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No culture for career?

**Conceptualisations of career as a cultural phenomenon
and as experienced by tenth graders and career counsellors
in Norway.**

PhD Dissertations in Child and Youth Participation and Competence
Development • 2021



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- No. 22** **Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke:** No culture for career? Conceptualisations of career as a cultural phenomenon and as experienced by tenth graders and career counsellors in Norway

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No culture for career?

Conceptualisations of career as a cultural phenomenon and as experienced by tenth graders and career counsellors in Norway.

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Sammendrag

Denne studien spør hvordan kultur fungerer som kontekst for forming av karrierebegrepet og hvilke muligheter og begrensninger dette innebærer for å implementere karrierebegrepet i norsk skole sett fra tiendeklassinger og deres rådgiveres perspektiv. Denne avhandlingen består av to kapitler og to artikler med kappe, og undersøker norsk kultur og hvordan kulturelle verdier dukker opp i diskusjoner om yrkesvalg samt tiendeklassingers og skolerådgiveres forståelse av karrierebegrepet. Karriereveiledning og -læring i denne avhandlingen er situert i det norske utdanningssystemet, hvor karriereveiledning har hatt en betydelig utvikling de siste tiårene. Fokuset for avhandlingen er delt mellom et makro- og mikronivå, den tar for seg det filosofiske forestillingsgrunnet for norsk kultur, men adresserer også tiendeklassinger i overgangen til videregående og deres rådgivere. Kappen bringer funn fra intervjuer med tiendeklassinger og rådgivere sammen med den teoretiske undersøkelsen. Det foreslås et konseptuelt rammeverk for å forstå hvordan kultur påvirker hvordan karrierebegrepet oppleves og formes i møte med norsk kultur. Studien har altså både en teoretisk og en empirisk tråd. Studien utforsker den ubekvemme posisjonen karrierebegrepet har i norsk kultur. Studien utforsker hvordan globale teorier om karriere og karrierelæring som overføres mellom kontekster, kan gi uventede resultater. Her hevdes at utviklingen av norsk karriereveiledning lenge har fokusert på struktur, mens diskusjoner om innhold i karriereteorier har mer nylig blitt aktuelle. Spørsmålet om 'hva karriere er' i Norge er således av betydning.

Det vitenskapsfilosofiske perspektivet fenomenologi brukes sammen med teorier om begrepsdannelse, karriere og kultur for å utvikle et konseptuelt rammeverk. Det argumenteres for å se på sammenhengen mellom forestillinger og konkrete begivenheter, som i dette eksempelet er ideer om karriere og konkrete hendelser i karrieren, og foreslår en modell som knytter sammen disse konseptene og illustrerer hvordan kultur fungerer som en kontekst for konseptualisering av karriere. Med andre ord, karrierebegreper og teorier kan potensielt knyttes til den levde opplevelsen av karriere, men man må se konseptene som relevante for at sammenhengen skal gi mening.

I diskusjonen av forskningsspørsmålene, hevdes at en viktig og definerende fortelling om den norske kulturen er forholdet mellom 'jeg' og 'vi', eller ideen om autonomi innenfor en ramme av ansvar. Videre løftes et demokratisk karrierebegrep frem som en sentral ide, hvor dannelse er sentralt. Et demokratisk karrierebegrep bærer med seg en forventning og en motivasjon (eng: agency) i å hjelpe studentene med å utvikle medborgerskap og er slik knyttet til dannelse. Imidlertid, ettersom opplevd erfaring og karrierebegrepet er i et gjensidig meningsskapende forhold, foreslås en forståelse av et demokratisk karrierebegrep som formet og forstått gjennom levde karriere.

Abstract

This thesis asks how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors? The thesis consists of four papers and this synopsis. The papers investigate Norwegian culture, examine how cultural values surface in discussions about career choices; and explore how tenth graders and school counsellors understand the career concept. Career guidance and learning are situated in the Norwegian education system, where there have been significant developments concerning career education over the last decades. The focus of the thesis is split between a macro and a micro level, and it addresses the philosophical and ideational underpinnings of Norwegian culture and it also addresses tenth graders about to transition into upper secondary and their counsellors. The synopsis draws the theories and findings from interviews with tenth graders and counsellors together with the theoretical investigation. It proposes a conceptual framework for understanding how culture influence the formation of the career concept. As such, the thesis follows both a theoretical and an empirical line of inquiry.

The study explores the uneasy position of career in Norwegian culture. It also explores the way that theories of career and career learning have travelled the world and shows that when theories transfer between contexts, the results may be unexpected. The study argues that while the development of Norwegian career guidance has focused on structure, discussions on the content of career theories have emerged more recently and that the question of 'what is career' in Norway is of importance. The philosophical perspective of phenomenology is used together with theories on concept formation, career and culture to develop a conceptual framework. Proposing a model that connects these concepts and illustrates how culture works as a framework for the conceptualisation of career, the study argues that such a framework guides thinking about both the ideational content and the concrete events. In other words, career concepts and theories can potentially connect to the lived experience of career but seeing concepts as relevant is important to make this happen.

Discussing the research questions, the thesis argues that a big and defining narrative of the Norwegian culture is the relationship between the 'I' and the 'we', or the idea that individuals are autonomous within a framework of responsibility. Further, a democratic career concept is discussed, encompassing *danning* as a central idea as it has agency for educators to help students develop citizenship. However, as lived experience and career concepts are in a reciprocal relationship of meaning making, an understanding of democratic career concept as informed by lived career is proposed.

Preface

As I am about to write these last few sentences of this synopsis which means that I am about to pop this bubble within which I have found myself over these last few months, I am struck by how things have changed since I dove into this introspective journey of thinking, reading and writing. Not only have my son's hair grown long, and the world is green instead of white, the *world* is also a different place now than it was just earlier this year. The first half-year of 2020 has been challenging worldwide. The SARS-CoV-2 virus and the covid-19 disease have turned our social systems up-down, and people around the world are broke, isolated and afraid. Social unrest has risen from poor leadership in extreme situations, where angry and frustrated citizens have taken to the streets to voice their protests against racism, poverty, and lack of future prospects.

I live in Norway, in a society marked by social security and equal worth. It is a relatively quiet corner of the world. I write about how this context makes us Norwegians experience, respond to and understand the career concept. This could, if I listen to the devil on my shoulder, lead me to see my project as insignificant and non-interesting in the bigger picture. How is *this* important when the world is burning?

