

The Five Dimensions of Environmentally Sustainable Career Guidance



Nordic- Baltic Euroguidance webinar
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It's me! Hi!

- Miriam Dimsits
- Associate professor, VIA University College, School of Continuing Education, Aarhus, Denmark
- Work and live in Aarhus, DK
- My life and career woven together with this place..
- I spend time here, resonance
- Which places/habitats are woven in to your career?
- Where do you find resonance?



Agenda:

- Defining terms and methodology
- The five dimensions of environmentally sustainable career guidance
- A framework for theory and practice of environmentally sustainable career guidance
- Career guidance scenarios: How to use the five dimensions of environmentally sustainable career guidance to develop concrete guidance activities
- Mini-workshop and questions!

The work I'm introducing is
a piece of research developed together
with Tristram Hooley, Professor of
Career Education, ICEGS,
Derby/Inland Norway University
.....publication in review😊



Our aim

To bring clarity into the career guidance field, so

1. What is green guidance/sustainable career guidance?
2. What is this practice addressing/what is the problem?
3. How can it be done?

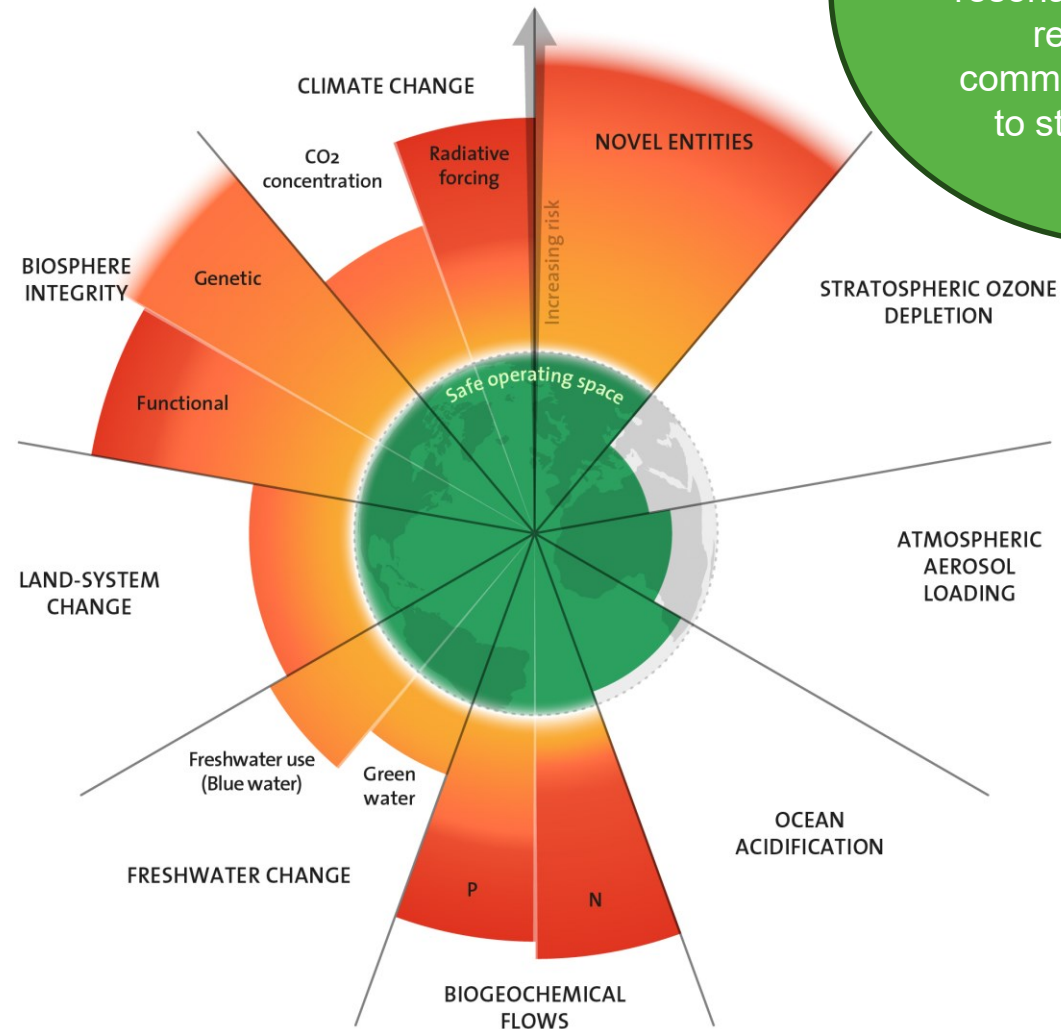


What is this practice addressing/what is the problem?

