

A trip can transform your life: life and career experiences in contemporaneity

Uma viagem pode transformar a sua vida: experiências de vida e carreira na contemporaneidade

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ABSTRACT

Based on real data, the following case describes Marília's career and life paths. Marília is a young executive who lives a moment of reevaluation in both professional and life aspects. A lack of life meaning led her to do volunteer tourism, seeking significant experiences and self-development in both career and life. The case aims to understand contemporary careers conceptions in its relations with the current marketplace, and how they are related to Marília's career decisions. Career is defined as a series of experiences that allows personal development and enhance individual employability. The case allows to (a) comprehend, throughout the volunteer tourism experience, how different experiences can foster and build contemporary careers thru theoretical frameworks like protean career, borderless career, kaleidoscope career, and sustainable career; (b) situate the raise of contemporary careers conceptions; (c) highlight the main features of these conceptions; (d) compare the traditional career path with the contemporary careers; (e) understand Marília's career decisions in life and work contexts, which includes the decision to travel in a volunteer tourism experience; (f) encourage the discussion of other life experiences that might add value to contemporary careers.

Keywords: Teaching Case, Kaleidoscope Career, Protean Career, Borderless Career, Sustainable Career.

RESUMO

Baseado em dados reais, este caso de ensino descreve a situação de carreira e de vida de Marília, uma jovem executiva, bem como seus questionamentos, que a levaram a buscar o turismo voluntário como forma de aliar seus valores e crenças com o viajar a turismo e com o fazer voluntariado de uma forma diferente, possibilitando seu autodesenvolvimento pessoal e profissional. O objetivo geral do caso é compreender as concepções contemporâneas de carreira, entendendo de que modo se ajustam às configurações atuais do mundo do trabalho e se relacionam com as decisões de Marília. Carreira é aqui com-

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RESUMO

preendida como uma série de experiências que possibilitam desenvolvimento profissional e contribuem para a empregabilidade individual. O caso propicia: (a) compreender, a partir da experiência de turismo voluntário de Marília, como diferentes experiências podem colaborar para a construção das carreiras contemporâneas através dos construtos teóricos de carreira proteana, carreira sem-fronteiras, carreira caleidoscópica e carreira sustentável; (b) situar o surgimento das concepções contemporâneas de carreira; (c) destacar os aspectos centrais que cercam essas concepções de carreira; (d) traçar comparação com as abordagens tradicionais de carreira; (e) entender as decisões de carreira de Marília em seu contexto de vida e trabalho, o que inclui a opção pelo turismo voluntário; (f) incitar nos alunos a reflexão sobre outras experiências de vida que possam agregar na construção das carreiras contemporâneas. **Palavras-chave:** Caso de Ensino, Carreira Caleidoscópica, Carreira Proteana, Carreira Sem-Fronteiras, Carreira Sustentável.

Introduction

Based on real data, the case describes Marília's career and life situation, a young executive, graduated in Management with several specialization courses, now working for a multinational. The case brings the career trajectory of this young woman, always in constant search for her development and professional placement, as well as her questionings. The experience of voluntary tourism is part of a set of experiences carried out by Marília in order to achieve what she has not found through work at her current company.

Marília experiences the context of building employability (FORRIER; VERBRUGGEN; DE CUYPER, 2015; FUGATE; KINICKI; ASHFORTH, 2004) as a way to stay in the labor market, supported by the current business culture that emphasizes the role of individuals as the main responsible for their careers. This situation places individuals more and more tied to work, which takes up total life time by demanding the promotion of experiences that add to the career and are also achieved outside the walls of the company. Career is understood here as a series of experiences that enable professional development and contribute to individual employability (BARUCH, 2015). With the subject being an active agent in relation to work, the criteria of success change, and become increasingly sub-

jective (LAWRENCE; HALL; ARTHUR, 2015; SULLIVAN; BARUCH, 2009; VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015).

Despite winning prestigious space in the multinational where she operates, situated in the position of coordinator of the Marketing Department, Marília declares a feeling of dissatisfaction with her current life moment. The weight of the intense work demands and the hours dedicated to investing in career-oriented improvements, reflect the feeling of dissatisfaction with life. The executive reports lack of going through experiences with a greater meaning, more consistent with her values and beliefs. At a certain point, she saw in voluntary tourism the opportunity to combine her values and beliefs with traveling for tourism and volunteering in a different way, a decision she also makes with her personal and professional self-development in mind.

The case addresses this growing phenomenon, voluntary tourism, a type of tourism that takes place from international trips with the purpose of performing some kind of short-term volunteering. These are trips intermediated by tourist agencies responsible for connecting the volunteer to a specific Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), with social projects abroad (WEARING; MCGEHEE, 2013). Among other characteristics, it comprises a type of unpaid work, a service offered in which the individual effectively pays to work as a volunteer abroad, often in conditions of adversity. The activity of voluntary tourism can also be seen as a form of “responsible consumption”, in which the tourist travels with a certain “greater” purpose, that of reciprocating socially in some way (JLUSOY, 2016; WEARING; MCGEHEE, 2013).

