

1 The Neoliberal Challenge to Career Guidance—Mobilising Research, Policy and Practice Around Social Justice

*Tristram Hooley, Ronald G. Sultana
and Rie Thomsen*

Introduction

Politicians prospered—but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

From Donald Trump's inaugural address, January 2017

This book is the first of two volumes which address how career guidance can become part of the struggle for social justice. It is also about neoliberalism and how this frames struggles for social justice and the field of career guidance. The volumes examine career guidance practice, policy, theory and research and explores ideas, stances and values as well as strategies and actions that can move the field forwards. In this first volume, we look at the contexts that neoliberalism offers for career guidance, continue the process of developing theories to support career guidance to engage positively with social justice, and explore how research can inform the development of practice and how practitioners can be involved in research processes. In the second volume, we will go on, in the volume to be released next year, to examine the diverse ways that different communities, groups and individuals experience neoliberalism and explore the range of possibilities for career guidance to be practiced differently. Our hope is that these volumes will help to reorient the field of career guidance for the challenging times in which we live.

Like most academic projects, *Career Guidance for Social Justice: Contesting Neoliberalism* has been written over a couple of years. While we have been writing, history has been unfolding in ways that have been both surprising and disconcerting. Two books about career guidance offer a small contribution to a world in which Donald Trump is co-opting the language of radicalism to dismantle the institutions of American democracy, in which the future of Europe, endangered by Brexit, revolves on successive elections

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where the populist right challenge for power and in which there are famines across East Africa, war in Syria, homophobic purges in Chechnya and precarity everywhere. But, as the quote above from Donald Trump's inauguration demonstrates, concerns about career and livelihood remain at the heart of a myriad of personal and political struggles and their relationship to social justice cannot be assumed. Consequently, we hope that these books can contribute to our understanding of the shifts that are happening in our world and what they mean for our field and, most importantly, that the books can help those involved in the field of career guidance to think about responses that are possible and useful.

These two volumes of readings build on previous efforts by others in the field, and have drawn together insights from a range of disciplines and theoretical orientations—including critical psychology, social psychology, political economy, critical theory, sociology, feminism, queer theory, post-colonial studies, critical race theory, cultural studies and liberation philosophy. We hope to show the extent to which neoliberalism ‘sets the political and economic agenda, limits the possible outcomes, biases expectations, and imposes urgent tasks on those challenging its assumptions, methods and consequences’ (Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005, p. 4). It is by becoming more critically aware of the contexts in which we work, and how these contexts shape not only what we do, but also what we *aspire* to achieve and what we value, that career guidance can claim to wear the social justice mantle.

In the two volumes we address three main concepts (1) social justice, (2) neoliberalism, and (3) career guidance. Our hope is that the books can investigate the interactions between these concepts from a range of different perspectives. The primary purpose of this introduction is therefore to define these three concepts and to situate the books historically, politically and epistemologically.

Situating the Volumes

All three editors have been writing about career guidance and its relationship with social justice, inequality, community and neoliberalism for several years. As we wrote, we realised that we were not alone and we identified each other and many other people who were asking similar questions. We found a concern with social justice articulated across a range of countries and drawing on a range of different theoretical and political traditions. These two volumes were proposed as a way to draw this diverse movement together and to intervene into the theoretical debates that exist around career guidance and contribute to its development. We hope that it will help to shape the future direction of the field and identify an agenda for future research.

This tradition of sociopolitical writing about career guidance goes back, as Zytowski (2001) has argued, to the origins of the field. We can also find it represented in the work of the National Institute for Career Education

and Counselling (NICEC) in the UK, in Scandinavian research informed by critical psychology (Thomsen, 2014) and by sociology (Buland & Mathiesen, 2014; Lundahl & Olofsson, 2014) particularly between the late 1970s and 1990s, in the work of David Blustein and his colleagues in the USA (2006), and, increasingly, in voices coming from the global south (e.g. Ratnam, 2011; Da Silva, Paiva, & Ribeiro, 2016; Sultana, 2017a). Perhaps most visibly we saw the standard being raised in Irving and Malik's (2004) *Critical Reflections on Career Education and Guidance: Promoting Social Justice within a Global Economy*. Career guidance, they argued, sits in a complex relationship with neoliberalism, at times enculturating people into a neoliberal sensibility and at others offering a space for critical engagement with power. It is this difficult balancing act that this volume hopes to continue to debate.

Over a decade after Irving and Malik's book, two of the editors edited a special issue of the NICEC journal (Hooley & Sultana, 2016), which focused on the issue of social justice and career guidance. It became clear that there was much still to say about these issues and a wide range of authors keen to contribute. This provided the genesis of this project and encouraged us to think carefully about what had changed since Irving and Malik had written about "the triumphalist cry of capitalism" (p. 1) where "the neoliberal economic rationality overshadows any discussion of the collective good" (p. 3). By the early 2000s it was not just the politicians of the Right that were declaring that "there is no alternative" to capitalism. The politics of the Left was now dominated by the "third way", which moved towards the centre and largely adopted the political and economic positions of the right (Romano, 2006). A year after Irving and Malik's book, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair described the kind of individual who could succeed within this neoliberal world and identified the kind of career management skills that they would need to do so.

The character of this changing world is indifferent to tradition. Unforgiving of frailty. No respecter of past reputations. It has no custom and practice. It is replete with opportunities, but they only go to those swift to adapt, slow to complain, open, willing and able to change.

(Tony Blair quoted by Harris, 2016)

Such words echo much of the rhetoric of career theory with its talk of "boundaryless" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and "protean" careers (Hall, 1996) and of the need for individuals' to build "career adaptability" (Savickas, 2013) in the face of "this changing world". As John Harris noted on hearing Blair speak, "most people aren't like that." But these kinds of concerns, like those raised by Irving and Malik and many others about inequality, precarity and social exclusion, were easy to ignore for the political class.

Subsequent events have proved that the "third way" did not represent any kind of final settlement for capitalism. The financial crisis of 2008 has

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resulted in an intense period of political and economic debate and reconfiguration. The election of Donald Trump can be attributed to it, but so can the unexpected celebrity of Thomas Piketty, whose neo-Marxist *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, published in English in 2014, became an unlikely, but welcome, best seller. We continue to live in a neoliberal world, but there are alternatives on offer. It is tempting to celebrate the emergence of Bernie Sanders in the USA, the left turn of the British Labour Party and Podemos in Spain. But, the alternative to neoliberalism is being most visibly articulated by the populist right variously represented by Le Pen, Wilders, Erdogan and others. The opening up of alternatives of both the left and right raise questions about whether neoliberalism is enduring or being replaced by something new (and potentially much worse). We will move on to address this later in the chapter, but first we should clarify what we mean by social justice.

