Lévassieur (2005) estimate, for example, that between 1 and 1.5 million of industrial jobs were destroyed in France between 1980 and 2002. In the richest countries, there have now evolved the forms of work, which slip away from the labour regulations and the social protection of workers. In Europe, this is the case of “detached workers”. There have also emerged various types of extremely precarious employment contracts (such as “zero-hours” contracts in the UK, or “one-euro” jobs in Germany), or the imposition by companies of the status of auto-entrepreneurs (self-employed) to persons whose only “customer” is the company itself. In many companies,

the engagement of “peripheral employees” or “trainees” has become the norm. The reinforcement of “core employee” teams takes place when economic conditions are good; they are dismissed when the conditions deteriorate (Gordon, Edwards, Reich, 1982; Lewin, 2005). Most workers – including those highly qualified – are now operating in extreme conditions of flexibility. No longer having a sustainable and precise professional function, they must organize themselves within the framework of teams of colleagues to reach the production objectives assigned to the team, for which each individual is claimed to be personally responsible. Therefore, the activities of each worker vary according to the objectives to be attained, the production techniques and the tasks that the other members of the team can perform. These flexible modes of work and employment organization are often combined with individual assessment procedures which result in situations of fierce competition between the workers (Sennett 1998; Linhart 2011, 2015).

These various phenomena have been exacerbated during the last decades by the progress of the robotization of production. Robots are increasingly able to perform complex tasks in their entirety. For instance, two Oxford researchers, Carl Frey and Michael Osborne, calculated in 2013 that 47% of US jobs were at high risk of automation over the next two decades. Few people are required to develop software and create robots that replace much larger workforce. According to the article published in “Economie et Entreprise”, the supplement to the newspaper “Le Monde”, white-collar workers are as threatened by advances in technology as supermarket cashiers. Two economists at the University of Chicago, Loukas Karabarbounis and Brent Neiman, have shown that between 2000 and 2012 in the United States, the unemployment rate of skilled employees doubled (Miller, 2016). All of these technological developments, therefore, seem to reduce the need for workforce, while nearly 4 billion people are currently under thirty.

In such global context, employees find themselves in a situation of very unfavourable global mutual competition (including competition within the company that employs them). Never have the concepts of “decent work” and “humane work” been so topical, as shown in prolific work published in recent years relating to the precarious conditions of employment and existence (Dejours, 2000; Paugam, 2000; Cingolani, 2005; Blanc, 2007; Linhart, 2011; Standing, 2011; Roquefort, 2012). However, in the context of global success of the neo-liberal doctrine and the new global distribution of paid work that it stimulates, these concepts can no longer allow any improvement in working conditions if they do not give rise – contrary to what the neo-liberal ideology advocates – to the establishment of a Universal Law imposing humane and decent working conditions. Inhumane and non-decent forms of employment are indeed less expensive than those respecting these principles. As we have noted, a century ago, the Treaty of Versailles already emphasised that “the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to

improve the conditions in their own countries”. The introduction of such a law and its worldwide application - in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - would imply the establishment of an international organization with the power to legislate and enforce such regulations. This could become the mission of the ILO. It would imply change in the statutes of this international tripartite organization because, since its creation, it has only been intended to carry out investigations and make recommendations concerning work.

### **2.3 Active life based on the ethical imperative of equitable responsibility**

The principle of competing for national rights defended by the Washington Consensus, as well as the rapid search for considerable profits by financial capitalism, the development of which is supported by this consensus, encourage the implementation of tax optimization strategies, allowing the use of tax havens. As a result, the companies concerned do not contribute to the development of the countries in which they operate (Migaud et al., 2009). Such economic organization has, moreover, major consequences related to the nature of production. Rapid rise in profits drives breeding of genetically modified animals, proliferation of “junk food”, design and sales of devices whose obsolescence is programmed, etc.

However, the principles of social justice and equal human dignity, on which the concepts of decent and humane work are based, neither emphasize this type of consequences of the currently dominant forms of work organization and exchange, nor highlight the ecological, environmental and human crises (global warming, pollution, migration and refugees, etc.) that they produce.