- A result of the way we consume, produce, live.....
- A result of how we work!!
- Calls for urgent change of the way we consume, produce, live
- The labour market is changing: Some industries/workfields are closing
- The labour market has to change: New industries/workfields are arising
- Career guidance has played an important part in helping people to adapt to change
- Career guidance has also helped to push for changes
- Leaving nobody behind/ ensuring social justice

(Azote for Stockholm Resilience Centre, based on analysis in Richardson et al 2023.)

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Hartmut Rosa: Our accelerated lifestyles has led to loss of resonance with nature, relationships, communities...leading to stress, burnout!

NAMING THIS PRACTICE: BRINGING CLARITY INTO THE FIELD

- Green vs. sustainable - Both concepts have built-in vaguenesses/obscurities/ambiguities
- What does “green” guidance mean? Something with nature...but not the systemic dimension of interrelations, impacts, reciprocity of education, labour market, production, consumption
- Does “sustainable” perhaps encompass a little too much of what we want to achieve? And take away focus from climate, environment and biodiversity?
- We want to bring (the power of) informed and research based clarity and precision into the field
- Naming a career guidance practice, that addresses the crisis of climate, biodiversity and environment - as areas connected to our lifestyles, work, production, consumption, living conditions locally/globally



*the empty signifier is a
site of struggle onto
which different parties
seek to place meaning”
(Laclau, 1996/2007)*

Environmentally sustainable career guidance...

"empowers individuals, groups and collectives to develop their lives and careers in ways that do not compromise the ability of other people nor future generations to meet their needs. It recognises that human beings are a part of nature which is valuable in its own right, and that all life, particularly the life of the most vulnerable, is threatened by a growing climate crisis, the depletion of biodiversity and other environmental damage caused by human action.

Environmentally sustainable career guidance is a pedagogic intervention which builds individual and community capacity to analyse, respond to, and address social, environmental and career problems whilst supporting people to build a good life for themselves and others. Fundamentally it aims to stimulate people's imagination and empower them to find their way to a better life and a sustainable world" (Dimsits & Hooley, forthcoming)

What do we already know from the literature on green guidance/ sustainability and guidance?



Narrative literature review



Snowball method



Danish anthology – looking into references of references of references



Literature search on combinations of sustainability or green and career or career guidance or career learning or career education

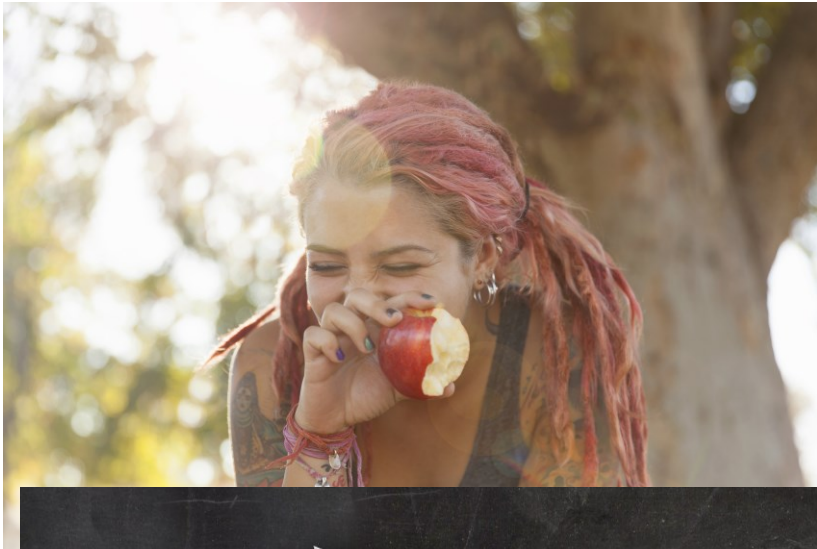


Leaving out the vast ESD-area not touching upon career, career guidance, career choice, career learning, career education

We found different perspectives on environmentally sustainable career guidance....