This case makes it possible to discuss contemporary career conceptions. It allows to understand Marília's choice for carrying out voluntary tourism based on the understanding of the transformations in the work world that lead to new possibilities for the constitution of careers in contemporary times. There is a labor market marked by turbulence and uncertainty, with the emergence of different employment links, new types of work and different conceptions of success – which also change the way in which individuals execute their careers and the way they conduct careers in organizations (BARUCH, 2006; BENDASSOLLI, 2009; SULLIVAN; BARUCH, 2009). In this perspective, it went from career constructs in which the organization was the center for conceptions considered more appropriate to the current moment and the new market requirements, aimed at the individual movement in the search for employability through diverse experiences that directly and indirectly influence

careers (BENDASSOLLI, 2009; SULLIVAN; BARUCH, 2009; BARUCH, 2015; VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015). From the point of view of the organization, the case contributes to the thinking of management focused on the professional of the twenty-first century, young people who crave more than objective career rewards – such as good remuneration and bonuses; but perceived experiences of self-realization, satisfaction and personal and professional growth. Marília's story represents the embodiment of these subjective needs and serves as inspiration for the proposition of policies and practices of people management that meet the expectations of the new generation entering the labor market. It is also possible to reflect on skills developed from experiences gained beyond the walls of companies or formal educational institutions, as is the case with voluntary tourism (MÜLLER, SCHEFFER; CLOSS, 2020). Going beyond the text, it is possible to associate the expansion of analysis perspectives (“thinking outside the box”), sensitivity, adaptability, flexibility, risk management, internal listening, research and commitment as some of the skills and learnings triggered by Marília's experience in voluntary tourism.

It is therefore appropriate to reflect on various aspects involving current career conceptions. How do contemporary career conceptions fit into the current configurations of the work world and relate to Marília's decisions? How do experiences in the context of private life, such as voluntary tourism, participate in the construction of contemporary careers? What do Marília's reflections signal us about how careers are conducted these days? What aspects, both objective and subjective, come to influence hers and the career decisions of individuals in the current work context? What changes in relation to how careers were conducted within organizations and how they are today? How would it be possible to maintain sustainability in contemporary careers? What can Marília's case already signal us in terms of career sustainability?

MARÍLIA'S STORY: LIFE AND CAREER UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Marília, 28 years old, Brazilian, natural and resident in Rio de Janeiro, capital, currently working as coordinator of the marketing department in a multinational specialized in financial consulting. She has always studied in good schools and completed her higher education in Management at a renowned University in Rio de Janeiro. Despite her young age, she already has two specializations within the

area of Marketing. She is currently in a situation of professional rise: she is the youngest in a management position within the company in which she works. “I often get positive feedback regarding my performance. I know they consider me a trusted person within the organization. There are real possibilities for growth! I also recognize that few people my age have gotten to where I am. It wasn't easy... I worked hard for it! But it isn't for everybody...”

Her parents always provided the necessary financial conditions for her to perform various extracurricular activities. In her youth, she was for a long time a youth player in the volleyball team of a Rio club. She started her English course at the age of 8, as well as a Spanish one. Upon entering university, she sought to improve herself professionally in the early years. She started her professional career at the university's Jr. Company, to then work in three companies, two of which are multinationals. In the meantime, she held a six-month exchange program in the United States to consolidate her English. “I was building my professional resume. I've always looked for experiences that led to that, working in places that could give me a certain stamp on my resume, you know?! Build a trajectory. My last internship took me to a post and here I am to this day”.

At this last job position, she mentions that there were moments of performance evaluation with her superiors and she was always questioned about her future plans and about what she had been doing for her self-development, moments that have always led her to many life questions.

Because she considers sport as an important aspect, she currently combines work with her Crossfit training. Marília defines herself as someone competitive, restless, always in search of new challenges and overcoming her own limits. “I'm quite competitive! I always try to do my best. If someone tells me: Let's do Crossfit? I already study how to diet to improve my performance, what I need to compete. At work it's the same thing! I am not one for standing still, I always try to give my best and do whatever it takes to do a job well done!”.

NEW CONCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS

One of Marília's passions is traveling. As a child, her parents periodically took her to international trips. Thus, between childhood and adulthood, she visited almost all of Europe and much of the United States (during her exchange program). In

recent years, however, due to the dedication to work and the responsibilities required by her position in the company, Marília increasingly uses holidays as escapes from her routine. She now seeks unconventional destinations, due to a self-declared desire to engage in differentiated and meaningful experiences. To this end, conventional tourist destinations no longer enough. “It’s all pretty much the same thing. We travel, visit the sights, take a picture near the Statue of Liberty, near the Eiffel Tower. These for me... They weren’t enough anymore! Of course it was never in vain, I even, whenever possible, took some course that I could add to the work. No trip of mine is empty. But I still missed something more.” This dissatisfaction in her travels was accompanied by several internal questions. “I can’t explain... In the professional sphere everything is fine. I love my work, I feel fulfilled through it. I’ve always given everything! But I entered a moment... I can’t explain! Almost a mid-30s crisis, you know? I’m questioning myself about everything! It’s almost an existential void! I miss something more!”. The dissatisfaction was so seemingly inexplicable that Marília reports being ashamed to tell friends what she was feeling: “Whenever I pulled this kind of subject my friends would say: ‘Are you crazy, Marília?! Look at the opportunity you have, look at where you are! Are you complaining about what?!’ And honestly, I liked my job! I even took anxiolytics to soften my mood. I knew I should be fine, everything was right in my life. But that discomfort, that dissatisfaction remained and, in a way, it bothered me.”

“A TRIP CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE”

Then, in one of her plans for upcoming holidays, she came across a tourist modality known as voluntary tourism. She found a company specialized in international travel to perform volunteer work abroad, headquartered in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The agency’s commercials immediately piqued her interest: “a trip that can change your life” or “come and make a difference”. So “For some reason the whole thing caught my eye! Starting with the story of the owner of the company: he worked with the board of a large company, and after a trip to volunteer in Nepal, he decided to quit that position. According to him, the journey was so transformative that he saw no more sense in what he was doing. I don’t know... somehow that got to me. I got in touch with the agency, got acquainted with the programs. I already had some money saved... I felt like I needed that!”.

After researching this type of tourism, talking to people who had already traveled, and checking the attributes of the destination countries offered by the agency, Marília discovers in South Africa the ideal destination for her vacation. “First of all it's an English speaking country, right?! I could practice. I need to be constantly practicing... Second, the country's beautiful nature and the projects as a caregiver for children seemed so rewarding! I've always had a curiosity, a desire to do something like that! The time had come!”.