What Is Social Justice?

Very few people would be happy to think of themselves as unjust or seek to bring about a society which results in injustice. Certainly, careers workers typically seek to locate themselves and their work as being able to contribute to social justice (Arthur, Collins, McMahon, & Marshall, 2009). However, such beliefs in “justice” and “social justice” require further scrutiny and definition. Social justice is an articulation of what individuals, groups and societies believe is morally and politically right. Inevitably, this means that our ideas about what constitutes social justice differ and we need to be very careful not to use social justice as a way of imposing ideology onto others without debate.

Political ideas should not be transmuted into moral absolutes. We want to open up debate and to celebrate pluralism rather than to impose orthodoxy. One of our concerns with the politics of neoliberalism is the way in which the political positions espoused by the ruling orthodoxy are frequently described as incontestable and understood in moral rather than political terms. Harvey (2005, p. 3) argues that the politics of neoliberalism has “become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in and understand the world.” Our adoption of the terminology of social justice needs to be alert to its imprecision and to remain aware that what is social justice to us might be injustice to others.

The appeal of the terminology of ‘social justice’ therefore lies partially in its contestability. Other terms like socialist, liberal, anarchist, radical, feminist, critical race theorist or critical psychologist and so on would locate this project in a tighter political tradition. However, we are seeking a pluralist engagement with career guidance which recognises diverse experiences, backgrounds, theories and politics. We believe that such pluralism is a strength, and we have asked all contributors to think about what ‘social justice’ means from their perspective and to be explicit about it.

This is not to say that ‘anything goes’, nor to say that different conceptions of social justice are incontestable. As Sultana (2014a) has noted there are a range of different traditions of justice which are informed by different philosophical positions. How we relate to ideas about social justice is ontological, bound up with our fundamental beliefs about the world. Given this, talking about social justice should not be advanced to gloss over these differences, but rather should be a way of creating a space within which these differences can be debated. Such debates need to recognise that the problem of social injustice might be understood in a wide range of different ways and to recognise that we can have similar analyses about the problem (for example, recognising inequalities of wealth, power and voice), whilst advancing radically different ideas about what can and should be done about this and what the role of career guidance can be.

Each chapter in this book provides an answer to the question ‘What is social justice?’ Authors write for social harmony, for equity, for equality, for difference and diversity, but all with an awareness of a dystopian other. Within these volumes there are disagreements about what social justice is, but all of the contributors are sure that we have not got enough of it. The articles address a need for a change and argue that there is a range of roles that the activities of career guidance can play in this change. However, before we discuss the multiple roles of career guidance activities in relation to social justice it is important to clarify our understanding of the world in which we are finding an absence of social justice.

What Is Neoliberalism?

The general contours of what constitutes ‘neoliberalism’ have been rehearsed in literature across a vast array of disciplines and sub-disciplines: Dunn (2016) claims that well over 400,000 academic publications have used the term. What we provide here is therefore only a cursory sketch, highlighting definitions and debates that are especially relevant and which justify its use as a framing narrative for this volume. As several authors in this collection of articles also note, neoliberalism—described by some as a fundamentalist doctrine that normalises its own tenets by propounding the view that ‘there is no alternative’—is a set of beliefs about how wealth should be produced and distributed: it thus has a major impact on the world of work, and consequently, on the way career guidance is conceived and practiced.

Some have argued that the term ‘neoliberal’ has been overused, and that its ‘conceptual sprawl’ (Dunn, 2016, p. 17) refers to such a wide array of social practices that it does not have an essential core meaning (Venugopal, 2015; Flew, 2014). We are alert to such critiques, and recognise the fact that neoliberalism is somewhat amorphous and even internally inconsistent, wearing different masks as it morphs in response to context (Gamble, 2001; Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005). We are also sensitive to the call to use the term as an adjective and an adverb rather more than as a noun, thus

short-circuiting the dangers associated with reifying ‘it’ in ways that suggest it is ‘an accomplished object’ rather than ‘a tendency, a more or less realized, more or less articulated, unevenly distributed ensemble of attributes discernible in the world’ (Comaroff, 2011, p. 141). Nevertheless, we consider that the term still has value for us given our purposes for these volumes. Chief among these is the attempt to challenge the career guidance field out of its enduring over-reliance on individualistic psychological methods in both practice and research, which, while useful in helping us understand some of the dynamics involved in the interplay between self and society, fails to acknowledge, let alone throw light on the systemic, social and political nature of the unequal power relations involved. A critical consideration of neoliberalism opens up a set of crucial conversations that, in our view, career guidance practitioners and researchers need to engage in if the field is to reject co-optation by, and subordination to, the instrumentalist rationality of the market and the ‘competition state’ (Cerny, 2010), and if it is truly to be a force *for* social justice.

Distinct political traditions of right and left exist which have been most iconically represented by Adam Smith and Karl Marx. In this cleavage of political economy, neoliberalism can be seen as the recent articulation of the former’s reasoned and normatively driven insights about the economic nature of humanity, what impels it forward, and the kinds of environments that could lead to overcoming poverty. While Smith became convinced that the notorious ‘invisible hand of the market’ could conjure up this happy state of affairs, Marx—and those who drew on his analysis—argued that human dignity and wellbeing could not be abandoned to the whims of a Darwinian market that is thoroughly saturated in unequal power relations, and which could thus never deliver on social justice in terms of redistribution of wealth. Nevertheless, the 1980s saw the triumph of Smith’s doctrine, as reformulated by such economists as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek and the defeat of both the Soviet bloc, which claimed to be Marxist, and Western social democracy, which was inspired by the ideas of another economist of note, John Maynard Keynes.