Thereby, the introduction of the Universal Labour Law would not suffice to deal with the crises, the importance and acuity of which were emphasized in the first part of the article. A new principle must therefore be defined: this principle would be the basis of a critique of work that would both stress the deleterious consequences of the dominant forms of work organization and exchange, and propose alternative forms in view of solving the current eco-systemic and human crises. Such a principle could allow, on the one hand, the establishment of public policies and, on the other hand, the specification of the final purpose of career and life design interventions.

Such a principle could be defined by combining central propositions of the two major thinkers of 20<sup>th</sup> century ethics: Paul Ricoeur and Hans Jonas (Guichard, 2016a, b). Ricoeur (1992, p. 351) stated that ethical intention is “to live well with and for others in just institutions”. Jonas, in turn, formulated (1979, 1985, 2005) “the Imperative of Responsibility” constituting “an ethics for technological civilization”. This imperative is the following: “act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life on Earth”

(1985, p. 11). The combination of these two ethical principles makes it possible to define an ethical norm that can be applied, on the one hand, to the evaluation of public policies, and, on the other hand, to each individual's "government" of their active life. It may be formulated in the following way: "May each person lead their active life in such a way that their work, its products and the modes of its exchange, contribute to the development of a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth".

Given the gravity of contemporary global crises, this norm should currently be the basis of reflection of all political and economic leaders, as well as all those who have the capacity to act in the scope of work organization and product-exchange systems. This standard requires them to systematically ask the following question: Does the political, economic, social, organizational, etc., decision that I am (or we are) taking, foster or hinder the development of active lives contributing to the development of a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth?

The same norm should also be the basis of thinking of all the world's citizens, reflecting on the direction they wish to give to their active lives. For researchers and practitioners of career counselling, the question therefore arises about the interventions which should be chosen to help them.

### **3. The imperative: to prepare individuals and collectives to build active lives that contribute to humane, equitable and sustainable development**

More than ten years ago, Peter Plant was already writing that

the role of guidance practitioners goes beyond that of exploring self and opportunity. It poses questions to globalisation and it questions economic growth as an end in itself. We could call this Green Guidance. Thus, career guidance enters into the risky areas of social change. How far can guidance go in terms of being an agent for social and economic change, a Trojan horse in a society that salutes globalization and capitalism? (2005, p. XIV).

Peter Plant's question is rhetorical. Given the role of the dominant forms of work organization and exchange (which are determined by the demands of global financial capitalism based on the Washington Consensus) in contemporary global crises, it calls for only one answer: career and life design interventions must now contribute to equitable and sustainable economic and human development. The stakes of these crises are indeed so high that, during the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 September 2015, all Heads of State and Government adopted a resolution titled, ambitiously: "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". One of the consequences of this unanimous endorsement is to urge researchers and practitioners of career

and life design interventions to ask themselves by which methodologies they may achieve specific objectives that correspond to such an imperative. What interventions should be designed to prepare individuals and collectives to design active lives that contribute to equitable and sustainable human development by 2030?

In order to address these questions, the researchers and practitioners may rely on the following double observation. On the one hand, as Hannah Arendt (1958) has pointed out, active life is a fundamental anthropological characteristic. Through their work activities and the interactions and exchanges these activities involve, human beings become what they are and contribute to the creation of a certain human world. The human species is *homo faber* (Bergson, 1907). However, on the other hand, this active life of *homo faber* has produced, as has already been indicated, the current global financial capitalism and the harmful forms of work organization and exchange. Thus, alleviating current global crises requires developing new forms of work organization and product exchange, allowing individuals and collectives to lead active lives concerned with “living well, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth”.

It is therefore important to design life and career design interventions aimed at helping individuals to take this direction. However, as has already been noted, most of the active life design interventions offered to individuals in industrialized societies since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has had a very different final purpose. They were (and still are) employability guidance, the purpose of which was (and still is) to promote the inclusion of individuals into today’s world of work and its exchange. For the past decade, a few life design interventions have been helping counselees to determine the direction they want to give to their active life without presupposing that this direction necessarily consists of such a professional inclusion. These life design interventions have given the counselees the opportunity to reflect on the direction of their active lives, taking into account the urgency of sustainable and equitable global development. They give the counselees this opportunity without leading them to place systematically at the heart of their reflection the concerns that the United Nations considers crucial for the future of humanity.