In June 2017, Marília travels to Cape Town to volunteer at an orphanage for needy children in a nearby town. The poor conditions of the site – lack of basic sanitation, shortage of water and food, caused an initial shock. However, the joy of the children in welcoming her (along with the other volunteers), made her dizzy. “It was a great emotion to see those children, even without anything, screaming, happy to receive us! They were all waiting for us at the orphanage gate... it was beautiful to look at. And every day was like that! Every day they welcomed us laughing, partying!”. The children's precariousness in the local reality awakens conflicting feelings in Marília. Although her intention was to help them, she felt that she herself experienced a life lesson. “Almost a punch in the stomach, a slap in the face. It is an experience that puts in check all your life's problems. You see no sense in complaining about work, in complaining about life... Your problems are minimal compared to what those children experience. And they are always happy. It hurt my heart”.

LIFE AND CAREER CHOICES REASSESSMENTS

Returning to the routine was not easy. Although she says she is more motivated than she was in the period before the trip, her existential questions extend to work. “I feel more motivated to do my best! I always remember children in Africa. I have nothing to complain about!! Only that... I realized that I don't feel complete anymore just living to pay my bills, sitting behind the computer. I know that my work is important, that it has great relevance. But in the financial consulting business, I actually only help wealthy people to get richer. I realized on this trip that I have a greater need to donate myself to the world, to plant a seed. Perhaps because I have always had every opportunity in life. I don't know! I just know that I feel, more and more, a thirst for something more! For making a difference in the world”. When reflecting if the trip was, in fact, the starting point for all these transformations, Marília says

thoughtfully: “The trip did not come alone, it was the sum of several factors. Perhaps I had been in need for some time. But it was certainly a transformative point: you living the experience is something that goes far beyond words”.

Currently, Marília still works at the financial consultancy company, but sees this career moment as transitory. “I will soon be leaving... the financial return definitely does not hold me back. It’s a mental health issue, you know? I need new challenges, a turn in my life. My superiors are already informed, I am planning to leave within 1 year, we made an agreement. And this moment of transition is important. I made a financial plan, when I leave the company I will be well supported to take risks in new projects”. When asked about the new career possibilities, Marília gives some clues about her future plans: “First I want to take a sabbatical to work on volunteer projects in several countries and in Brazil as well. In these trips I already intend to apply all the knowledge acquired over the years with planning, management and so on... I want to assist as I can the NGOs that receive volunteers. Then I intend to work on social projects, in Brazil and abroad. Maybe opening an agency specializing in voluntary tourism, who knows? Or organize volunteer groups for specific projects already developed by NGOs in different communities. I don't know exactly yet. Let's see how things go in this sabbatical year, a lot happens during these experiences, maybe I'll come back with completely new ideas”.

TEACHING NOTES

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the case is to promote a discussion on how, given the current work context, different experiences, not strictly related to the organizational scope and formal educational institutions, can influence and participate in the construction of contemporary careers, based on Marília's experience, the central character, with voluntary tourism. In view of the situation presented, the case allows to understand contemporary conceptions of career, understanding how they adjust to the current configurations of the work world and are related to Marília's decisions. And although it is not the main focus, it still allows reflections on the role of companies in this context. Understanding careers in contemporary times allows us

to understand the expectations of young people who enter the current job market, personified in Marília's figure, in addition to serving as a support for proposing management practices aimed at engaging and retaining this professional profile.

The case provides: **(a)** understanding, from Marília's experience of voluntary tourism, how different experiences can collaborate for the construction of contemporary careers; **(b)** situate the emergence of contemporary career concepts; **(c)** highlight the central aspects surrounding these career concepts; **(d)** draw a comparison with traditional career approaches; **(e)** understand Marília's career decisions in her life and work context, which includes the option for voluntary tourism; **(f)** from the management point of view, Marília's story allows us to think about the current needs of young professionals, which has to do with expectations regarding the company that involve subjective rewards, such as self-realization and personal and professional development; **(g)** it allows thinking about people management practices and policies that meet the needs of these professionals; **(h)** it allows discussing topics such as motivation and engagement in organizations; **(i)** more specifically, it makes it possible to think about non-traditional ways of developing skills and learnings that meet the current needs of companies; in addition to **(j)** encouraging students to reflect on other life experiences that can add to the constitution of contemporary careers. The last issue **(j)** is set to expand the possibilities of discussing the case, since the experience of voluntary tourism may be financially inaccessible for some students.

DATA SOURCES

The data that constitute the respective teaching case were collected through semi-structured script interviews, with participants who undertook voluntary tourism. Twenty interviews were conducted between the beginning of August and the end of October 2017, part of a qualitative exploratory study designed for a dissertation. The survey was conducted with participants from different Brazilian states, through face-to-face interviews and via online applications (Skype or video conference via Messenger), according to the interviewee's availability or residence.

Marília is one of the interviewees, who, in a way, represents a specific group of research participants, with similar life and career trajectories and characteristics. Thus, she represents a group of interviewees, aged between 25 and 30 years old,

who declare that they are experiencing a moment of career advancement. They consider themselves to be successful at work and enjoy professional challenges that are compatible with their personal values. Therefore, Marília's statements reproduced in the case are sometimes similar to those of the participants.

The voluntary tourism agency mentioned in the case helped to attract participants for the research and brokered the trip of 11 among the 20 interviewees. The references to the company's founder expressed in the case with Marília's statements are adaptations of the interviewees' reports, clients of the agency, who identify with the entrepreneur's trajectory.

TARGET AUDIENCE AND THEMES/SUBJECTS FOR APPLYING THE CASE

The target audience of the case is varied, including undergraduate students from courses such as administration and psychology, professionals of specialization and master's courses, as well as all those interested in reflecting and learning about career and life issues. It can be worked in subjects such as People Management, Career Management, People Development, Organizational Behavior and Psychology applied to Management, among others.