But rather, this project is an effort to show that thinking about career is important. By helping people understand and direct their agency, career guidance has the ability to touch peoples' lives and release their power to work for social justice. This is perhaps the most important aspect of career guidance today. This project is an effort to show that conversations with young people about career can have agency towards imagining and struggling for a better world also in Norway, through the career concept's relationship to danning. This thesis is a rather long argument for why it is important to overcome the inclination to think that career is for the few, for the climbers, the racers, or for the 'career women' as one of my interview subjects called it – it is for all.

It is an argument for why *you* should take the word *career/karriere*, scrutinise it, shape it, give it meaning – and use it.

I hope I can convince you.

*

It takes a village to do a thesis. There are quite a few people to thank for supporting me on this journey:

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Dissertation papers

Paper 1: Chapter

Bakke, I.B. (2018). Norsk karrierekompetanse - Karriereferdigheter med kulturell bagasje [Norwegian career competence – Career guidance with a cultural baggage]. In Kjærgård, R. & Plant, P (Eds.) *Karriereveiledning – For individ og samfunn [Career guidance – For individuals and society]*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.

Paper 2: Chapter

Bakke, I. B. (2020). The ‘idea of career’ and ‘a welfare state of mind’: On the Nordic model for welfare and career. In Haug, E. H, Hooley, T., Kettunen, J. & Thomsen, R. (Eds.) *Career and career guidance in the Nordic countries*. Leiden: Sense.

Paper 3: Journal article

Bakke, I. B. (2021). Career and cultural context: collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality in the career thinking of Norwegian teenagers. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2021.1872767>

Paper 4: Journal article

Bakke, I. B., & Hooley, T. (2020). “I don’t think anyone here have thought about career really” - What the concept of ‘career’ means to Norwegian teenagers and school counsellors. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1833242>

All the papers are published.

Glossary

Career refers to the abstract, wide and overall signification of choices and events that make up an individual's journey through life, education and work.

The *career actor* is the individual enacting career.

The *career field* refers to the general field of research and practice on these issues.

The *career concept* and *career conceptualisation* refer to the attempts made to pinpoint and define career.

Career theory refers to such attempts made by scholars and researchers.

Career guidance and counselling refer to the practice of applying career conceptualisations and career theory in conversations about education, work and life issues, and it also refers to the theory and writing about it.

Career choice, career development, refer to different ways of putting career conceptualisations to work and emphasise different aspects of career as a journey through life, learning and work. Theory on career choice emphasises the aspects that guide and structure the career actors' choices. Career development deals with how career evolves over time.

Career competence and *career management skills* refer to the knowledge, attributes and skills needed to develop and manage one's career.

Career education and *career learning* refers to the process of acquiring such competencies and skills in a generic and open process or structured as in schools or other educational settings.

Context is often defined as the background, environment, setting, framework, or surroundings of events or occurrences. Simply, context means the circumstances which form the background of an event, idea or statement.

Culture is a contextual factor, affecting the living conditions of individuals and groups together with socioeconomic factors, urban or rural settings, climate etc. Throughout this thesis, culture is assumed as a contextual factor.

Danning refers to the philosophy of developing citizenship through education, through a process of personal development encompassing scholarly education.

Dugnad refers to voluntary work, and is generally associated with the post WW2 era, when a social democratic idea about communities working together to rebuild Norwegian society was prominent.

Nordicity refers to the commonality or the cultural element of Nordic-ness of the Nordic countries.

Responsibilitising refers to the use of career concepts to emphasise individuals' own responsibility for failure or success in their careers and is linked to an understanding of the postmodern world of work as a precarious employment structure where support systems are scarce.

1. Introduction

Making career choices is important, and the choice process defines the individual. It is easy to recognise that of all the big and small life-choices an individual must make during their lifetime, reflecting actively upon the possibilities and limitations, consequences and possible outcomes of choosing specific jobs are essential. Yet vocational choices are not something that individuals make in isolation. Rather they are bound up with choices about educational programmes and life projects like partners, children, responsibility for a family, developing talents or voluntary work that pose different challenges, and it is beneficial to consider how to engage with them.

In Norway, individuals, social actors, and institutions have 'always' had a role in aiding young peoples' process of making educational and vocational choices (Kjærgård, 2013). Such choice processes have 'always' included elements of both formal and informal forms of guidance and ways to support workers (Kjærgård, 2020). However, guidance related to educational and vocational choices has been institutionalised as a responsibility of schools in Norway since 1959, but the emphasis of school-based counselling has not been on vocational and educational options, but rather on social pedagogic issues (Buland & Mathiesen, 2008; Teig, 2000). After the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as an international agency with key expertise in skills policy, recommended career guidance as a framework for lifelong learning in Norway in 2002 (OECD, 2002), Norwegian policymakers and stakeholders have been working to develop such a system (Haug, 2014; Haug et al., 2019; Helgesen & Feiring, 2007; NOU 2016: 7, 2016). The recommendations that the OECD made, more firmly connected the Norwegian field of vocational and educational guidance to an international field of *career* guidance theory and research, emphasising not only the need for a system for guidance but also the content of it.

The development of the Norwegian field of career guidance research and practice has established and expanded relatively fast over the last two decades (Haug et al., 2019). From being a marginal

field of interest, it is now integrated into the welfare system as well as the education system and in the general discussion on competence development and lifelong learning for the population (e.g. Haug, 2018; Kjærgård & Plant, 2018; Kompetanse Norge, 2019; NOU 2016: 7, 2016; Svendsrud, 2015). In other words, while the field of educational and vocational guidance in Norway has been steadily developing since the mid-20th century, the development of a field of *career* guidance research and practice related to education in Norway has been rapid. As such, the Norwegian story is one example that can illustrate and inform a discussion on the relationship between the general and the particular, practice and theory and the global and national in the career field. It is ultimately a discussion about how to situate theories within cultural contexts.

This project addresses the question: how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors?

I have explored this question in a theoretical and empirical project where I have studied various elements of career guidance in Norway as described in four papers. In addition, this synopsis is a fifth work, that build on the work in the papers and expand the theoretical contribution of my study.

However, the story needs to start at the beginning.

1.2 Positionality

As is explained in the methodology section of this synopsis, this study applies a qualitative framework, which involves many decisions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2013). The decisions made in the analytic process, i.e. about what constitutes a theme, and whether to look for underlying or semantic themes, reflect the researcher in many ways. From preferences about theory to personal history, the researcher's understanding of the research problem and ideas about what can be learned from the data will inevitably shape the analytic process. Hence, being transparent about positionality is important.