The new articulation of liberalism was supported by influential conservative think tanks such as the Adam Smith Institute and agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It was aggressively propelled onto the international stage by larger-than-life conservative populist politicians such as Margaret Thatcher in the UK, Ronald Reagan in the USA, not to mention other politicians who were ‘inspired’ by the formers’ policies, including those from ostensibly left-wing parties such as Roger Douglas in New Zealand. Neoliberalism sketched out a series of (often) connected policies that have been adopted by, or foisted upon, most nations in the developed and developing world. While the extent and depth of penetration of these policies, and the manner in which they have been interpreted and implemented, differ according to context, one can nevertheless speak meaningfully about a ‘policy construct’ that ‘straddles a wide range

of social, political and economic phenomena at different levels of complexity' (Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005, p. 1). Key elements of this construct include the globalisation of trade, financialisation of markets—by which we mean, following Epstein (2006, p. 3) 'the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of domestic and international economies'—commitment to market forces and a 'laissez-faire' approach that, in regard to some aspects and sectors of society, involves a 'rolling back' of state institutions and practices. Such 'reconfigurations' (Harvey, 2005, p. 78) include the downsizing of the public sector, privatisation of state assets, deregulation of markets, and the withdrawal or restriction of funding for welfare regimes and erstwhile free public services that social democrats had established over decades of struggle—cuts which have had severe and deleterious repercussions on various groups of people, including women and the poor (Campbell, 2014). In many cases, such 'savings' for the public purse were accompanied by cuts in corporate and property tax rates, a policy mix that promoted the transfer of wealth from the common citizen to the wealthy, and which, particularly in an environment of austerity, required the state not to retreat, but to exercise a range of coercive practices, revealing the extent to which, under neoliberalism, 'economic and political power translate into each other' (Crouch, 2011, p. 70).

The reach of such policies is global, with neoliberalism being seen by some as 'part of a hegemonic project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world, benefiting especially the financial interests within each country, and US capital internationally' (Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005, p. 1). Indeed, it is fair to say that globalisation, neoliberalism and empire cannot be analytically or causally separated (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Prasch, 2005).

Once again, this recalls Hall's (1996) concept of the 'protean career' as the ideal model which career guidance is seeking to bring about. The hero and heroine in the neoliberal saga is the individual: there is no place here for 'the social', for 'society', for a Keynesian-style compromise in favour of 'solidarity', or for 'social justice', which, as Hayek famously argued, is nothing less than a 'mirage', given that 'there can be no distributive justice where no one distributes' and that 'considerations of justice provide no justification for 'correcting' the results of the market' (Hayek, 1976, p. 68, and 1969, p. 175, as cited in Schmidtz, 2016, p. 8).

Not only does neoliberalism propound suspicion and (apparent) disinvestiture of the powers of the state, but it proposes, as an alternative, a quasi-blind faith in the market as 'archetype', with public entities extolled, and ultimately enforced to mirror the 'firm' through the adoption of so-called 'New Public Management' (Vigoda, 2003) and its 'reform technologies' (Ball, 2008) that reconfigure citizens as consumers and clients, leaders as managers, and public service as a measurable, performative exercise subject to micro-management and 'total quality assurance'. NPM thus

accomplishes, at the organisational and institutional levels, the central neo-liberal tenets of the privatisation and marketisation of society by transferring market principles to the public sector.

As a series of discourses and practices, NPM gained traction with the new wave of liberalism in the 1980s, with early adopters being the UK, the USA, and Canada—all of which were then governed by the New Right. In imitation of successful businesses, and to shore up a legitimacy crisis, public service sectors such as education, health and employment services in several countries were obliged to undergo a managerial revolution that included the adoption of value systems and protocols that were supposed to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to ‘do more with less’. Career guidance has not been immune to the move to NPM with various attempts to marketise the field often resulting in a reduction of the availability of services, the narrowing of the objectives of career guidance to more instrumental outcomes and the erosion of professionalism (Hughes, Meijers, & Kuijpers, 2015; Lewin & Colley, 2011; Watts, 2015). The global enactments of NPM have been varied in their articulation, penetration and implementation, though in several cases they have been discredited (Levy, 2010; Guerrero-Orozco, 2014).

Neoliberalism entails more than just an economic and political doctrine: despite its ideological claims of non-intervention, it involves extensive and invasive intrusions into vast areas of social life, including the most personal—such as, for instance, the choice of vocation, work and career. Citizens witness a silent transition from welfare to ‘competition state’ in which ‘The state still has a major national yet paradoxical role to play—to expose the domestic to the transnational in order to ensure that citizens keep up with the multiple pressures and demands of that increasingly interpenetrated political, economic and social ecosystem’ (Cerny, 2010, p. 1). The structures, rhetoric and practices associated with neoliberalism bring about a deep conditioning of the human psyche—what many in this volume, following Foucault, refer to as ‘responsibilisation’ (see chapters 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, for instance) and what Scharff (2016), among others, calls the formation of ‘entrepreneurial subjectivity’. It is about the production of a particular subjectivity ‘centred upon economic self-interest and competition, in sharp opposition to other, more critical forms of subjectivity, such as that of the active citizen or the conscious worker’ (Sotiris, 2014, p. 319). In Foucauldian terms, neoliberalism is ‘a form of structural and behavioural power’ (Gill, 1995, p. 411), relying on ‘new forms of political-economic governance premised on the extension of market relationships’ (Larner, 2000, p. 5).

When the social is hollowed out, when notions of solidarity, mutual aid, and a sense of responsibility and empathy for others within and beyond national borders, are constructed not as virtues but as dangerous or as a source of weakness, then all that remains is the Protean/Sisyphean individual. Neoliberalism beckons, invites, seduces and, to use an Althusserian term, ‘interpellates’ the individual, as much as social institutions and

practices. Its ideological matrix shapes our thoughts, and our deepest feelings about what constitutes a socially just world. Neoliberal discourses are not merely outside of us; they are not just an external force. Rather, neoliberal discourses are also internalised. They ‘colonize us—gifting us with our existence and shaping our desires, our beliefs in what is right’ (Davies, 2005, p. 1). It is a subjectivity ‘manifested in our talk about ourselves and our experiences’ (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 248), with the ‘capillaries’ of neoliberal values becoming ‘firmly entrenched in the cartography of our everyday lives’ (Comaroff, 2011, p. 146).