What topics will be worked on in class/section in which the case will be used?

- Changes in the work world and the work world today
- Contemporary career conceptions
- Career and subjective criteria of success
- Implications of new career conceptions in aspects of life and work

Suggestion for a lesson plan

It is suggested that the case study be analyzed in the classroom in pairs or small groups (3 or 4 students) and discussed later in the large group (complete class). For the reading of the case and the initial discussion, it is proposed a time of about 30 minutes. After, each group will present their highlights in the discussion and conclusions.

It is important that students have done a previous reading of the recommended articles, or have had a class with previous discussion on the topic. It is also recommended to highlight the transition from career constructs in which the organization

was the center, to more contemporary conceptions based on a notion of trajectory/life projects, considered more appropriate to current market requirements. In this sense, it is proposed that students have contact especially with the notions of protean career (HALL; YIP; DOIRON, 2018; HALL, 2004), borderless career (ARTHUR, 2008; GUAN et al., 2019), kaleidoscopic career (MAINIERO; SULLIVAN, 2005), sustainable careers (DE VOS et al., 2016; DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020; VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015) and career anchors (SCHEIN, 1996), as well as be able to think about changes in the role of organizations in the conduct of careers (VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015; LAWRENCE; HALL; ARTHUR, 2015; BARUCH, 2006; VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010). Regarding the concept of career anchor, although it was developed by Schein in the 1970s, it was revisited and updated by the author in subsequent years and remains a reference for career studies (VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010). Thus, it is recommended to discuss aspects such as the propagated need for career self-management, the need for constant development aimed at a flexible and adaptable posture of the subjects, the multidirectionality that careers assume, the breaking of barriers/boundaries between life and work and transposition of contexts, the subjective criteria of success, the construction of employability, the search for the sustainability of careers, as well as the possibility of thinking about the search for experiences that add value to careers, many are achieved outside the scope of the organization (DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020), as proposed in the case. With regard to the role of organizations, it is suggested to reflect on the implications of these changes in career development and to what extent they reflect the reality of organizations in Brazil.

The discussion on sustainable careers is recent in the academic field, especially in Brazil, which also marks the relevance of the discussion of these topics with the desired audience. Their greatest contribution lies in approaching careers from a long-term perspective (DE VOS et al., 2016; LAWRENCE; HALL; ARTHUR, 2015), considering as relevant in professional trajectories, not only the need for employability, but also aspects intrinsically important to human beings, such as mental/physical health and happiness (DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020). The assumptions of sustainable career (DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020) also allow the discussion of the influence of aspects outside the institutional or organizational environment in the composition of contemporary careers.

It is also timely, in a broad way, to discuss how aspects inherent to the identity of the subject – as personal values and particular priorities (BENDASSOLLI, 2009; HALL; YIP; DOIRON, 2018) take shape in this context, as well as career starts to relate to the notion of trajectory/life projects.

In order to facilitate the conduct of the case, the following prior readings are recommended:

For undergraduate/specialization classes:

About Voluntary Tourism and careers:

MÜLLER, C. V.; SCHEFFER, A. B. B. Turismo voluntário: uma experiência em busca do sentido? vida e trabalho em questão. *Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, v. 20, n. 1, p. 1–26, 2019. DOI: 10.1590/1678-6971/eramg190095.

About contemporary careers:

VELOSO, E. F. R.; DUTRA, J. S. Evolução do conceito de carreira e sua aplicação para a organização e para as pessoas. In: DUTRA, J. S. *Gestão de carreiras na empresa contemporânea*. São Paulo: Atlas, 2010.

For Master's classes:

About voluntary tourism and careers:

MÜLLER, C. V.; SCHEFFER, A. B. B. Turismo voluntário: uma experiência em busca do sentido? vida e trabalho em questão. *Revista de Administração Mackenzie*, v. 20, n. 1, p. 1–26, 2019. DOI: 10.1590/1678-6971/eramg190095.

About the development of skills and learning from voluntary tourism:

MÜLLER, C. V.; SCHEFFER, A. B. B.; CLOSS, L. Q. Volunteer tourism , transformative learning and its impacts on careers : the case of Brazilian volunteers. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, December 2019, p. 1–13, 2020. DOI: 10.1002/jtr.2368

About contemporary careers:

ARTHUR, M. B. Examining contemporary careers: A call for interdisciplinary inquiry. *Human Relations*, v. 61, n. 2, p. 163–186, fev. 2008. DOI: 10.1177/0018726707087783

- BARUCH, Y. Career development in organizations and beyond: balancing traditional and contemporary viewpoints. *Human Resource Management Review*, v. 16, n. 2, p. 125–138, 2006. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.03.002
- BENDASSOLLI, P. F. Recomposição da relação sujeito-trabalho nos modelos emergentes de carreira. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, v. 49, n.4, 387–400, out-dez, 2009. DOI: 10.1590/S0034-75902009000400003.
- HALL, D. T. The protean career: a quarter-century journey. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, v. 65, n. 1, p. 1–13, 2004. 10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.006
- HALL, D. T.; YIP, J.; DOIRON, K. Protean careers at work: self-direction and values orientation in psychological success. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, v. 5, n. 1, p. 129–156, 2018. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104631
- MAINIERO, L. A.; SULLIVAN, S. E. Kaleidoscope careers: an alternate explanation for the “opt-out” revolution. *The Academy of Management Executive*, v. 19, n. 1, 106-123, 2005. 10.5465/ame.2005.15841962.
- MAINIERO, L. A.; GIBSON, D. E. The kaleidoscope career model revisited: how midcareer men and women diverge on authenticity, balance, and challenge. *Journal of Career Development*, v. 45, n. 4, p. 361–377, 2017. DOI: 10.1177/0894845317698223
- RIZZATTI, D. B.; SACRAMENTO, A. M.; VALMORBIDA, V. S.; MAYER, V. P.; OLIVEIRA, M. Z. Transição de carreira em adultos brasileiros: um levantamento da literatura científica. *Revista Interinstitucional de Psicologia*, v.11, n. 1, 153-173, 2018. DOI: 10.36298/gerais2019110112
- SCHEIN, E. H. Career anchors revisited: implications for career development in the 21st century. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, v. 10, n. 4, p. 80–88, 1996. DOI: 10.5465/ame
- SULLIVAN, S. E.; BARUCH, Y. Advances in career theory and research: A critical review and agenda for future exploration. *Journal of Management*, v. 35, n. 6, p. 1542–1571, 2009. DOI: 10.1177/0149206309350082
- VELOSO, E. F. R.; DUTRA, J. S. Evolução do conceito de carreira e sua aplicação para a organização e para as pessoas. In: *Gestão de carreiras na empresa contemporânea*, 2010.