Positionality is understood as the social and political context that creates an identity, and it also describes how identity influences, and potentially biases, understanding and outlook on the world (Dictionary, 2020). It is particularly important in the context of research. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that the researcher will uniquely add something to the analytic process, something that necessarily comes from the researcher's position in the world. Other qualitative social science theorists (Charmaz, 2009; Reichertz, 2009) refer to a specific preparedness. Attempting to make the researcher position transparent will, therefore, be essential and is of great importance in any analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

How personal experience shapes the researcher's approach to the research question can be seen in why the researcher finds the topic of interest. For me, the question about the relationship between the theoretical concept of career and Norwegian work culture was raised one and a half decades ago, when I was doing my master's degree (Bakke, 2008). The discovery I made during that process was akin to Reichertz (2009) allegory of being 'struck by lightning'.

As a student in organisational and vocational psychology at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, I was being educated in a department whose history of research and development went back to one of the first research institutes in industrial psychology in Norway. The monumental figure Einar Thorsrud (Thorsrud, Blichfeldt, & Qvale, 1983; Thorsrud & Emery, 1970) had a history at this institute as a leader in the development of the knowledge that underpins the Norwegian employment structure, e.g. through his influence on the Employment Act (Saksvik & Nytrø, 2006). This work had left a legacy of pride and ownership for the department – in addition to, it could be argued, an emphasis on the systemic level in organisational psychological research.

The focus on the operation and adaptation of systems is a typical feature of organisational/industrial psychology in Norway (Fischer & Sortland, 2001). Individual work satisfaction and adaptation are often understood as issues that need to be solved on a systemic level. For example, legislation securing workplace democracy and a workplace design which facilitates variation in work and opportunities to learn and develop (Employment Act, 2005), ultimately places the responsibility for individuals work satisfaction on the organisation. But how does this look from an individual perspective? Doing a research project commissioned by the Unit for Innovation and Development at the university, I got a closer look at this.

The commissioned project explored a new web portal, launched by the Unit, which was designed to provide an online community for employers and students to get together and cooperate on projects. It was designed to allow organisations to engage with junior researchers and for students to engage with future employers. The career benefits were emphasised. Interestingly, the University's two large campuses, one of which was focused primarily on natural and mathematical sciences and one which was focused on humanities and social sciences, responded to this initiative in very different ways. The maths/science/tech students engaged in activities and joint ventures, while the humanities and social science students did not respond at all. My job became figuring out why the humanities and social science students were uninterested and what could be done to remedy this.

I sampled students from both campuses and discussed the problem in individual interviews, and my interest in career emerged as the picture became more detailed and nuanced. The maths/science/tech students welcomed this as an opportunity to work on their career prospects,

which was something they had been motivated to do since starting their education. They were eager to get in contact with future employers, both to learn about the world of work and position themselves for future recruitment – i.e. building career management skills and working on their employability.

The humanities and social science students did not, and the reason they gave was simple. They did not want to think about career, which they saw as what happens after graduation. A few of them even said that they did not want to graduate because being able to immerse themselves in the topics they found attractive as students was not something they saw as possible after graduation. They often could not recognise themselves and their qualifications in the titles of the jobs they were told were relevant to them. Career was a non-topic for these students, rather than representing something positive. When they pondered career issues, they felt that they were presented with demands that they were unsure that they would ever be able to meet. They also reported a slight resentment towards tech students who they saw as being preoccupied with career prospects.

The humanities and social science students' uneasiness about career puzzled me, and I realised that career as a concept denoted an overall approach to working life, which was something that these students either opted in to or out of while they were in education. It also showed that it is not possible to approach all work-related issues through the lens of the organisation. My curiosity about career as a concept, and motivation to understand why it appeared irrelevant to some, transferred into a master's thesis where I explored career theory.

This curiosity and these questions have followed me since. In my postgraduate career, I have worked in the Norwegian welfare administration (NAV) with health-related benefits, and later in recruitment and HR in both the private and public sector. As such, I have had plenty of opportunities to discuss issues of career choice and development with a wide range of clients. However, my contention about the awkward position of the career word persisted. For example, in meetings with clients in NAV who were reorienting to new vocations or educations because of health issues, I often found that they found it hard to see that terms like *career* choice and development fitted their situation. They were sick or out of a job and needed to find ways back into employment, and they felt that they could not afford to be concerned with their *career*.

The opportunity to explore these issues further came with this thesis. Many conversations about the career concept followed, from which I concluded that this was a good time to be exploring the concept of career. For example, at one of the schools I visited to collect data for this project, when discussing the relevance of the career concept in education the counsellor sighed:

...here, there's no culture or tradition for [career]. (...). So there's no tradition or culture for it being a good thing. (Counsellor N) (Paper 4, p. 7)

Living in a small community where upper secondary was unavailable and people rarely had higher education, the counsellor saw the concept of career as unfamiliar. And rather than being an encompassing, including concept that denote what people actually *do*, it exacerbated status differences between those that had 'academic jobs' and those that did not.

While describing my interest in the awkwardness of the career word helps explains my motivation to investigate this, why is the question about how people relate to and think about career in Norway interesting and important? To answer this, we need to look at what is particular and interesting about Norway.

1.3 Norway

I have described and discussed the development of the Norwegian working culture and the characteristics of the Nordic welfare model in Paper 1 and Paper 2. I have also explored how teenagers and counsellors relate some of these cultural issues to career choices in Paper 3 and Paper 4. Hence, I will not detail this further in this synopsis. However, to give the reader a greater understanding of the country, this section highlights some of the aspects of Norway that I consider most relevant to the argument I am developing in this thesis. These include the diversity of Norwegian life due to geography and demography, the emphasis on egalitarianism in the political economy and the broader Norwegian culture, and the education system as one crucial context for career guidance in Norway.

The basic facts about Norway are that it is a constitutional monarchy in northern Europe, which after a history of being united with Denmark and Sweden, crafted its constitution and had its own parliament from 1814 and was an independent state from 1905. Norway is a democracy, with a social-democratic mixed economy, and had a protestant state church until 2012. The total area of the Norwegian mainland is 304,125 km², and with all its fjords and 239,057 registered islands the coastline of Norway is the world's second-longest. Norway's indigenous Sami people make up approx. 1 % of the country's population and the Sami language is an official Norwegian language, together with bokmål and nynorsk (Thuesen, Thorsnæs & Røvik, 2020).