In many ways, therefore, neoliberalism has been the triumphant ideology for the last three decades, assuming a hegemonic status to such an extent that it no longer feels morally reprehensible to declare that the unemployed are responsible for their own misery, that citizens should be relabelled as ‘consumers’, that trade unions are an obstacle to progress, that zero-hour contracts, individual rather than collective bargaining, and insecurity of tenure are not only acceptable, but commendable aspects of protean, boundaryless careers, presumably infusing not angst and anxiety but motivation, zest and excitement in one’s life. This is not to say that the hegemony is complete, in the Gramscian sense that individuals and groups are so thoroughly blinded by the discursive mirages propounded by those in power that they endorse and help reproduce situations that work against their own best self-interest. Resistance has accompanied neoliberalism from the start, and has gathered momentum with the accumulation of evidence over the past three-and-a-half decades that the efficiency gains of privatisation have been widely exaggerated, that deregulation has indeed increased wealth assets, but only for a very few at the top (Piketty, 2014), with little if any sign of the much-vaunted ‘trickle-down’ bonanza, and that the gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, within and between nations, has increased to such an extent as to constitute a major threat not only to social stability, and to a host of quality of life indicators, including life expectancy (Wilkinson, 2010), but also to overall economic output and productivity (Stiglitz, 2012). Such resistance has been galvanised by a series of events that have shown what happens when markets and marketeers are given a free reign: livelihoods are destroyed, savings wiped out, households and communities bankrupted, and pension plans dissolved in what has become the lead metaphor of our time: a liquid world, where things fall apart and the centre cannot hold (Bauman, 2001, Chapter 4). The irony of it all is that the very same state that neoliberal acolytes would see ‘rolled back’ is quickly ‘activated’ to bail out failing banks and businesses . . . at the expense of the public purse, while imposing austerity on its bewildered citizens.

Working in Neoliberalism

Work is a bane for many in the twenty-first century. A Gallup study carried out in 2013 and involving 230,000 full-time and part-time workers in 142

countries reports that only 13% of people feel engaged and fulfilled by their jobs. Citing this report, Schwartz (2015) concludes: ‘Work is more often a source of frustration than one of fulfilment for nearly 90% of the world’s workers. Think of the social, emotional, and perhaps even economic waste that this statistic represents. Ninety percent of adults spend half their waking lives doing things they would rather not be doing at places they would rather not be’ (p. 3).

Such generalisations risk minimising the hugely important differences in the experience of work between different social groups within and between countries in the global North and South. And yet, as the International Labor Organization reports show us year in, year out, the data regarding decent work across the world are increasingly negative for an increasingly large number of people, in terms of the four indicators of employment, social protection, workers’ rights, and social dialogue (ILO, 2016, chapter 2). Frustration and disillusionment are widespread, arising from people’s experience of exclusion from the labour market, poor working conditions, low wages, exposure to vulnerability and insecurity, and job quality (Ryder, 2017, p. 1).

A synthesis of the characteristics and trends that mark the world of work under neoliberalism in the ‘competition state’ makes for depressing reading: Decent work is hard to find and easy to lose. Workers are required to study for long periods to gain jobs which are at risk from automation (see chapter 6) and, where they are in the public sector, in danger of being cut. Finding and keeping a job has high stakes for individuals and their families, but even those who have work often find that working is becoming increasingly intense and encroaching into other aspects of their lives (Burchell, Ladipo, & Wilkinson, 2005). Work demands loyalty, but gives little if any back. It is increasingly marked by intensification, by insecurity, by short-to-temporary-to-zero contracts, by competition and by informal Uber-like arrangements that circumvent labour laws and trade unions. It often pays below-subsistence wages, giving rise to a new class of ‘working poor’. Workplaces have made use of new technologies to install disciplinary and surveillance regimes based on micro-management strategies that shackle with a smile. Workers are expected to smile back: one of the new work trends reported by *The Economist* is management’s efforts to regulate employees’ psychological states, ‘turning happiness into an instrument of corporate control’ (2016, p. 1).

We are primed to depend practically and emotionally on work, only to find jobs (if we’re lucky) that are too small for our spirit. We are schooled into being creative and sociable, but spend our days in jobs that are devoid of reciprocity, mutuality, and conviviality. Citizens are constantly exhorted and admonished to find a ‘work-life’ balance whilst wages stagnate and the working week gets ever longer with the right to ‘disconnect’ from work increasingly lost. Youths desperate to find a job after indebting themselves for years to come to pay for their studies, relentlessly edit their cv, commodify themselves through the creation of online digital identities (see

chapter 7), and go through all the hoops and hurdles—including accepting that newest form of exploitation, endless unpaid ‘internships’—in order to improve their ‘employability’. While all this might sound rhetorical and even melodramatic, one only needs to consult the recent spate of books about the nature of work in neoliberal times to sink one’s teeth into the empirical evidence that gives substance to this grim portrayal (*inter alia* Sennett, 1998; Procoli, 2004; Standing, 2011; Cederström & Fleming, 2012; Frayne, 2015; Fleming, 2015—among many others).

Are We Moving to a Post-Neoliberal Period?

Some have seen the banking crisis and the credit crunch of 2007–2008, and the subsequent economic repercussions worldwide, as a sign that global free-market capitalism is imploding, and that neoliberalism is unravelling since under its watch ‘economic growth rates have declined, unemployment and underemployment have become widespread, inequalities between and within countries have become sharper, the living and working conditions of the majority have deteriorated almost everywhere, and the periphery has suffered greatly from economic instability’ (Saad-Filho & Johnson, 2005, p. 5). This crisis ‘can shift the parameters of the debate, from one concerning small palliative and restorative measures, to one which opens the way for moving towards a new political era and new understandings of what constitutes the good society’ (Hall, Massey, & Rustin, 2013, p. 8). In Latin America, a number of countries—including Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela and Ecuador—are referred to as ‘post-liberal’ in recognition of their attempts to create fledgling welfare states, often in the wake of failed neoliberal reforms. The European Union, having thoroughly succumbed to market ideology by 1992 (Hermann, 2007), and having instrumentalised the process of integration to ensure the hegemony of neoliberalism (Milios, 2005), is now trying to redeem its soul by adopting a ‘new European pillar of social rights’, with the intention of securing a ‘social triple A rating’ that puts citizen interests first (Sanden & Schlüter, 2016). Time will tell whether the commitment to the social economy is as deep as that to the market economy has been over the past decades, or whether it is just a sop to Cerberus.