The vital issues of current crises require going beyond this simple possibility. They involve designing interventions that consistently take into account the imperative “to lead one’s active life in such a way that it contributes to a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth” (Guichard et al., 2016; Cohen-Scali et al., 2018). In other words, these interventions should focus the counselees’ reflection on the following question: In which work activities (this term refers to the whole range of productive situations, involving cooperation, exchange, recognition and self-construction) can I get involved (or “can we get involved”, in the case

of the reflection of a collective) to produce goods or services that contribute to humane, equitable and sustainable global development?

Building such interventions is not easy. Indeed, unlike employability guidance, they cannot refer to the existing forms of work organization in today's economically dominant models. Their references can only be established in work organization and exchange in a world to be built: a sustainable, socially just world, guaranteeing everyone a truly humane life. Such interventions can therefore only be conceived by referring to proposals from economists and work specialists who have reflected on suitable forms of organization and exchange of decent and humane work. However, these analyses are still rare and fragmentary (Lang, 1994; Arnspenger, 2009, 2011; Mandin, 2009; Hunyadi, 2015; Laville, 2016; Bourg et al., 2016; Bradburn, 2017). In the context of the UNESCO Chair at the University of Wrocław, two complementary tracks have nevertheless begun to be explored (Guichard, 2016a, b, 2017; Pouyaud, Guichard, 2017). One of them is concerned with interventions promoting global development of humane and decent work activities and with helping individuals to direct their active lives in this context. The second relates to interventions aimed at helping individuals and groups to direct their active lives by referring to work and exchange systems with the lowest possible ecological footprint.

### **3.1 Career education for humane and decent work contributing to the construction of a humane, equitable and sustainable world**

As noted in the paragraph 2.2 above, the establishment of humane and decent conditions of work, both in the industrialized countries and in the poorest economies, requires the establishment of the International Labour Law. The International Labour Organization, whose mission might be to conceive and implement this law, has had since its origin only an advisory role. It can neither define the fundamental principles of a Universal Law of decent and humane work, nor globally enforce it. In today's global context, where prevails the ideology of benefits of an economic competition that no universal principle of law must hinder, it is most unlikely that such a Universal Law might be developed or applied without the pressure of popular demands.

The ethical principle,

may each person lead their active life in such a way that their work, its products and the modes of its exchange, contribute to the development of a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth

implies, however, that all people become aware of the paramount importance for every human being of such a Universal Law allowing decent and humane work, and that they demand its establishment.

New career education whose first step would be to promote this awareness should, therefore, be offered to all young people. For this purpose, this new career education would inform them, on the one hand, about the role of work, its modes of organization and its forms of exchange in the construction of the world and the subjectivity of each individual. On the other hand, it would focus on the role of different forms of work organization and exchange in the development of individual talents, certain ways of relating to oneself and to others, representations of oneself and others, on the transformations of the world which they provoke, as well as on the deleterious consequences of certain systems of work organization and exchange. The contents of the first part of this new career education would be based on adaptations to the levels of knowledge of young people of the analyses of authors such as Henri Bergson, Georges Friedmann, Hanna Arendt, André Gorz, Philippe Malrieu, Christophe Dejours, Patrice Flichy, etc.

The second component of the new career education would aim to help young people to think about their future active life by focusing on humane and decent work activities contributing to equitable and sustainable development. Current career education focuses on job functions and workplaces in the contemporary world. It demands that young people analyse their skills, interests, values – actual or potential – by referring to the existing world of paid work. The new career education would focus on the world of work activities to be developed in order to contribute to sustainable and equitable development. This imperative of grounding the reflection in the world of work that does not exist yet, but that must be created, necessarily makes this new career education more complex and more ambitious than the old one.