Norway has a relatively large territory and small population compared to other European countries, with an average population density of 15 individuals per km² compared to e.g. 281 individuals per km² in Germany, which is of roughly the same size (Worldometers, 2020). Of the approximately 5,4 million inhabitants of Norway, approximately 10 % lives in the northern region on 30 % of the total

mainland of Norway (Kartverket, 2019; SSB, 2019). Hence, the south of Norway is more densely populated. The great variety in geography and infrastructure from north to south and coast to inland means that the living conditions of the population are shaped in various ways by the country's geography. Also, there are a range of other factors, including varying opportunity structures between urban and rural areas and differences in the natural world and climate which further shape the living conditions of those living in different parts of the country. Hence, as is the case with most countries, there is considerable diversity within Norway.

1.3.1 The rural heritage

It could be argued that the urban-rural issue relates to elements deeply embedded in Norwegian culture. After having been under the rule of Denmark, the new Norwegian state which emerged after 1814 needed to root itself in something that was considered genuinely Norwegian. Parallel to the social engineering that took place to create the state as an institution with legislation, structures for education, and the creation of a parliament, was a national romantic wave of literature, music and art which asserted an idea of Norwegian culture and sought to illustrate what being Norwegian meant (Sørensen, 1952). Artworks depicted the rough but beautiful landscape of mountains and the sturdy farmer in his *bunad* (national costume), the composer Edvard Grieg tried to capture the drama of Norwegian nature and writer Ivar Aasen gathered rural dialects and synthesised them into a purely Norwegian language – *nynorsk* (New Norwegian) as an alternative to Danish-Norwegian. The Norwegian artists looked to and idealised the rural because this was where traditions and history were kept alive, through knowledge of crafts and traditions that were transferred verbally and practically through generations (Haverkamp, 2019).

Research into how geography shapes Norwegian's lives has often centred around the differences between urban and rural living. The migration of the population to urban areas has been discussed as a concern affecting the development and sustainability of the de-centralised regions for example as a worry about the depletion of 'brain-power' as educated workers, particularly women, leave behind traditional gender structures, migrate away from rural areas and exacerbate the limited opportunity structures that exists in these areas (Eikeland & Lie, 1999; Farstad, 2016; Haugen & Villa, 2006; Lysgård, 2013; Villa, 2000). This 'brain drain' leads to a lack of innovation and development in rural industries and businesses.

Paradoxically, while the rural heritage is a source of pride and cultural cohesion, it is also connected to issues of social status and class (Rye, 2011), with rural living at the lower end and urban living at the higher end of a social class continuum. Consequently, the de-centralisation debate is bound up

with issues of career decision-making related to geographical mobility, and these are in turn bound up with issues of cultural identity and social class.

1.3.2 Educating citizens

As a welfare state built on the Nordic model with a strong social democratic heritage (Dølvik, 2007), an underpinning principle of Norwegian society is *utjevning* - equity. Equity in this sense entails creating conditions that minimise the effect of social differences and give equal opportunities for social mobility (Alestalo, Hort, & Kuhlne, 2009; Hernes & Hippe, 2007). This intent is evident in the major social structures, including legislation concerning work, welfare and education. Key policy aims include encouraging all citizens to contribute to and participate in society through work, protecting citizens against risk and precarity and supporting them through periods of difficulty.

However, some critics of the social-democratic welfare state liken it to a 'nanny state', a term coined to describe the exaggerated ways that governments 'attempt to regulate everything from drinking soda to taking selfies with tigers' (Franks, 2017, p. 2). The negative connotations of nanny state suggest pacifying citizens and reducing their autonomy (Le Grand & New, 2015). But, the relationship between social structures and individual autonomy is less than straight-forward as the Norwegian welfare system directs its resources towards supporting peoples' capacity to work. It is not just about incentivising, but also about *expecting* participation in the social structure of work. This issue is discussed in greater depth in Paper 2 in this thesis. As such, the aim of the welfare state could be argued as seeking to engage citizens in society rather than to pacify them.

Engagement and participation require investment on the part of citizens; hence the belief in such a system is important. This belief is actively fostered within the Norwegian education system which does not just focus on scholarly competence but also actively addresses the individual's development as a citizen and as a member of the community and the nation. The development of citizenship is captured in the concept of *danning* (Asplin & Lingås, 2016), which can be imperfectly translated as 'personal formation and development' or 'bildung'. It is a process of formation in which scholarly education is important but is encompassed within the broader development of an individual into a full member of society. The Norwegian word *utdanning* is translated as 'education', but the concept of *danning* describes personal development parallel to education. Acquiring competence is about the development of individual skills and knowledge, but it is also about using them responsibly and being able to manage the tensions between individual possibilities and social responsibilities (Education Act, 2007). Career guidance and education is a part of this picture, where career guidance in schools is seen as having an important role in supporting the personal development of young people (NOU

2016: 7), by e.g. addressing important social issues as gender egalitarianism (Mathiesen, Buland & Bungum, 2014).

In the Nordic countries, Antikainen (2006) argues that there is a specifically Nordic model of education, founded on specific local values and practices found in the Nordic, social democratic welfare model. The Nordic education model is designed to educate and shape the future citizens of the Nordic states. Antikainen (2006) argues that the shaping of future citizens implies conveying through educational content and methods the ideological heritage that will be important for future citizens to adhere to and believe in, in order to sustain the social model. Key to socialisation is, therefore, the inculcation of views on equality in terms of social relationships, individualism/self-dependence in the light of social responsibilities, and the importance of work as an arena for acting as a citizen.

The perspective of danning as an underpinning philosophy of education, and the idea that this process of formation points to a future where participation through education and work are key priorities, implies a link to career and career choices (Lødding, Borgen, & Mjøen, 2008). Choices about the future, education and work ask individuals to consider how they wish to participate in society and enact their citizenship.

1.3.3 The Norwegian education system

The Norwegian school system is designed to provide the same opportunities for all, and the philosophy of danning and the education of the whole person lies at the heart of delivering and structuring the curriculum and learning processes (Education Act, 2007).