Others, however, have noted the resilience of neoliberalism, and its power of incumbency and adaptability (Crouch, 2011). Many neoliberals have viewed the recent crisis as an opportunity to learn from mistakes and ‘perfect free market economies by establishing the regulatory environment most conducive to a successful deregulated world [. . .] we have seen a tangible return to business as usual, even bad-faith business’ (Comaroff, 2011, p. 144).

Furthermore, as already noted earlier, the main response to the persistent affront of the corporate sector and its relative immunity even when it violates ‘the being, bodies, belongings, or bioenvironment of ordinary citizens’ (*ibid.*, p. 145) has not been an organised effort to strike back and deepen

democracy—despite the efforts of such important but ultimately transient movements as Occupy Wall Street. Rather, the tendency has been a slide towards ultra-nationalism and populism on the part of the masses, who feel deprived of the benefits of globalisation and who are increasingly susceptible to the conservative invocations of nation, race, religion, tradition, and authority (Fekete, 2016). While Left politics are coming back into the mainstream to some extent, Brexit in the UK and Trump in the USA are reminders of just how powerful the rhetoric around ‘making the nation great again’ can be, and how such ideologies converge with the programme of far right parties. Despite the latter’s toxic jingoism and anti-immigration agenda, this movement across continental Europe and beyond nevertheless represents a cry of protest, if not despair, against austerity measures imposed by a political establishment that is seen to be in cahoots with big business against the ‘little man’. Protectionism, however, is hardly a viable strategy, requiring as it does the reversal of globalisation, which is tantamount to unscrambling an omelette; it is, moreover, hardly the basis for a new moral and economic settlement, in a world where planetary challenges—such as the mass movements of people and global warming—do not recognise national boundaries. As such, while neoliberalism is not necessarily here to stay, it is too early to administer last rites.

We have clearly been cursed to live in interesting times. If these volumes had been published in 2007 they would have been very different. Political certainties are up for grabs and the future of neoliberalism looks less certain than ever. However, this book does not represent a determinist view as we recognise that both our personal and political futures are still being made, even if they will not be made in the circumstances of our own choosing. Career guidance has typically emphasised agency over structure, but has inevitably sought to balance both. We will now turn to our final concept—career guidance—and explore its relationship with both social justice and neoliberalism.

What Is Career Guidance?

Our central concept is ‘career guidance’. Career guidance is an educational field through which individuals are encouraged, supported and guided to think about and take action in their lives. A range of practices are associated with this field, such as the provision of labour market information, career assessment, one-to-one counselling, career education, experiential learning in the workplace and many others. The OECD (2004, p. 19) definition of career guidance has become extremely influential and bears repeating here.

Career guidance refers to services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications and

abilities. It helps them to understand the labour market and education systems, and to relate this to what they know about themselves . . . While personal interviews are still the dominant tool, career guidance includes a wide range of other services: group discussions; printed and electronic information; school lessons; structured experience; telephone advice; on-line help. Career guidance is provided to people in a very wide range of settings: schools and tertiary institutions; public employment services; private guidance providers; enterprises; and community settings.

As Sultana (2017b) has argued, this definition is not politically neutral; rather, it is rooted in both the technocratic ideology of the OECD and in the developmentalism which is associated with the humanistic traditions of the career guidance field. Furthermore, it is a definition which emerged out of a consideration of career guidance in the wealthy countries of the OECD. This cultural and geographical framing has consequences in terms of what is included and excluded from the definition (see chapters 5 and 12). However, what is clearly absent is a view to the context and structures in which career guidance is embedded and a view to the critical emancipatory perspectives to which this book is also addressed. The OECD definition is useful, but it does not include any sense that career guidance can be addressed to social injustice nor that it can or should challenge the structures of neoliberalism that we have argued hamper individual's careers and pursuit of the good life.

The OECD definition has become influential in part because it offers clarity to a field which has multiple definitions, practices and, perhaps most importantly, competing ontologies, rationalities and epistemologies (chapter 4). It is possible to find a shared point of origin for the field. The birth of the field is usually attributed to a range of social reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Zytowski, 2001; Savickas, 2009) with Frank Parsons usually, if arguably, accorded the status of 'founding father'. Parsons's (1909) concern was how people gain access to vocations suitable to them and subsequently how they gain a foothold in the labour market. To support this process, he developed a practice which was called 'vocational guidance'. Parsons saw this new practice as an answer to a society undergoing rapid changes and a desire to support people to reach their full potential and he emphasised the importance of helping young people, women and poor people to employment in order for them to improve their lives (Zytowski, 2001; Arthur, Collins, Marshall, & McMahon, 2013, p. 136; Plant & Kjærgård, 2016). Parsons highlighted society's responsibility for individuals' careers and pointed out that it would require structural changes to create a society with more justice (Parsons, 1909).

As the field moved away from its progressive point of origin, it increasingly fragmented around a range of different practice, political rationales and disciplinary and national bases. In different places and at different times people

understood career differently, developed different approaches to providing career help and supporting career learning and sought to use career guidance in the service of different ends. Sultana (2014b, p. 16, and chapter 4 this volume) has argued that it is possible to classify this diversity through the use of Habermas' (1971) knowledge-constitutive interests as they are expressed in a particular type of scientific or scholarly inquiry (technocratic, developmental and emancipatory) and to link these scholarly inquiries to different epistemic traditions that inform career guidance research and practice. Technocratic inquiry is mainly concerned with instrumental control and manipulation of one's environment, where the values of efficiency, prediction and outcomes dominate, and where means are subordinated to the ends sought. Hermeneutic inquiry highlights human beings' interest in communication, social interaction, and interpretation—the intersubjective 'playfulness' in securing and extending possibilities of understanding oneself and others in the conduct of life. Finally, emancipatory inquiry addresses mankind's propensity for self-reflection and self-knowledge, the ability to see one's biography as a confluence of internal and external factors that can limit options, a realisation that can be liberatory when such factors are not considered outside human control (i.e. 'reified'), but rather amenable to action that expands our possibilities for self-expression and self-fulfilment.

These different knowledge-constitutive interests offer strands that can be woven together in different ways by different actors and commentators on career guidance. We would particularly like to explore the way in which they are woven together in two key traditions within career guidance: firstly, in the way in which career guidance has been developed through the psychological tradition and, secondly, through the way in which the field has been represented and utilised in public policy. We will then conclude by considering the kinds of alternative weaves of rationalities that are suggested by the chapters presented in this volume.