About sustainable careers :

BARUCH, Y. Organizational and labor markets as career ecosystem. In: *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015. p. 364–380. DOI: 10.4337/9781782547037.00029

DE VOS, A.; VAN DER HEIJDEN, B. I. J. M.; AKKERMANS, J. Sustainable careers: towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, v. 117, n. June 2018, p. 1–13, 2020. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2018.06.011

LAWRENCE, B. S.; HALL, D. T.; ARTHUR, M. B. Sustainable careers then and now. In: *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015. p. 432–450. DOI: 10.4337/9781782547037.00033

VAN DER HEIJDEN, B. I. J. M.; DE VOS, A. Sustainable careers: introductory chapter. In: *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015. p. 1–19. DOI: 10.4337/9781782547037.00006

About employability:

BENDASSOLLI, P. F. Recomposição da relação sujeito-trabalho nos modelos emergentes de carreira. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, v. 49, n.4, 387–400, out-dez, 2009. DOI: 10.1590/S0034-75902009000400003.

FUGATE, M.; KINICKI, A. J.; ASHFORTH, B. E. Employability: A psycho-social construct, its dimensions, and applications. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, v. 65, n. 1, p. 14–38, 2004. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2003.10.005

FORRIER, A.; VERBRUGGEN, M.; DE CUYPER, N. Integrating different notions of employability in a dynamic chain: The relationship between job transitions, movement capital and perceived employability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, v. 89, p. 56–64, 2015. DOI: 10.1016/j.jvb.2015.04.007

Questions for discussion

1. Discuss how contemporary notions of career fit the configurations of the current work world and how they differ from the traditional notion of career? What changes in terms of career development for individuals and organizations? How can Marília's questionings be related to current career conceptions?
2. What features concerning the protean career, borderless career, kaleidoscopic career and career anchors can be identified in the case?

3. The need to build employability permeates the various aspects of the study of contemporary careers. How do you understand this question and how does it appear in the case?
4. What other life experiences can be added to the constitution of contemporary careers in the face of the current demands of organizations? Justify relating to the theories studied.
5. The notions of contemporary careers bring a dimension that involves searching for meaning tied to the subjective criteria of success. Marília holds a management position of recognized responsibility within the company, with clear possibility of professional advancement. So, how would you explain Marília's anxieties and questionings?
6. Marília's expectations regarding her career represent the demands of professionals of the 21st century. Remuneration and bonuses are not enough to keep this professional engaged, in what is perceived a search for self-realization and personal and professional development. How can companies meet the expectations of this professional? Propose policies and/or people management practices that could motivate professionals with Marília's profile.
7. What would be a sustainable career? How can Marília's case relate to the search for sustainability in career?

As a practical contribution for students to think about their careers, we suggest the use of tools such as **Canvas you** (MIRANDA, 2020), which aims to structure career and life planning from the identification of strengths or **Roda da Vida** (RODA DA VIDA, 2020), a self-knowledge tool focused on career and personal life.

Discussion (or Case Analysis)

The traditional notion of linear, hierarchical and stable career was based on the notion of employment from the industrial society and typical characteristic of large organizations (BARUCH, 2006; BENDASSOLLI, 2009; VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010). By the end of the Twentieth Century, the organizational structure and the system

of organizational development based on hierarchies were dominant in Western societies, supporting a so-called traditional, more linear career model, where the criterion of success was determined by the individual's ability to reach the maximum point of the hierarchical pyramid within enterprises. The organization was therefore primarily responsible for managing the careers of individuals.

However, between the late 1990s and the beginning of the Twenty-First Century, globalization, rapid technological advances, changes in the labor market itself, the diversification of the workforce, the drying up of traditional organizational structures, among other organizational and contextual changes led to greater unpredictability that no longer opens up space and does not guarantee the hierarchical rise within the same organization. From an organizational point of view, security and stability, previously guaranteed by the company, give way to “opportunities for development” (BARUCH, 2006), in a new subject-work relationship guided by employability (BENDASSOLLI, 2009), in which the individual takes greater command of his/her own career. Thus, it became necessary to revisit the current theoretical models of career for conceptions that were able to accommodate this new conjuncture.

Marília experiences this situation directly. The idea of constant improvement directly permeates her entire life trajectory. At the age of 8 she begins her studies in English, a language of paramount importance for insertion in the current market. As English no longer appears as a differential but an essential demand, Marília later seeks to learn Spanish. Upon entering University, she joined the Jr. Company to acquire business experience, as well as conduct an exchange program to the United States in order to improve her English. This movement can be understood within the idea of employability. Employability is understood as the ability to continuously fill, acquire and create work through skills optimization (FORRIER; VERBRUGGEN; DE CUYPER, 2015; VAN DER HEIJDEN; VAN DER HEIJDEN, 2006), within a context of continuous learning. It is up to the individual to feed their employability through experiences that develop or create skills essential for their support in the labor market (VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015), which does not necessarily mean being employed in any organization. In this sense, Marília's attitudes are primarily based on actions (such as language courses, Jr. Company, travels) that do not depend on an employment bond.