Year one to ten of schooling are compulsory and are provided by the municipal administration. As such it is available in relative proximity to all Norwegian children. Compulsory education is a general program of education designed to provide students with a wide and solid knowledge base. It seeks a balance between theoretical and practical skills. Children start school in the year they turn six years of age. Primary school runs from years one till seven, and lower secondary from years eight till ten. These are often separate, and lower secondary schools will have a wider geographical catchment area, however still within the same municipality. On completion of lower secondary school, all students are offered non-compulsory upper secondary education. Students are asked to choose an upper secondary education pathway from two broadly defined routes. Students transitioning directly to upper secondary start at fifteen or sixteen years of age; however, it is possible to delay further education as the right to upper secondary education lasts until students are twenty-four. The academic three-year programs emphasise theoretical studies and direct students toward further academic education, and the vocational four-year programs emphasise practical studies and direct

students into vocations and thus directly into work (Thune, Reisegg, & Askheim, 2020). The upper secondary schools are provided by the regional authorities and are often placed in central areas, e.g. the town or city being the administrative centre of a region. Great distances often mean that students from other municipalities in the region will have to commute or move out of their homes to attend school, sometimes living on their own in bed-sits or shared apartments, and other times living with family or in boarding houses (Bakke, 2018).

Norwegian primary schools do not often see career guidance or career education as relevant (Mordal, Buland, & Mathiesen, 2020). However, it is seen as vital in lower secondary to prepare students for the transition to further education (Andreassen, Hovdenak, & Swahn, 2008; Haug, 2016; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2015). The subject Utdanningsvalg (Educational choice) running from year eight and through year ten, is aimed at providing students with career learning and guidance, and the elective subject Arbeidslivsfag (Worklife-subject) is aimed at giving students work-relevant experience. Lower secondary schools will also have counsellors, who are often teachers with an additional role as counsellor, and who have responsibility for career guidance and counselling as well as social pedagogic counselling. However, it is up to the schools themselves to organise and structure these subjects, and the outcome in terms of career learning and career choice preparation is variable (Røise, 2020). A large part of ongoing policy and research efforts in career guidance in Norway has a particular focus on Utdanningsvalg and counselling in schools, and efforts are being made to strengthen methodological frameworks and the competence of teachers and counsellors (Haug et al., 2019). My study addresses this work, and I refer to chapter 2 for a detailed introduction of career guidance and education in the Norwegian education system.

1.3.4 The caveat of 'model'

As the term *model* refers to ideal states and abstract representations rather than sets of facts (Ryner, 2007) it is important to recognise that the different Nordic models are sets of policies and strategies which have developed in different national contexts (Haug, Hooley, Kettunen & Thomsen, 2020a; Paper 2). This will not only make them look different across the Nordic countries, but there is also a considerable question to be asked about how well a Nordic welfare ideology reflect life as it is lived in Norway.

One aspect is whether the model match reality, and another aspect is how elements are encountered in real life. For example, an overall value and ideal such as *equity*, can be seen in different forms as it trickles through society. From universal welfare policies meant to support and give opportunity which are rather experienced as restricting to the individual and forcing compliance (Thorsen, 2006; Wahl, 2007; Wergeland, 2008), via calling for acceptance of multiculturalism and

diversity in a culture felt as cohesive and homogenous and hard to be integrated into (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007; Bygnes, 2013). Finally, to a realisation that an economic elite and socioeconomic stratification do exist also in Norway (Hansen, Andersen, Flemmen, & Ljunggren, 2014) and that equity may not be for all. Also, the use of New Public Management (NPM) as organising principle permeates the Norwegian welfare state even though the underlying neoliberalism of NPM and market-oriented strategies are in fact met with resistance and counteracted (Nyland, Ahlgren & Lapsley, 2020), illustrating the disharmony of the two ideological forces.

I will not go further into these critiques, but rather say that in other words, we must be careful not to conflate the ideal Nordic or Norwegian welfare model with the actual function of society. It is important to note that such conflation is not assumed in this thesis. It is also not assumed that all Norwegians buy into the ideological framework of welfare and social democracy, as these ideological frameworks inevitably have debate and social struggle as companion (Bjørnson, 2001). It is rather assumed that societal models formulate and conceptualise principles and values that gain hegemony, they give content and direction for education, socialisation, and articulate a direction for the development of society (McKowen, 2020).

1.4 The study

1.4.1 Aim of the study

The study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Norwegian culture works as a context for conceptualising career. It aims to overcome the ambiguity of the career concept by contributing to a more declared concept. As such, the study primarily addresses the career concept.

The study also aims to explore what a contextually informed concept of career looks like and a key element is considering how culturally contingent understandings of work and life issues relate to the concept of career. Therefore, the study also addresses culture as phenomenon, both through the experience of my interview participants as well as a theoretical exploration. Hence, the objects of this study are teenagers in tenth grade and their career counsellors, but it is also the wider Norwegian culture as phenomenon as well as the career concept. The idea is to learn about culture through tapping into the socialisation process of education, danning and career discovery.

To ground the discussion in a contextually based understanding of the career concept, a thorough exploration of culture is helpful. For this purpose, I explore the characteristics of Norwegian culture and how it relates to the career concept through an investigation of literature and a theoretical discussion. However, theoretical discussions have a limited capacity to bring forward new knowledge of how concepts are perceived, experienced and how they acquire and give meaning. Inviting tenth graders and counsellors to share their experience with career choice allows the voice of citizens to be

heard and grounds my study in lived experience. The thesis is both a theoretical and an empirical exploration. As such, the work with tenth graders and counsellors acts as a case study for a 'big picture' theoretical analysis of the political economy. It is not assumed that all Norwegians relate to these concepts in a similar way, but the study rather attempts to approach similar issues from both ends of the telescope, by looking at political discussions of culture at the same time as drawing on empirical insights about how these issues manifest within a particular case.

Discussing alternative understandings of the career concept does not have a solely theoretical purpose. The discussion also has implications for career guidance practice, research and policymaking. By making underlying tensions explicit, the study aims to raise awareness about the potential benefits of clarifying the assumptions and values that individuals take for granted. Making what is assumed explicit and debatable may shed light on individual experiences, where career development and choice-making can be discussed in relation to an employment system of values and expectations which nevertheless works as a framework for their lives.

1.4.2 Research questions

This study asks the overall question of how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors?