The Psychological Tradition

Career guidance's origins in social reform were quickly put to one side as the field became increasingly viewed as a branch of psychology. Early researchers approached the question of career choice and the provision of career support through a rational and 'scientific' lens. They focused their efforts on developing, researching and distributing aptitude and interest tests and with providing occupational information with the aim of 'matching' individuals to a labour market, which was viewed as unproblematic and incontestable (Niles & Harris Bowlsby, 2009). Such approaches took the individual as the start and end point and ignored society and the social context other than as something which the individual had to be slotted into. As a number of reviews of the history of career guidance have shown, the field became increasingly and almost exclusively shaped by psychology, and by specific strands in psychology that are either positivist (represented most powerfully

by trait-factor or matching approaches) or developmentalist, aligned with what, Habermas refers to as ‘hermeneutic sciences’. The latter found its most articulate and enduring expression in the field of career guidance and counselling in the work of Rogers (1995) and those influenced by him (Amundson, 1998; Peavy, 2000), and emphasised the individuals’ capacity to define their own objectives (in the counselling process and in life) and their hope and ability to find their own path towards self-actualisation. In relation to this tradition, Prilleltensky and Stead (2012, p. 322) note that most career theories

emphasize self-development, self-improvement, self-efficacy, self-creation, and self-regulation, all hallmarks of societies valuing individualism, as ways to make optimal career choices [. . .] and seldom consider how the working world may be restructured from ethical and social justice perspectives to the benefit of workers.

The authors go on to note that career psychology ‘has placed little emphasis on oppression, how this maintains the status quo and marginalizes people and the extent to which this may severely limit or remove individuals’ career choice options’ (ibid., p. 322).

More recently, the life-design tradition (see Savickas et al., 2009) has foregrounded a hermeneutic knowledge interest/inquiry even further, arguing that individuals should have the right to write their own stories and that the role of career guidance is to support this kind of hermeneutic meaning-making, rather than to base career guidance interventions on a technocratic ‘science’ to allocate people towards an idealised career outcome. Despite claims of innovative practice in this ‘narrative turn’ (Reid & West, 2011) in the field, life-design remains focused on individuals, promoting epistemic practices that divorce and decontextualise persons from socioeconomic and cultural factors and restrains. It tends to represent career development as the outcome of personal volition, as if the ability to tell oneself stories about one’s place in the world is enough to narrativise oneself out of structurally imposed constraints such as poverty, lack of opportunity, systemically induced inequality, and such like. The contention in our volumes is quite different, namely that the narratives that we patch together for ourselves are intimately woven up with that master narrative that shapes our lives—neoliberalism (see chapters 10, 11 and 14).

Increasingly, however, the field of career guidance is showing a readiness to become more critical of the technocratic inquiry in which it has been embedded for several years, and to engage with other disciplines, including sociology and philosophy, which open up for other knowledge-constitutive interests and more emancipatory inquiries (Brown & Lent, 2016; Hooley, 2017, and enables researchers and practitioners to address what Prilleltensky and Stead (2012) call the ‘adjust/challenge’ dilemma head on. A perusal of the articles that have appeared in specialist career guidance journals

internationally, as well as handbooks that purport to present the ‘state-of-the-art’ in the field (*inter alia* Athanasou & Van Esbroeck, 2008; Arulmani, Bakshi, Leong, & Watts, 2014) suggests that while vocational psychology still reigns as the queen discipline in the field, there are clearly many knaves around who, if not yet strong enough to usurp the throne, are making daring forays, helping establish other psychologies and social sciences as worthwhile and legitimate team players for inquiries into the fields of career and career guidance. Many of these authors either feature as contributors to our volumes or are referred to and discussed in some detail. Increasingly, too, the kind of psychology that is mobilised is different, moving away from conceptualisations based on individualism and a denial of context, towards a notion of the field as not merely a technical activity, but rather as a moral and normative enterprise that does not separate personal and societal fulfilment, in the search for a life worth living. In the best of cases, such humanism is supplemented with structural analyses which allows for critical reflections about how the political economy and particularly the distribution of power shape ideas about work, career, aspiration and, indeed, what it means to be human.

Our contention as editors is that these trends are most auspicious, opening up as they do multiperspectival and interdisciplinary conversations that announce an exciting, generative moment when boundaries are tested and transgressed, and new landscapes are charted and explored. Among the most promising is an engagement with critical psychology inspired by the works of such authors as Martín-Barò (1994) and Klaus Holzkamp (2013). Such work brings together psychological, sociological and economic insights in order to reflect on ‘the central themes of pursuing social justice, promoting the welfare of communities in general and oppressed groups in particular, and altering the status quo of society and the status quo of psychology’ (Fox & Prilleltensky, 1997, p. 4). By ‘highlighting of tensions so as to illuminate the contradictions, choices, and alternatives salient in our own time and place’ (Rappaport & Stewart, 1997, p. 304), critical psychology challenges positivistic and technocratic notions of scientific ‘validity’, which have of late been reincarnated in the strident calls for ‘evidence-based policy’, urging us to opt instead for ‘psychopolitical validity’. This challenges research and action to ‘take into account power dynamics in psychological and political domains affecting oppression, liberation, and wellness at the personal, group, and community levels’ (Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007, p. 2).

The Policy Tradition

While psychology has in many ways been the core discipline around which career guidance has been organised, there is another important epistemic strand which has shaped the field. Although career guidance is not confined to the public sector, its accessibility by the majority of the population has

been dependent on public policy involvement. The development of public policy around career guidance and the allocation of public funds to this activity have been accompanied by an extensive policy literature which has been commissioned and published by national governments and by international agencies such as OECD, the European Union and the International Labour Organisation. It is typified by discussions of the rationales for career guidance and by an instrumental focus on ‘what works’ rather than on why it works or what the purpose of career guidance is (Hooley, 2017).

The policy literature has considerable limitations because, as Thomsen (2012, p. 54) argues, where the knowledge presented is intended to form the basis of political decisions, there is typically ‘a reduction of complexity, the absence of any criticism of ideology, and the absence of any problematisation.’ However, such literature does address some important issues that are largely absent from the psychological literature such as: Why is career guidance socially valuable? How does it connect to other social and political institutions and processes? How can it be delivered at scale to ensure access for the whole population? And how can quality be assured and challenges to delivery overcome? Given this, it would be possible for the psychological and policy traditions to be complementary; however, in practice, they rarely overlap with micro, meso and macro questions frequently being addressed in different places with little cross-fertilisation.