Career development was traditionally seen as an object of control of the organization, linked to the growth in the hierarchy, and the company was responsible for its command. Nowadays, the role of the individual in the conduct of their careers is broadened, which does not mean that, as it appears in the case, the organization does not yet have a role in this process. Marília was constantly challenged to reflect on her future and on what she had been doing for her self-development, especially in the moments of performance evaluation with her superiors, moments that always led her to many life questions. Thus, from its practices, it is up to the organization to stimulate, especially from its managers/leaders, also the development of this employability, in a role of the organization more of support and facilitator of a successful career (BARUCH, 2006).

Thus, theoretical career models that aim to respond to this set of current socioeconomic requirements arise. Contemporary career conceptions have similar characteristics and theoretical models that are distinguished from each other due to the emphasis given to each approach. When applying the case in the classroom, it is possible for students to answer this question using a specific career theory, or by taking a snapshot of the main ideas within the scope understood by these theoretical models. It is important to think that such models indicate movements of changes, not necessarily representing dichotomies or denying aspects that no longer exist (BARUCH, 2006). As Baruch (2006) points out, all these changes do not mean that we are heading for a total change, because traditional career elements are still present in practice, such as the search for a certain stability among people, “which still needs to find different ways to be filled” (p.135). Thus, one can have companies operating in more predictable contexts, individuals who seek stability or growth in hierarchy, visions of career success based on remuneration, status or power.

The protean career model (HALL; YIP; DOIRON, 2018; HALL, 2004) points to the need for a flexible and adaptable posture not only of the market, but also in the subject. Under the eyes of the individual, the contract of loyalty to the company was replaced by another one based on the development of continuous learning skills. The criteria of success change, and relate mainly to the individual's own perception of the meaning of a “successful career”. To be successful, therefore, does not necessarily mean to be pegged to the walls of a given organization. Other highlighted aspects are the active posture of the subject in the conduct of their

careers, as well as the need for greater autonomy, the ability to learn, to direct career and life and to build relationships (VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010).

Upon entering University and studying Management, Marília begins an explicit process of acquiring professional experience. It begins, initially, with unpaid work in the Jr. Company, and after a while, she begins a trajectory of institutional linkage and disconnection. According to what is expressed in the case, the alternation of experience in three different companies, in addition to the exchange program abroad, demonstrates Marília's concern to constantly improve herself, no due loyalty to any particular organization. The company is therefore seen as an opportunity for development, a step in career building, and not its final destination (not least because the economic settings do not guarantee the long-term bond). Success, for Marília, is therefore not tied to the hierarchical rise within the same organization, but takes on a more subjective character, since the trajectory is commanded by her own aspirations and desires.

In this sense, Baruch (2004) highlights as characteristic of contemporary careers, the multiple possible directions of development in search of career success. There is no single direction for success, which implies other options of criteria for defining career success, such as self-realization, autonomy, freedom. Such aspects are allied to traditional measures such as success, income, position and status (external criteria), but due to trajectory non-linearity converge in the possibility of different criteria, which include more internal criteria of success. Marília's internal questions are linked to this conjuncture: although she was in a well-paid position with good professional placement, this alone was not enough. Although the case does not go into detail about the future, it brings indications that Marília may change companies in the future, in search of something more consistent with her values, emphasizing the contemporary notion of career success related to intrinsic aspects of the individual. The experience with volunteer tourism fulfills what it promises "a trip that will transform your life" and arouses her interest in activities that cause more satisfaction than that obtained in her current job. The moment the individual takes over the agency of his/her career, he/she puts a little of himself/herself in this construction. Hall (2004) illustrates this situation by emphasizing that careers are driven by the "*path with the heart*", referring to the idea of a career plan, which is no longer so dependent on organizations.

Baruch (2006) states that we are living a movement of change in the values and norms that guide careers, from a traditional notion to more contemporary ones, which can lead people to crises at work. The role of values as a guide in the conduct of careers appears in this sense, being important for the choices of where and in which to work.

Furthermore, voluntary tourism is approached in the academy as an experience that assists in the individual's self-knowledge processes (COGHLAN; WEILER, 2015; ULUSOY, 2016; ZAHRA; MCINTOSH, 2007). In Baruch's proposal (2004), career is affected by life experiences which, when significant to the individual, can lead to life and career reassessments (MÜLLER; SCHEFFER; CLOSS, 2020; MÜLLER; SCHEFFER, 2019).

Success also appears as linked to the balance between life and work, in a quest to minimize the levels of stress arising from the current demands that put the individual in constant movement (BARUCH, 2006). Marília increasingly uses holidays as an escape from her routine, even starting to look for unconventional destinations now, due to a self-declared desire to engage in different and meaningful experiences.

Similarly, the borderless career model (Arthur, 2008) points to the sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the limits of the configurations of a single job, bringing a notion of breaking barriers and transposition of contexts. Spheres of life, work, among other contexts, therefore, intertwine and interact with each other in career decisions. Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015) address this issue by emphasizing the idea of “social spaces” present in contemporary conceptions, to be discussed a little further following this work. In general, this concerns the inherent interaction of the individual with the various contexts that permeate it – life, family, market, organizations, economy spheres. Careers are increasingly borderless (BARUCH, 2006; VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010) and decisions inherent to the professional trajectory enter different individual spheres in a context of life and career which are inseparable and interrelated.

In this sense, Marília's life history is built by aspects that permeate, at all times, issues of work and career. Her travels, even if carried out at a time that would be intended for leisure, bring with them an idea of experience that contributes, in some way, to the career: “whenever possible I took some course that could add to

the work. No trip of mine is empty”; this is also verified in the choice of destinations, giving priority to countries that have English as the official language even in her trip with the purpose of volunteering. This conjuncture is a reflection of the context of employability (BARUCH, 2006; VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015), in which individuals, in moments of non-work, devote themselves to experiences that may increase their professional curriculum.