This overall research question is the endpoint of a process of development throughout the study of going back and forth between iterations to test whether the research question communicates with the theoretical and empirical developments in the papers. I find support for this iterative process of research design in Strauss and Corbin's (1998) point that research is 'a "flow of work" that evolves over the entire course of any investigative project' (p. 31). As any type of work means adapting and making choices and decisions about the usefulness of procedures, it is a 'messy affair' (p. 32) which will *necessarily* look different at the end from how it was conceived at the start.

My research process initially started with an inquiry about how Norwegian teenagers experience making career decisions and then followed two lines of exploration, a theoretical and an empirical, which together make up a collection of studies of various elements of career guidance in Norway.

The theoretical line of exploration came out of the motivation to learn more about the cultural setting of Norway and how it relates to understandings of career. Going down this avenue, I wrote Papers 1 and 2, which were literature studies. In the first paper, I explored the specific characteristics of Norwegian working culture by looking at the historical developments that have shaped the Norwegian working life. In the second paper, I took a step back and explored how the Nordic model

of welfare functions as an overarching ideological and cultural framework for the Norwegian welfare state.

In these papers, I discuss the tension between a hierarchical and achievement-oriented understanding of career and a community-oriented framework for society on two levels. Firstly, I discuss Norwegian history and social structures and secondly the ideological concept of a Nordic welfare model. Paper 1 and Paper 2 discuss how culture positions the career concept and how the career concept can be negotiated to accommodate important cultural values by asking these research questions:

Paper 1: How is the development of a distinctive Norwegian work culture significant for thinking about career in Norway?

Paper 2: What are the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as a concept?

The second line of exploration was an empirical one based on interview data gathered from teenagers and counsellors about career choice experiences. During the analysis phase, I saw how I could connect the theoretical constructs I had worked with in my two previous papers to these interviews via the assumption that cultural ideas and values work implicitly. I could look for latent information in my material. The interviews deal with aspects of career choice, including the positives and negatives of different choices and the expectations and affordances that could be linked to cultural learning as a basis for understanding and appraising work, education and life.

In Paper 3 and Paper 4, I looked at the teenagers' and counsellors' thinking about career choices through a cultural lens. First, by looking at how cultural concepts affect career choice, and secondly how culturally contingent ideas about work, education and life influence how career is conceptualised. Paper 3 and Paper 4 are empirical explorations of how cultural ideas and values surface in conversations about career and discuss how the concept of career can connect to underpinning cultural ideas and values.

Paper 3: In what ways are Norwegian cultural values important for teenagers making vocational and educational (career) choices and for the counsellors providing career guidance and education?

Paper 4: What are the barriers and opportunities to introducing the concept of career to tenth graders and their counsellors in Norwegian schools?

In my four papers, I have detailed what Norwegian and Nordic culture look like from my perspective, and how I see this affecting career choice and conceptualisations of career. However, none of the papers provides a detailed theoretical discussion into what either career or culture is or how concept formation work. In order to answer the overarching research question, I find that a thorough discussion of both career and culture as central concepts as well as concept formation is warranted in this synopsis as a foundation from which to characterise a culturally sensitive career concept for Norway. Therefore, the synopsis of my thesis raises a fifth research question to address these issues:

Synopsis: How does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does Norwegian culture influence the formation of a context specific career concept – both as a phenomenon and in the experience of the tenth graders and counsellors in this study?

I discuss these concepts in chapter 3, Theoretical framework, and develop a conceptual framework from this in chapter 6, Discussion.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

My PhD-project was conducted between January 2016 and June 2020 at the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Lillehammer campus, where I was enrolled at the 'Child and Youth Competence Development' (Barn og Unges Kompetanseutvikling, BUK) PhD-program.

Paper 1, 2, 3, and 4 refer to two chapters in edited volumes and two journal articles written for the PhD-project, and together with this document – the synopsis – they form the thesis. The synopsis is divided into five chapters: Introduction, Literature review, Theoretical framework, Methodology and metatheory, Findings and Discussion.

After having set the scene in chapter 1, the Introduction, I will show the relevance of my topic in chapter 2, the Literature review. I provide a narrative literature review, highlighting the aspects and findings from research, debate and theory in the career field that are important to the lines of argument developed through the thesis. In this chapter important topics include the focus on context, the shift to the postmodern career and career learning and career management skills, the difficulties related to different understandings of theoretical constructs in career theory, and the development of career guidance in Norway as a shift from debating structure to discussing content.

In chapter 3, the Theoretical framework, I use concept formation as proposed by Koselleck (2004; Koselleck & White, 2002) as an analytical tool for an in-depth discussion of the concepts of career and culture, as they have been the central concepts that underpin the thesis. In this chapter, a central argument is that conceptualisation of both career and culture is closely related to an understanding of context, it frames thinking and give direction to the future.

In chapter 4, Metatheory and methodology, I detail the metatheoretical, the methodological and practical aspects of my study. I use phenomenology to 'explain myself' and position myself concerning ontology and epistemology. I then describe procedures for data collection and analysing.

In chapter 5, Findings, I briefly introduce my four papers, which are found as appendixes in the back of this synopsis.

In chapter 6, the Discussion, I present my understanding of the relationship between career, culture and conceptualisation, both as theoretical constructs and related to my findings. I sum up by going back to my research questions one more time and find that an important aspect of the career concept is its ability to be shaped, formed and moulded into what it needs to be, across contexts.

In chapter 7, Concluding remarks, I summarise the main contribution made by my study and suggest implications for practice, theory and research.

1.5.1 A note on form

A doctorate is an education, and all the steps taken in it is a part of an educational process. Especially, the process of writing this synopsis has been an intense learning process, where I recognise the experience of being in a hermeneutic circle of thinking, reading and writing to learn (Halvorsen, 2011, pp. 58-59). Halvorsen (2011) argues that a process of writing-to-learn shapes the form of writing, where writing in a narrative form release potential. Narratives have an implicit, inquiring form, where one's own experiences can be combined and scrutinised in relation to the experiences of others, in a constant process of asking questions and finding answers that raise new questions.

I recognise that raising topics and discussing them is a manner of exploring and learning. I have chosen to make this visible in the synopsis text by writing in a self-reflexive manner and using a narrative form. I did not see this as an alternative in the papers for the thesis. The effect of this choice is particularly evident in chapter 1, Introduction, where I show how my experience as an early researcher made me raise questions about the career concept; in chapter 2, Literature review, where I use theory and literature to further develop my question about how the career concept is understood and experienced; in chapter 4, Methodology and metatheory, where I describe the choice and use of methodology as a learning process; and in Chapter 6, Discussion, where I draw together my learning about concept formation, career and culture.