Like the psychological tradition, the policy tradition also articulates a range of different rationales for career guidance. At times, career guidance is positioned as a right that citizens should have access to as part of guaranteeing them access to the good life. At others, it is positioned as a mechanism for achieving social transformation, for example by increasing social mobility. However, more usually the technocratic strand is dominant in the weave of public policy, which imagines career guidance as an intervention which can organise people in their (and others) best interests and in the best interest of society. Critically, the definition of what is best for you, for others and for society as a whole is typically decided by those with state power, or the ruling class. The public policy literature, therefore, views career guidance as a soft policy instrument in service of a wide range of historically situated policy goals—most notoriously, the shift from steering towards higher education to steering them towards TVET tracks. As Bergmo-Prvulovic argues in Chapter 9, such an approach views both career guidance and individuals themselves as a means rather than an end. On this view, the goal of career guidance is to align the behaviour of individuals with the achievement of policy objectives. Such a perspective has a strong internal logic. Given that it is the state that is largely paying for career guidance, it is unsurprising that governments would seek to utilise career guidance to achieve wider objectives.

However, in the context of a neoliberal state, the interests of individuals and the state are not always aligned. In such a situation, career guidance can easily serve as a mechanism for responsabilisation and co-option. Individuals

are schooled through neoliberal discourse to desire certain outcomes from their lives and then ‘guided’ in directions which serve those interests. As Sultana (2017b, p. 10) has argued this raises questions about how far it is legitimate for career guidance to seek to channel individuals ‘towards particular occupations on the grounds that this is of benefit to the nation’ and towards particular ways of living their lives, ways that do not always lead health and happiness. Such technocratic policies prove to be highly political and consequently exert an influence whereby the theory and practice of career guidance, particularly those aspects of it which are publicly funded, are required to support, or at least not contest, neoliberalism.

Developing the Emancipatory Tradition

In 2013, the Board of Directors for the International Association for Educational and Vocational Guidance released the *IAEVG Communiqué on Social Justice in Educational and Career Guidance and Counselling*, acknowledging the everyday work of many practitioners, but also underlining that ‘although each of us has roles and responsibilities towards social justice, we need to address the structural and societal barriers that continue to oppress people, requiring leadership and collective efforts’ (IAEVG, 2013). If our account of neoliberalism holds, then career guidance cannot go about as if it was ‘business as usual’. This would only contribute to further instilling what Standing (2011) calls ‘precaritisation’, or the ‘habituation to expecting a life of unstable labour and unstable living’. Career guidance modalities that remain focused on the individual and blind to the social inevitably end up reinforcing rather than challenging such ‘habituation’ in all sorts of ways, including through the very language that is mobilised in the exercise of the profession. Roper, Ganesh, and Inkson (2010) give a very good example of what we are referring to here in their critical analysis of the discourse around ‘boundaryless careers’, showing how such a term has become ‘normalised’, i.e. has become so integrated into the psyche of those who use it that they no longer question its precepts through ‘a critique of the circumstances of boundarylessness, or of any discussion of viable alternatives’, making it appear as if it were inevitable (pp. 670–671). A *social* reading of the term alerts us instead to the way such a metaphor constructs employees ‘as individuals with personal responsibility for their own success’, emphasising ‘individual rather than societal or organisational responsibility for economic and career outcomes’ (p. 673).

Roper et al.’s example highlights the way in which a lack of critical knowledge leads us to slide into what Foucault (1971) refers to as the ‘orders of discourse’, i.e. the socially determined and determining ways of making sense of issues and social realities, where social relationships are established and played out in both language and practice.

Career guidance is more likely to be on the side of social justice when it questions notions of ‘lifelong learning’ and ‘employability’ and the rhetoric

around ‘knowledge-based economies’ by pointing out the phenomenon of underemployment (Standing, 2011); when it insists on debating ‘employment’ rather than ‘employability’, a term that locates worklessness as a deficit in and of the individual, rather than of the labour market; or when it does not wax lyrical about ‘career mobility’ as a path to self-determination and self-fulfilment, knowing full well the cost that geographical, social and occupational identity dislocations have for security, as well as for the human satisfaction that can accrue from being embedded in a family, a community and a place (see chapter 5). Without a strongly *social* understanding of its work, career guidance quickly becomes yet another expression of a neoliberal mindset, such as when, in public employment services, it passively acquiesces to a draconian policing of benefits, thus participating in normalising the discourse about ‘free riders’ and the ‘undeserving poor’. The very core of career guidance services is also tainted when it forgets its origins rooted in a commitment to social justice and citizen support (Plant & Kjærgård, 2016), and embraces a managerialist style that processes people in relation to pre-established targets that value performativity at the cost of personhood.

And here lies a particularly intractable predicament for career guidance, whose practitioners (and researchers) are often in the employ of the state, and who nevertheless are bound by their professional ethics (IAEVG, 1995) to privilege and protect their ‘clients’. While many critiques of neoliberalism have a tendency to simplistically reproduce a binary, which posits the state as good and market as bad (Dunn, 2016), the reality is that the state, rather than monitoring the workings of the economy, has adopted the market as its organising principle. In many countries, government has *become* business, where ‘the categorical distinction between politics and economics, that classical liberal fiction, is largely erased’, leading to the state becoming ‘inextricably part of the workings of the market and, hence, no longer ‘outside’, an antidote, or an antithesis from which to rethink or reconstruct ‘the neoliberal paradigm’ (Comaroff, 2011, p. 145). Working in such a context, it becomes difficult for individuals in the employ of the state to first of all recognise, and then to resist and reimagine socially just ways of being and acting, in organisations whose institutional cultures, value systems and very thought-processes have been deeply tainted by a neoliberal mindset. In this volume, Poulsen, Skovhus and Thomsen in chapter 13 discuss the possibilities of participatory approaches to research can serve to disrupt the neoliberal discourse of a functionalist view on career learning activities.