All the different contributions, we found, make up dimensions of peoples careers. The literature contributions deal with different aspects of career, and ways for people to move their careers in a sustainable direction - benefitting both individual and planetary wellbeing



THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE CAREER GUIDANCE

The affective dimension

The social- ecological dimension

The educational dimension

The transformational dimension

The political – ideological dimension

THE AFFECTIVE DIMENSION

- Feelings as empathy with others/nature, stress or burn-out, connectedness to nature, feelings of alienation and detachment from nature and environment
- Feelings of powerlessness and loss of hope, both in relation to the future and the possibility of developing a career
- Loss of resonance/establishing resonance - *af-fection* and *e-motion* (Rosa, 2021)

What could career guidance practice look like

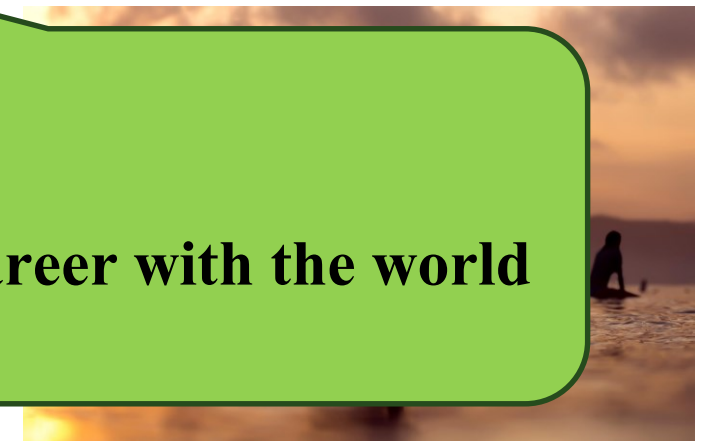
- ❖ Using nature as a career guidance setting
- ❖ Working with existential or/and grounding- inspired approaches
- ❖ People's attitudes and emotions in relation to nature and the environment
- ❖ Working with craft approaches
- ❖ Collective and group based settings evoking universality and hope

Activity idea: Let a group meditate for a few minutes about a place in nature that brings them calm/or just go there! Discuss the emotions evoked in you, and how your career and way of life can make more room for these emotions and these places



Learning area:

Connect career with the world



THE SOCIAL – ECOLOGICAL DIMENSION

- The importance of collective learning and action with those around you
- Building social-ecological solidarity with the marginalised and threatened lifeforms in the world: people/groups/nature/species/habitats
- Connect people to others and to the natural world

What could career guidance practice look like

- ❖ Collective, group oriented or community based
- ❖ Focus on how we can live together
- ❖ Build solidaristic communities of mutual aid with both those who are like us and those who are different
- ❖ Work together to understand which actions are needed to contribute to a socially and environmentally sustainable community for human beings and all things living.

Activity idea: Get the group to discuss which societal or local priority needs to be addressed most urgently *e.g. homelessness, poor air quality, or lack of activities for young people.* Then think about how different occupations contribute to this. Finally get the group to work together to develop and deliver a small project towards this aim *e.g. baking cookies for lonely elderly or making an area in the school or community for wildlife.*

Learning area:

Build solidarity with the world through careering

THE EDUCATIONAL DIMENSION

- How the world of work impacts the environment
- Which careers contribute positively to the green transition of the economy (Plant 1996, 2014, 2020)
- The careers practitioner cannot provide simple answers to the problems of environmental sustainability
- Be transparent and reflexive in discussions with clients about the uncertainties in working with and even comprehending sustainability
- Encourage the client to explore and consider different possibilities (Hooley, 2023) and find her own answers (Poulsen & Skovhus, 2022)

What could career guidance practice look like

- ❖ Exploring connections between the climate- and environmental crisis, the production systems and the world of work.
- ❖ Exploring environmental impacts of different career paths, occupations, and sectors
- ❖ Providing quality labour market information that addresses environmental sustainability - information on needed skills both technical and transversal for the green transition.