2. Literature review

This synopsis asks how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does Norwegian culture influence the formation of a context specific career concept – both as a phenomenon and in the experience of the tenth graders and counsellors in this study? This question is central to this literature review as it directs our attention to the phenomenon of culture as something that influences how we think about career. It provides a starting point for my discussion of literature and research in the career field.

In this chapter, I will present literature I find relevant to my argument in the form of a narrative review. This review was developed in a similar way as to the approach taken for my literature-based studies (Paper 1 and Paper 2). See chapter 4, section 4.2.1 for a detailed description of the approach taken. I have read widely throughout the study, but for this review, I focused in on threads in the literature describing issues with career across contexts and how it has been challenging. The focus is on macro-level theory and policy transference as well as the micro-level where practitioners in the field experience the consequence of this transference. The following narrative review aims to show that my thesis communicates with writing and research focusing on the complex relationship between theory and practice.

For the following section I look at international and national developments in career guidance and education, where I see discussions on career guidance as underpinned by understandings and conceptualisations of the career concept. International interest and policy focus over the last decades have seen career guidance and education as powerful tools that can support citizens as they work on their careers in an increasingly precarious world of work. However, while career learning has an appeal which makes it attractive as a basis for a system of lifelong learning, transferring theoretical frameworks of career from one context to another is problematic. Focusing in on Norway, I look at the Norwegian investigation of career management skills (CMS) which has come to be a cornerstone in Norwegian career guidance with a newly proposed framework. I also look at the way

that the Norwegian career field has worked with developing a national system for career guidance, where this work developed from being concerned with the structure of the system to currently focusing on content. I find that to a great extent it is because of this shift that a discussion on conceptualisations of career is warranted, and it also explains why it is necessary to discuss the development of career *guidance* in Norway as an entry to discuss the career concept. Lastly, I argue that discussing conceptualisations of career is important in the ongoing debate that will shape career guidance in the Norwegian context, working to overcome what I have termed the culturally contingent 'awkwardness of career'.

2.1 Solving problems – career guidance

Career learning is central to the currently developing system for career guidance in Norway, and especially relevant for career education in schools (Andreassen, Hovdenak & Swahn, 2008; Haug, 2018; NOU 2016:7). Theories on career learning are underpinned by an understanding that individuals by way of being in the world both implicitly and explicitly continuously learn what is relevant to know about work and career from context. The object of career guidance and career education is to help them understand and apply what they learn (Gottfredson, 2002; Krumboltz, 2009; Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976; Law, 1996, 1999; Law & Watts, 1977; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002; Willis, 1977, to mention only a few). How the career actor understands the career concept then, will necessarily have a consequence for which competencies and skills the career actor needs to learn. A common distinction between understandings of career is one of career as a race or a journey (Law, 2009), which inevitably will lead the career actor to emphasise racing skills or managing an exploration. While a scholarly understanding is that of career as a journey of lifelong learning and development, a more common and everyday conceptualisation refer to career as a race (Law, 2009; Thomsen, 2014).

The national development of such a system can be seen as a response to an international policy theme where education and competence are key to heighten the efficacy of the labour market and the economy, to increase equity and strengthen the resilience of the workforce. The OECD in particular has been known to since the seventies having fronted a message about the need for education and skills policies that help citizens engage in lifelong learning and competence development, however for a long time without a focus and strategy as to how this should be done (J. Bengtsson, 2013). From the turn of the millennium career guidance has been discussed as an instrument to implement strategies for lifelong learning where the role of career guidance in helping individuals to navigate a more complex world would arguably benefit both individuals and at the same time, contribute to public goals, such as social justice, prosperity and sustainable employment (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). However, the coupling between economic growth, lifelong learning and

career guidance and development have been met with much critique (A. Bengtsson, 2011), where the development of career guidance as connected to OECD is especially troublesome to writers who see OECD as a frontline champion for neoliberal policies in the Western world (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006).

Especially criticised is the underlying rationale from human capital theory holding that undertaking education and acquiring qualifications are means to build human capital, assuming that this gives better ability to compete and win in an employment structure understood as a market-place (Hooley, 2020; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Theories of career choice and development around the turn of the millennium had a similar underlying rationale. They often focused on the ability of individuals to mobilise and utilise features, skills and personal resources to strengthen their employability and navigate an increasingly complex world of education and employment (D. T. Hall, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). The rise of postmodernism emphasised the particular, the individual and the specific, and scholars in the field argued for more emphasis on context and idiosyncratic ways of understanding and constructing careers in relation to context and culture (Leong & Hartung, 2000; Metz & Guichard, 2009; Peiperl & Arthur, 2000; Savickas, 2012; Young, Marshall, & Valach, 2007). Career, and career success, was personal.

It leaves us with an interesting paradox, where the problem is highly individual and rooted, and the solution is the globally travelling idea of career management skills.

2.2 Theoretical concepts crossing contexts

Understandings of career concepts underpin how people go about their careers and different underlying understandings of central concepts in the career theories underpinning policy tools creates some difficulties in the use of methods across contexts. In the following, I will discuss the experiences with working with career theories across contexts.

2.2.1 Career concepts in career guidance

The complexity and various understandings of career, career guidance and career management skills, has been shown to create ethical dilemmas for guidance practitioners in the field, as they are given the task to negotiate between overall policy aims and individual needs (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). In their role as welfare service providers, they are instrumental in achieving goals set by policy initiatives. At the same time, practitioners' professional codes put tending to the needs and aims of the individual to the forefront. Bergmo-Prvulovic (2015) argues that different versions of career guidance appear in European policy documents, in the expectations of career guidance clients in work settings, and among professionals working in the field. There are different versions of career guidance because the practice of guidance work towards different goals. Underlying ideational

messages and perspectives on career communicated in policy documents say that career is subordinated to market forces (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012). At the same time, the EU policy on ethical guidelines for the profession stated that career was a 'self-managed adaptation of life path in response to surrounding market forces' (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2014, p. 12). These ideas about career guidance both seem to be thematically related to neo-liberal and human capital thinking and they leave the question: who is the career guidance practitioner really working for – the individual or the market?