The contents of the second part of the new career education could be based on texts such as the resolution (already mentioned) adopted by the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015. It defines an action programme consisting of 17 major goals and 169 targets. For example, Goal 8 is to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. Goal 10 aims to “reduce inequality within and among countries”. Goal 11 encourages to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Goal 12 aims to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”. Goal 16 is to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

For each of these objectives, the UN programme specifies different targets. For example, Target 9 of Goal 8 is the following: “By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”. Target 2 of Goal 11 states that by 2030 it is necessary to ensure “access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children,

persons with disabilities and older persons”. Target 3 of Goal 12 is to (by 2030) “halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses” by 2030. Target 8 of the same Goal 12 aims to “ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature”.

The second part of the new career education would be to encourage participants to think about, firstly, the activities that can contribute to the achievement of these goals and targets (or of others resulting from different analyses than those of the UN). Secondly, to ponder about the areas to which they would like to contribute. Thirdly, to focus on the talents they should develop, and, finally, on the ways to achieve these goals. The methodology of the two components of the new career education should be active and should comprise group work resulting in joint achievements (files, films, Power Point presentation, etc.).

### **3.2 Interventions accompanying individuals and collectives in the construction of active lives minimizing their ecological footprint**

The new career education, the outlines of which have been presented above, is not sufficient to remedy serious problems posed by the deleterious ecological footprint of the current forms of work organization and exchange. It is therefore essential to prepare individuals and groups to think about active life forms that minimize this footprint (Arnsperger, 2009, 2011; Hunyadi, 2015; Bourg et al., 2016).

Career and life design interventions could be aimed at helping people to engage in such forms of active life that would minimize their ecological footprint, particularly through the establishment of viable and sustainable systems of the production and exchange of work products (e.g. local exchange systems). These systems would be based on a “Principle of Ecological Subsidiarity” (PES) consisting in giving priority to local production and trade systems, whose ecological footprint is lower than that of more distant production and trade systems having harmful ecological consequences (Guichard, 2017; Pouyaud, Guichard, 2017).

The Principle of Ecological Subsidiarity consists in distinguishing between products which can be solely (or mainly) designed, manufactured and traded in a global trading system (e.g. drugs, scientific research, major technological innovations, etc.) and others that can be designed, manufactured and traded in local, regional or interregional exchange systems, depending on the immediate and longer-term ecological footprint associated with each of these levels of production and exchange (for example, at the local level: personal care, public transport, cultural activities, certain food productions, etc.).

Such a principle implies the creation of Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) for the production and exchange of goods and services constituting the

basic level of such an organization (Lang, 1994; Laville, 2016; Bradburn 2017). Such LETSs allow, firstly, to exchange services (for example: haircut, transport) with local productions (for example: vegetables, a cooked dish, a tailor-made garment or alterations, etc.); secondly, they allow to meet needs that are not or are poorly taken into account in the mainstream economy (for example: help to fill out a document on the Internet, transport of the elderly, offers of close cultural activities, such as theatre, exhibitions, training in craft or artistic activities, etc.); thirdly, they allow the collective organization of the production of renewable energy (using the sun, wind, rivers, etc.). In rural areas, LETSs provide the opportunity to set up local services and promote environmentally friendly local agriculture, etc. Finally, they stimulate collective development of a feeling of solidarity and, in each individual: knowledge, talents, self-esteem, feeling of being recognized as a bearer of talents, ability to recognize others in the same ways, etc. (Mandin, 2009).

Creating and developing a local exchange system is not easy. Organizing its connections with other exchange systems (regional, global) is even more complex. Career and life design interventions should, therefore, help groups and individuals to get involved in such projects. They would have a dual purpose. On the one hand, they would help each group, first, to reflect on the needs that could be met by a local exchange system and on the forms of work and exchange that could satisfy them. Second, they would help to organize and specify the structures and the modalities of this exchange system. Finally, they would aim to define and set up the institutions (such as a board of directors) essential for its functioning: institutions which are necessary, for instance, to link local trade with other levels of trade (e.g. by creating a local currency).

These interventions would, on the other hand, help each individual to think about a number of issues related to the direction of their active life. For example: Can they (or: do they want to) engage in such a local exchange system? By what activities could they contribute to the satisfaction of what needs? If not: in which work activities (producing sustainable and tradable goods or services satisfying human needs) could they engage? In which types of work organization and of exchange systems?