A first step would be the radical reassessment of the very assumptions on which current practice is constructed. Such a reassessment will need to ask fundamental questions about what work, the state, the economy and career guidance are *for* and in *whose interest* we believe that they should work. Such questions require us to throw off hegemonic discourses and rethink what is held to be ‘common sense’. But the belief that society can be organised in other ways has strong empirical and emotional support. It is clear

that the world could be organised differently and that many desire it to be so; what is less clear is how we get from here to there. These volumes seek to explore both the journey away from neoliberalism and the destination beyond it. They will question what has long been taken for granted in the hope of stimulating the career guidance community worldwide to think of new ways of enacting socially just practices that contest and resist rather than buttress and support the colonisation of citizens' lives by the unprincipled principles of neoliberalism.

The discussion above on the different traditions of career guidance research and practice highlights the theoretical limitations in of the field which these volumes seek to address. Career guidance is often poorly defined and understood from the limited vantage points of vocational psychology and public policy. The often-cited OECD definition of career guidance emphasises: choice, management, ambitions, interests, qualifications, abilities, reflection and an individual understanding of these. In order to emphasise career guidance's context, consciousness about structure, embeddedness in community, culture and conditions, there is a need to develop new definitions of career guidance that can support a more emancipatory rationality compatible with social justice.

Both Sultana (2017a) and Thomsen (2017) have proposed alternative definitions. Here we draw these together with other ideas informed by the chapters in these books to propose a new definition designed to provide a rival definition to that of the OECD.

Career guidance supports individuals and groups to discover more about work, leisure and learning and to consider their place in the world and plan for their futures. Key to this is developing individual and community capacity to analyse and problematise assumptions and power relations, to network and build solidarity and to create new and shared opportunities. It empowers individuals and groups to struggle within the world as it and to imagine the world as it could be.

Career guidance can take a wide range of forms and draws on diverse theoretical traditions. But at its heart it is a purposeful learning opportunity which supports individuals and groups to consider and reconsider work, leisure and learning in the light of new information and experiences and to take both individual and collective action as a result of this.

Such a definition seeks to open up new spaces for career guidance in a way that builds on existing practice. Moving away from technocratic or hermeneutic approaches, we are seeking to emphasise career guidance as a dialogic, mutually pedagogical relationship which can support conscientisation and the development of political skills and community resources and inspire people to transform the social realities within which they find themselves. Critically, this definition is seeking to clearly broaden the scope of

career guidance to ensure that it encompasses collective as well as individual actions. Such a definition opens up a more emancipatory form of inquiry that allows for self-reflection and supports the creation of self-knowledges but acknowledges that individual biographies are immersed into a confluence of internal and external factors that limit options and provide ideological endorsement for some life choices over others. Career guidance does not promise to melt structures into nothing, but it does hope to provide tools for people to find their way to the good life as part of a broader struggle for change.

What We Hope to Achieve

What our collection of readings attempts to do is to invite career guidance workers, researchers and policymakers—who themselves are subject to many of the characteristics of work outlined above—to decode the world not from the point of view of those in power, but rather from that of the ordinary citizen, and especially the most vulnerable. In asking such pivotal questions as: *In whose interests does all this work?* and *How is social justice being served by the way we are talking about the world?* the career guidance field is less likely to passively acquiesce to a neoliberal discourse, and more likely to trouble it, to contest and to resist, refusing to be part of its order. Our ambition with this volume is to help steer the field away from an over-reliance on positivistic and developmentalist psychological traditions to a deeper engagement with multi/interdisciplinary perspectives that look at career theory and at work through the critical lenses offered by sociology, economics, philosophy and critical psychology.

Our first volume begins with a series of chapters which seek to understand the neoliberal context and the place of career guidance within it. In chapter 2, Pouyaud and Guichard use the concept of ‘decent work’ to explore the nature of work within neoliberalism. In Chapter 3 Irving explores career guidance policy in New Zealand, showing how neoliberal rationalities have shaped these policies in ways which individualise and encourage responsibility. In Chapter 4 Sultana examines how austerity has increased precarity and argues that this requires a new emancipatory approach from career guidance. In Chapter 5, Alexander examines the geographical and special dimensions to neoliberalism and brings the concept of spatial justice into view. In Chapter 6, Hooley looks at technological changes, arguing that moral panics about automation need to be situated politically and viewed as an opportunity for a renegotiation of power relations. In Chapter 7, Buchanan continues the exploration of the intersection between neoliberalism and technology, this time turning to look at how the Internet has shaped the process of career building in ways that encourage people to self-commodify and compete.

The second section looks at how we can build new theories to inform new forms of career guidance which are capable of challenging neoliberalism. In

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Chapter 8, Rice looks at the theories of Nancy Fraser to provide a basis for a more emancipatory form of career guidance. Bergmo-Prvulovic turns to look at how the concepts of ‘career’ functions as a ‘bridging object’ between different social actors in Chapter 9. She discusses how different actors tend to mobilise different theories and ideologies whilst discussing the same concept and argues for a create awareness of these different perspectives. In Chapter 10, Olle draws on both Marx and Freud to argue for ‘radical refusal’ and ‘confrontation, conflict and anger’ in the reimagining of career guidance. Drawing on Giddens in Chapter 11, Bilon uses structuration theory to provide a basis for theorising career guidance more sociologically. While in Chapter 12, Ribeiro and Fonçatti examine career guidance from the perspective of the global south, arguing for the need to develop and adapt theories which are context-relevant.

The third and final section of this volume explores the relationship between research and practice. In Chapter 13, Poulsen et al.’s analyses show that the support provided within research circles also can serve to disrupt the neoliberal discourse of a functionalist view on career learning activities. In Chapter 14, Reid and West argue that auto/biographical and narrative research has the potential to illuminate individual experiences of social injustice, and to empower people towards greater agency in their lives. Vieira et al. in Chapter 15 open up a discussion on uncertainty and risk in school choices and explore the tension between the obligation to choose an occupational path within a framework of constraints—especially uncertainty and precariousness in a neoliberal labour market and the contemporary normative injunction to pursue authenticity and self-accomplishment, despite the risks (of failure). Finally, Bengtsson in Chapter 16 invites us to think differently about emancipation, equality and social justice in career guidance and reflect upon what matters in public career guidance through the lenses offered by Foucault and Rancière.

Our first volume raises questions, offers resources and provides some glimpses of an alternative future for career guidance. History continues to unfold around us; there are many injustices to be addressed and much opportunity to struggle for a better a world. We believe that career guidance can be part of this struggle, and we hope that this volume inspires the field to engage proactively in mounting a challenge against neoliberalism.

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