Activity idea: With a group or individual agree on an environmental challenge that needs to be handled, e.g., waste handling, textile production, global warming happening now in cities, increase in precipitation...Explore which jobs work in these industries and how they contribute to eliminating/solving, damage controlling or creating the problem. Discuss with the clients how they relate their own thoughts on career to these findings

Learning area:

Learn about careers in a sustainable world

THE TRANSFORMATIONAL DIMENSION

- Stimulate the 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959/2000), supplemented with the 'ecological imagination' (Norgaard, 2018)
- Help clients to connect their everyday experiences, troubles and hopes to the big social and environmental issues that they face,
- Help clients see possibilities and a way beyond the current situation
- Using imagination, entrepreneurial, transformational didactics
- Encourage people to consider and create alternative forms of work, production,

What could career guidance practice look like

- ❖ Career guidance activities that focus on imagining and inventing a vocational future worth hoping for
- ❖ Working and collaborating in creative ways to make change happen in your life, community, and world.
- ❖ Making inventions for the future
- ❖ Scenario building, preferable futures

Activity idea:

- Encourage your client(s) to imagine their ideal future. What does it look like, what is happening in their life? Make a drawing of this future life.
- What needs to change about the world for this future to be possible?
- What kinds of inventions have or could make made this future possible?
- What kinds of occupations could made this future possible?
- What does this make you think about your own career now – which steps do you want to take now?

Learning area:

Imagine and invent the world as you career

THE POLITICAL – IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION

- The problem has arisen in a political, societal, industrial context...
- Developing clients' understanding of the nature of the problem, how we live in the world and think about changing it
- The need to refrain from directive or dogmatic practices, enabling development of clients' stances on sustainability and careers
- Supporting people making career choices that support both personal well being AND planetary well being.

What could career guidance practice look like

- ❖ Using systemic practices as means of comprehending work/nature reciprocity ("From laying brick to building a cathedral")
- ❖ Enabling development of career values and meaningful career goals
- ❖ Critical interrogation of dominant and emergent political and societal ideologies
- ❖ Demasking content, power structures and actor interests
- ❖ Engage dialectically with students and clients without imposing own values and positions on them
- ❖ Openly discuss issues of transparency and impartiality

Activity idea 1: “a slice of white toast”

1. Look at a picture of the toast on a plate
2. Brainstorm all the sectors and careers involved in producing this piece of toast on the plate
3. How are the careers and the products interconnected?
4. What does this make you think about your own career ideas? Which career dilemmas appear for you?

Activity idea 2: “Career and SDGs”

1. Look at the SDGs – which one(s) is most interesting?
2. Explore, discuss which jobs contribute to this SDG?
3. What could be your career contribution to this SDG?
4. What would be important working values for you doing this in a company/business?

Learning area:

Change the world through career

You have to
prepare as a
CGP

Preconditions: Careers practitioners have capacity to:

Understand and communicate environmental issues *and* Be reflexive about ethics, norms and ideology

Aims

Career practitioners support people to:

Connect career with the world (affective)

Build solidarity with the world through
career (social-ecological)

Learn about careers in a sustainable world
(educational)

Imagine and invent the world as you
career (transformational)

Change the world through career
(political-ideological)

– CGPs
can aim
for these
areas in
their
design of
activities,
content
and form

We have turned
the dimensions
into learning
areas

Pedagogies

Drawing on:

A wide range of
pedagogic and
counselling approaches
with particular reference
to those informed by
critical theory

Approaches

Working with people in:

Collectives

Communities

Groups

Individual sessions

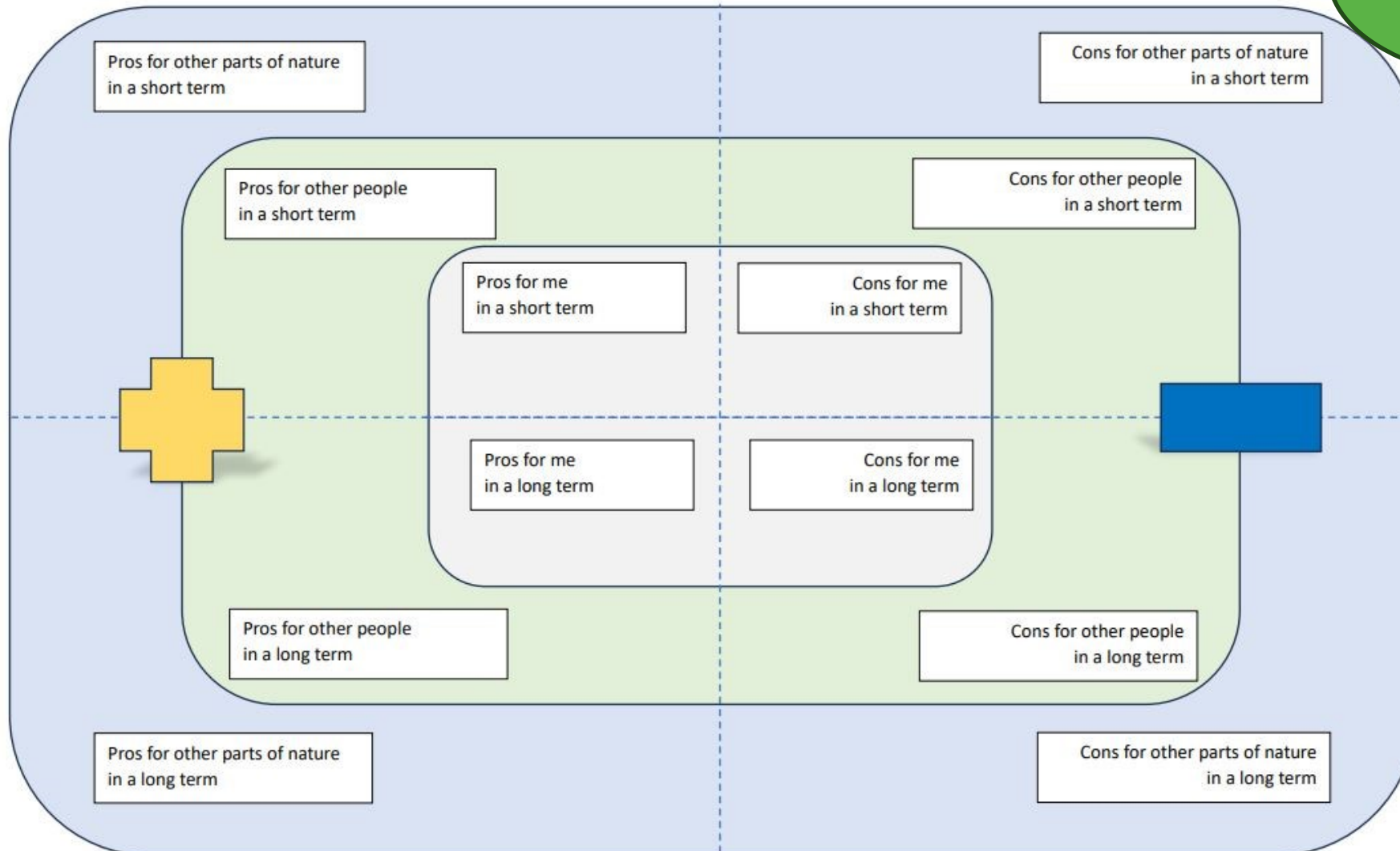
(Dimsits & Hooley,
forthcoming)

Career guidance scenarios (Inspired by forthcoming article Dimsits & Troelsen, 2025):
How to use the five dimensions of environmentally sustainable career guidance to develop concrete guidance activities



Scenario 1: Talking with clients about career guidance choices

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS, Inspired by Sheward & Branch 2012 // Sara Peltola, JYU



Dimensions: Social – ecological, educational – potentially affective and political- ideological