Borderless careers (ARTHUR, 2008) signal a greater mobility of the individual, who seeks organizations in order to gain experience and learning. Learning happens by the movement between projects, both at the organizational and life level, and by the discontinuity of the career (VELOSO; DUTRA, 2010). Marília's life and career experiences can be observed in the light of this perspective, strengthening her identity to the extent that this set of choices, because they are guided by her values, say something about her. It is worth noting, as Baruch (2006) points out, that more stable and linear patterns have changed to more dynamic systems. It changes the role of command and control of organizations to a more significant role of support and career development.

Another possibility of analysis of Marília's career is from the kaleidoscopic career model, proposed by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). In this construct, the career is relational to the moment of life of individuals, who modify their careers in order to fit roles or stages appropriate to their intrinsic needs. The nomenclature refers to the kaleidoscopic device, which uses three different colored mirrors to create infinite patterns. In this theory, three main career motivations are considered: **(1) authenticity**, in which career choices made allow one to be true to oneself – “Can I be myself in the middle of all this and still be authentic?”; **(2) balance**, aspect that seeks balance between work demands versus other aspects of one's life (such as family, friends, personal interests and etc.) – “If I make this career decision, can I balance the parts of my life into a coherent whole?”; and **(3) challenge**, where the emphasis is on a job considered stimulating and that enables career advancement (e.g. jobs with great responsibility or that allow autonomy) – “Will I be sufficiently challenged if I accept this career option?” (MAINIERO; SULLIVAN, 2005). There are noticeable changes of priorities in Marília's life, triggered especially with the experience of voluntary tourism. “Authenticity” appears as an important point, for example, when career changes are observed in the search for meaning, as well

as “challenge”, associated with the constant search for new experiences and opportunities. In addition, it is possible to discuss subjective success criteria and their relationship with changes in career priorities according to the career moment experienced. In a similar line, Mainiero and Gibson (2017) discuss the kaleidoscopic career theory by comparing careers of men and women, expanding the possibilities of the theory discussion. Thus, some points for articulation in the class discussions are suggested: What is the role of contemporary organizations in the face of the increasing need of individuals to balance work and life demands? What measures, policies and practices of people management can be adopted by organizations to meet the expectations of these professionals? What skills and learning capacities did the experience of voluntary tourism bring to Marília's career? What other life experiences can add to the construction of contemporary careers?

CAREER ANCHORS

The case can also be explored under the career anchors proposed by Schein (1996) and serve as a support for understanding the theory. In this perspective, professional choices are related to the reality of individuals determined by behavior patterns. Thus, career anchors are built during people's lives, through experiences that corroborate with the creation of values, needs and talents that form guiding directions of careers (SCHEIN, 1996). As explained by Veloso and Dutra (2010, p. 7), the career anchor influences and affects job change decisions, employment, determines future visions and career choices, as well as the individual's reactions in relation to work. Anchors influence individuals to a greater or lesser degree, not acting alone. This concept can be used by professionals in the area of people management as an aid in the definition of the professional project, by studying the self-perception of individuals in relation to their career aspirations.

Thus, Veloso and Dutra (2010) highlight characteristics of the career anchors proposed by Schein (1996):

1. **Technical/functional competence:** people with a sense of identity focused on technical issues. They feel fully realized when the work enables challenges within technical areas. People with this anchor usually have no interest in management, especially if it implies giving up their specialty area.

- II. **General managerial competence:** anchor related to absolute responsibility for results and identification of work with the success of the organization. People with this anchor tend to build opportunities that allow them to integrate other people's efforts into their own roles, prompting transformation of technical competence into a constant learning experience.
- III. **Autonomy/Independence:** anchor that emphasizes the opportunity to define one's own work, in which even in a formal organization, the person seeks functions that allow flexibility. It is important to the point that the individual refuses promotions if they affect their autonomy.
- IV. **Security/Stability:** there is the primary concern in the promise of job security. Being successful, in this anchor, relates to the idea of tranquility in relation to work.
- V. **Entrepreneurial Creativity:** anchor focused on the creation of the organization itself through its own capacity and willingness to take risks. The career path is built by identifying future opportunities. Success, in this anchor, is directly related to financial success.
- VI. **Service/Dedication to a Cause:** people from this anchor are looking for work opportunities that can accomplish something they consider useful, such as acting on causes, solving social and environmental problems, or assisting others. Occupations that allow this type are sought, even if it results in the change of organization and refusal of promotions that deviate from this goal.
- VII. **Pure Challenge:** Competitive jobs are sought, in which job opportunities aimed at solving problems and situations of difficult resolution are not neglected. People under this anchor are motivated by novelty, variety and difficulties, in which overcoming is an end in itself. It is usually an anchor found in people who are engaged in complex intellectual works or in interpersonal competitions.
- VIII. **Lifestyle:** this anchor emphasizes professional choices that balance and integrate personal and family needs with career requirements. The way of life is linked to the career in the most different expectations, according to what is valued by the individual. It can be said that the balance between personal and professional life is sought.

Thus, the case presents clues about Marília's career anchors, by raising perceptions of the character in relation to work and life aspects. One perceives a life focused on excellency and high performance in the personal sphere, which reflects in the professional, implicit in situations such as: (a) playing in the youth volleyball team in a Rio Club; (b) involvement with *Crossfit*, an activity that requires overcoming one's own limits; (c) high dedication to work, when she says: "I always try to deliver my best and do what it takes for a job well done" or "few people my age have reached where I am, (...) I worked hard for it." There is also a search for meaning experienced by Marília. Even before the trip, she demonstrates a dissatisfaction with work, which rewards her financially, but does not bring a sense of self-realization. Acting with a cause, on the other hand, satisfies her more deeply than the assignments in her current job: "I realized I don't feel complete just living to pay my bills, sitting behind the computer." After the trip this feeling becomes stronger and culminates in several reflections about her current job: "in the financial consulting business, I actually only help rich people get richer. I realized on this trip that I have a greater need to donate to the world, to plant a seed". It is noteworthy that career anchors (SCHEIN, 1996) are identified through self-perception, where previously lived experiences are considered.