The Principle of Ecological Subsidiarity is derived from the fundamental imperative to “directing one’s active life in such a way that it helps all human beings to have a good life, with and for others, in just institutions, ensuring the permanence of genuine human life on Earth”. As such, the principle is an ethical imperative that must determine everyone’s decisions about the direction of their active lives. However, in the absence of a world trade regulation based on such Principle of Ecological Subsidiarity (or on a similar principle), the development of LETSs, as well as that of local or regional productions, will necessarily be limited. Therefore, involvement into the development of a sustainable

and equitable global ecosystem implies that global regulation introduces such a principle in it. Interventions supporting individuals and collectives in building active lives that minimize their ecological footprint cannot, therefore, avoid to achieving citizens' awareness of the need for a global trade organization based on principles such as the ecological subsidiarity.

## Conclusion

These two outlines of interventions supporting people in the design of active lives contributing to equitable and sustainable development are only preliminary drafts. In order to evaluate and improve them, their methodology must be specified during experiments. Additionally, other possibilities will have to be explored. One point, however, seems to be already clear: the career and life design interventions can no longer ignore the problems of equitable and sustainable development as well as those of decent and humane work. Therefore, they need to be urgently and deeply transformed.

The need to renew these interventions is a consequence of programmes such as the resolution adopted by the United Nations on 25 September 2015. This UN programme of transforming our world explicitly refers to the spirit of Philadelphia. The articles in its introduction are clear. Article 8 states,

we [the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives] envisage a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination (...), of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity (...) A world which invests in its children and in which every child grows up free from violence and exploitation. A world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality". Article 14 states particularly that "we are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity. There are rising inequalities within and among countries. (...) Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern. (...) Natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, freshwater scarcity and loss of biodiversity, add to and exacerbate the list of challenges which humanity faces.

Such a revival of the spirit of Philadelphia does not mean that the world is now firmly committed to this direction. Indeed, the major treaties and trade agreements that continue to be signed are based on an opposite principle: the principle of free and unlimited economic competition. However, only by implementing principles such as ecological subsidiarity could the global trade achieve the goals and targets set by the UN 2015 resolution. It is therefore essential to make all citizens of the world aware of the imperative of establishing new rules of international trade in order to build a humane, equitable and sustainable world – the rules that organizations such as the World Trade Organization

could create and implement. The same is true for the Universal Labour Law based on the concepts of decent and humane work.

The programme outlined in this article will not be easy to develop. In fact, these new career and life design interventions, whose purpose is the construction of a humane, equitable and sustainable world, are addressed to individuals who have each become *homo consultans amidst pop-culture* (Kargulowa, 2018). With this expression, Alicja Kargulowa refers to the way in which liquid societies ensure their social cohesion through an endless flow of advice of all kinds via a multiplicity of media, ranging from, for example, advertising objects judiciously placed in films to professional advice on the most diverse problems (brushing teeth, diet, sex life, education of children, decoration of the house, etc.), by means of expressions or debates relating to these same questions, television competitions in cooking, decoration, etc., commercials relating to a multiplicity of products or the conduct to be followed, etc. The common feature of this flow of advice transforming the citizen into a *homo consultans amidst pop-culture* is that they aim to help people lead their life “at best” in the context of the world as it is. The questions concerning the transformations to be implemented in this world in order to make it sustainable and humane are marginal.

The challenge is, therefore, to design and implement interventions supporting the design and construction of active lives contributing to equitable and sustainable development, and to decent and humane work, addressed to the *homo consultans amidst pop-culture*, that is, to a person whose mind is shaped in such a way that they tend to ignore these issues in their daily decision-making processes. The new generation of researchers and practitioners in the domain of career and life design interventions will have to find ways of overcoming this difficulty in order to propose to counselees interventions leading them to integrate into their thinking the dimensions of sustainable development and social justice, as well as of human dignity and decent work for all.

*Translated from French by Agata Kulczycka*

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