Scenario 2: Getting a group to discuss work and career in light of the SDGs

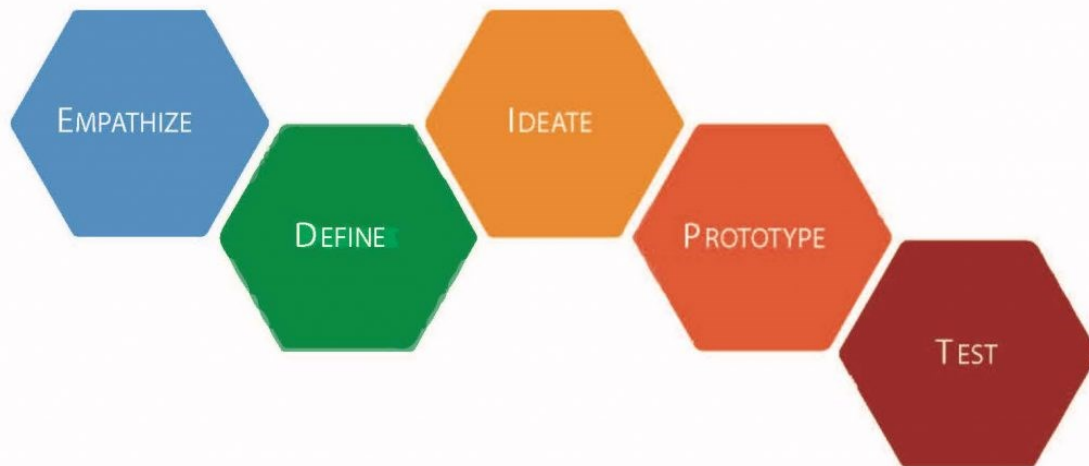
Dimensions:
Political-ideological,
educational
- potentially affective
and transformational

1. Discuss with participants the different kinds of work (to survive, to find meaning, to contribute to others/ by inventing/changing something),
2. Discuss how these certain types of work impact individuals and society.
3. Facilitate the group's reflection on how each participant can envision contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through life, work, and career, including identifying the skills and opportunities they already possess, the skills that need to be developed, and how to develop them (Inspired by Guichard 2022, p. 594).



Scenario 3: Facilitating local social and sustainable change

IDEO DESIGN THINKING PROCESS SPACES



Source: IDEO.com

Dimensions:
Social- ecological,
transformational -
potentially affective and
educational

- Using design-thinking
- Solving "real world" problems
- Bringing together a group, and facilitating, their social and sustainable innovation
- Creating value for others (and thereby for the group doing the work)
 - "We want to do more social activities"
 - "Learn to repair things, clothes, machines, gadgets"
 - "We want more biodiversity in our school/neighbourhood"
- (Inspired by Cottam, 2023)

Preconditions: Careers practitioners have capacity to:

Understand and communicate environmental issues *and* Be reflexive about ethics, norms and ideology

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Imagine and invent the world as you
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Change the world through career
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Approaches

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Collectives

Communities

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Individual sessions

*(Dimsits & Hooley,
forthcoming)*

Mini – workshop: Taking the next step in developing an environmentally sustainable career guidance practice

- Think of a career guidance activity in your practice....
- Maybe an activity that is related to/already addresses green guidance/sustainability?
- Or an activity, you do often, that would be interesting to develop?
- Write some notes
- Which learning area would be most valuable for your client to engage with - or easiest to apply?
- What do you think would happen if you added the one or maybe two dimensions?
- What would be the best case scenario learning output for the client?
- Let's not talk about worst case – but what would be your worry?
- So, what would be important in your practice, - to do, say, phrase - when you try this out?

Learning areas:

- ❖ Connect career with the world (affective)
- ❖ Build solidarity with the world through careering (social-ecological)
- ❖ Learn about careers in a sustainable world (educational)
- ❖ Imagine and invent the world as you career (transformational)
- ❖ Change the world through career (political-ideological)

Time for questions

1

What would be best case scenario learning output for the client?

2

Let's not talk about worst case – but what would be your worry?

3

So, what would be important in your practice, - to do, say, phrase - when you try this out?

THANK YOU!

Feel free to contact me
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