The proposed case is adequate to allow the student to reflect on the possible anchors with greater influence in Marília's life. There is no correct answer, it is up to the students to present their interpretations within the proposed, in agreement with Schein's theory (1996). It is also possible to apply the test of career anchors in the classroom, articulating with the other discussions on career and work performed.

SUSTAINABLE CAREERS

Another possibility of discussion of the case is from the concept of sustainable career (VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015; DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN, 2017). Van der Heijden and De Vos (in 2015) will offer a concept, built on the key concepts of contemporary careers (ARTHUR, 2008; BARUCH, 2006; HALL, 2004; MAINIERO; SULLIVAN, 2005; SULLIVAN; BARUCH, 2009), and in the end, sustainable is defined as "the sequence of experiences in the career of an individual, which are reflected by means of a variety of patterns of continuity over time, and across various social spaces, characterized as it is by the agency of the individual, in addition to providing

meaning for the individual” (VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015, p. 7). His understanding starts from four main dimensions: **(i) time, (ii) social space, (iii) agency and (iv) sense.**

Time (i) relates to a cycle of events and decisions, highlighting the dynamics of careers. Whether opting for new paths (BARUCH, 2006), crossing different barriers (ARTHUR, 2008), or involving other types of work, with change of company and temporary status as a result of a particular event. The **social spaces** dimension **(ii)** highlights that careers become increasingly borderless (ARTHUR, 2008), with professional decisions that enter different individual spheres. The subject influences and is influenced by various contexts – life, family, market, organizations, economy spheres. Therefore, choices/experiences of the particular scope, such as voluntary tourism, may affect other aspects of life, such as work and career. The possibility of acting with one's own hands [hands-on-service] in volunteer activities, as well as individual and collective reflections arising from cultural encounters inherent to volunteer tourism, are aspects that can trigger changes among those involved through transformative learning (MÜLLER; SCHEFFER; CLOSS, 2020; ULUSOY, 2016; COGHLAN; WEILER, 2015). Marília reports having experienced impactful situations in her volunteer program, which added to the inherent difficulties of social projects in countries in vulnerable situations, that triggered in her a series of reflections on life and career, present and future.

The individual assumes the role of “master of your own destiny” (BARUCH, 2006), being responsible for the **agency (iii)** of his/her career in line with the meaning attached to work. By **meaning (iv)** it implies attributes considered essential for the satisfaction of the individuals with their careers – which permeates both the individual sphere of the subject (desires), as well as the organizational context, providing the conditions for these needs to be met. Marília says that voluntary tourism was sought as an alternative in a specific moment of her life, an escape from the work routine and its future concerns, relating to her personal values. In addition, it gave rise to a desire to reciprocate socially, in some way, from everything she experienced.

Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015) bring the idea of sustainability in careers, which would be achieved through career experiences that have a certain continuity over time, considering the need to develop employability, and depending on a proactive and adaptable attitude in relation to the environment that surrounds it. Going further, it also involves considering aspects related to human sustainability (DE VOS;

VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020; DE VOS et al., 2016). From this, De Vos et al. (2020) introduce three indicators of sustainable careers “productivity”, “health” and “happiness”, which represent aspects considered essential for individual prosperity, in addition to being foundations for the well-being of the individual in the most diverse social spaces that participate and interact, such as the family, organizational and social spheres (BARUCH, 2015; VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015). Marília is perceived as susceptible to less worries and with a greater ability to deal with stressful situations, as if the balance between life and work had been, in a way, restored with the performance of an activity that provided satisfaction in the context of life, as possible reflexes in new postures at work (resilience, proactivity). The dimension of career sustainability relative to happiness permeates the idea of subjective criteria of success, and refers to the perception of participants about their career satisfaction. Marília demonstrates that she is not bound to objective rewards, such as good wages and positions in companies, a fact reinforced by stating that she is in moments of reassessment about what she wants in her career.

It is a constant search, guided by what is considered relevant (which provides meaning) to the individual, within the moment of career considered (DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020). Marília speaks, in a way, of this search that culminated in reflections on her life and career, turning to a search for alternatives more consistent with her aspirations, values and goals. Voluntary tourism also appeared as a possibility, as an experience of self-realization in other areas of her life, going beyond the organizational walls. Marília shows herself in a constant movement of building who she is, her identity(ies), in constant attention to what she has to offer to the market (building her employability), seeking to ally meaning in this movement. The work shifts from the central point, loses its centrality, no longer being the main way through which individuals define themselves, fixing their identity and their life projects (BENDASSOLLI, 2009).

The study on sustainability in careers can be approached from different theoretical perspectives, in which it is possible to stimulate the student to think about the practical implications of the theme. In addition to the discussions proposed in its fundamental article (VAN DER HEIJDEN; DE VOS, 2015), it is suggested: (i) to enter into factors that contribute to sustainability in careers based on the sustainability indicators proposed in the study by De Vos, Van der Heijen and Akkermans (2020),

such as health, happiness, and productivity; (ii) an understanding of different contextual influences on careers, and how they affect their sustainability, with the proposal of career ecosystems (BARUCH, 2015) or with the sustainable care process model (DE VOS; VAN DER HEIJDEN; AKKERMANS, 2020); (iii) a study on the factors that contribute to the employability (FORRIER; VERBRUGGEN; DE CUYPER, 2015; FUGATE; KINICKI; ASHFORTH, 2004) to discuss the implications of this logic in the worker's quality of life (LAWRENCE; HALL; ARTHUR, 2015).

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