Furthermore, the picture is complicated by career guidance clients' ideas about career, where personal meaning and self-realisation are essential aspects of career, in addition to an idea of more effort connected to more beneficial outcome (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2015). However, changing conditions for career gave feelings of powerlessness. They reflected a conflict between taken for granted meanings of career which are anchored in past working life conditions and new understandings of employment as insecure and not possible to control. In between are the career counsellors, who struggle with their professional role and identity as they realise their dual role of giving impartial support and matching individuals to jobs on behalf of the business sector and economic motives. They recognise that there is a 'common' view of career, from which they distance themselves, and they have an 'uneasy relationship to career' and have difficulty clarifying the meaning of the concept (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018, p. 149). It could be argued that they are 'stuck' between everyday and scholarly conceptualisations of career, in addition to policy and practice, where different uses of the concept creates an ambiguity for the career practitioners where it is not clear what they are working for and for whom.

2.2.2 Career management skills

I use the example of career management skills (CMS) to illustrate the complexity of working with theories and concepts across contexts, in addition to CMS being related to the development of frameworks for career learning and education in Norwegian schools. I will return to this in section 2.3.2.

Sultana (2012) describes the introduction of the career management skills (CMS) perspective in European skills policy in the 2000s. Making a framework for CMS is associated with defining and making clear what are essential career competencies to have to be able to manage and develop one's career (Haug, 2014; Haug, 2018). It is a cornerstone for frameworks for career guidance in Europe and Northern America, and CMS is an appealing idea because it clearly states that what is most important to know about career and career development can be *learned*. As such, we can see how human capital theory is an underlying philosophy as successful careers are not necessarily a

matter of individual fit or innate ability, and the career actor can work for success by learning the right competencies and skills.

There are many related and overlapping frameworks that use CMS, where the Blueprint framework (National Life/Work Centre, n.d.; Jarvis & Keeley, 2003; Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2009) is one. The first Blueprint framework was developed in Canada, influenced by theory developments in the USA, and has later been adapted and presented to both an Australian and British audience. The structures are recognisable across the different Blueprint frameworks (Hooley, Watts, Sultana, & Neary, 2013; Sultana, 2012). Several European countries made attempts to introduce the blueprint framework into their national education or employment systems, or other structures where systems for lifelong learning would seem appropriate, and Hooley et al. (2013) and Sultana (2012) draw on Lithuania's attempt as especially illustrative. The group working with the Canadian Blueprint found that the concepts and practices that underpinned the framework clashed with local educational traditions, understandings of terms and career development theories, realising that the apparent appeal covered up how closely it was linked to the context within which it originated.

For example, seeing career as a means to explore or to win implies different learning outcomes, and it also involves different ways to educate. In comparison, the various curricular and pedagogical traditions inform the education systems differently, and Europe having at least three such traditions complicates transference of overall frameworks and makes it problematic. Philosophies underpinning education being either Anglo-Saxon and outcome-oriented, Encyclopaedically content-oriented or Bildung/Humboldt humanist and process-oriented (McLean, 1990, in Hooley et al., 2013, p. 120) implies different views of the learner. The learner 'as passive or active, as a tabula rasa or as co-constructor of knowledge', and assessment and evaluation have implications for pedagogical approach. As mentioned earlier, the Norwegian education system is intimately connected to the Nordic welfare model where the Humboldt/Bildung tradition translates into the underpinning philosophy of *danning*. Here, a personal development encompasses scholarly competence, making e.g. selecting, tracking, and streaming of students younger than 16 years of age a non-option (Roe, Linnakylä, & Lie, 2003). Outcome- and content-oriented pedagogies sits uncomfortably within this framework, and concepts as competence requirements, assessments and excellence are continuously debated (Sjøberg, 2018). In other words, as an example of working with the CMS perspective, the work with the Blueprint framework shows that understandings of concepts underpinning method matter.

Czarniawska and Sevón (2005, p. 7) state that with increasing globalisation, the world becomes 'compressed': 'more things, people, ideas, travel more and quicker'. As ideas travel the world, they bear a certain meaning, but when introduced into a new context, they go through a process of transformation and transference, they will be translated – not diffused. Travelling ideas can turn out in negative ways, illustrated by both Lithuania's Blueprint experience and the career counsellors having an uneasy relationship to the career concept because they must juggle several versions of career guidance in their practice. They show that while conflicting conceptualisations can be identified, they are not easily solved. Lithuania dropped their Blueprint project, and the career counsellors mentioned above found it hard to clarify the career concept. And from our analysis in Paper 4 for this thesis, I find that counsellors can prefer not to.

In summary, these studies show that different ideas about the career concept are shaped by actors holding different positions. They are different versions while connected to an overall, theoretical idea about what career and career guidance are, as is the case both with the Blueprint framework and the different social representations of career. In other words, conflicting views and unclarity about what is important about career and career guidance does not just mean insecurity. It can also imply a certain awkwardness and discomfort. In the next section, I will look at how Norway has dealt with this lingering discomfort of the career concept in the development of a national career guidance field.

2.3 Norwegian career guidance and counselling

The story about the Norwegian career field *can* be told by highlighting the OECD reports in the years following the turn of the millennium. On the background of the emphasis on lifelong learning and the fast-developing career guidance frameworks in the European policy field, they stated that the situation for career guidance in Norway was dismal (OECD, 2002, 2014). A rapid development of structures for career guidance followed, e.g. the establishment of state-run partnerships for career guidance focused on the creation of guidance centres from 2004 (Helgesen & Feiring, 2007; Syvertsen, 2018) and the introduction of Utdanningsvalg (Educational choice) for career education in lower secondary schools from 2008. However, related to this interpretation are notable caveats. First; such a presentation gives the false impression that before the OECD pointed this out, there was nothing. And second; presenting the development of Norwegian career guidance as uncritically integrating and implementing OECD policies with its baggage of human capital theory and neoliberal policies disguise the process of struggle for developing good quality guidance that has been ongoing for decades in addition to obscuring the distinctiveness of Norwegian career guidance as it appears today, partly as a consequence of cultural specificity.

Hence, the story about the Norwegian career field can be told as being something different. As Haug et al. (2020a) argue, Nordic career guidance of which the Norwegian is part has developed uniquely. There is a long tradition for systematically providing citizens with educational and vocational guidance. Still, the career word has been contested as its inherent hierarchical and neoliberal attitudes are ‘troubling to the Nordic self-image’ (p.2. See also Paper 1, Paper 2, and Paper 4). In any case, the paradox of Nordicity is the co-occurrence of similarity and difference, underscoring the need to be aware of the particular context within which career guidance is embedded.

As such, Haug et al.’s (2020a) call for context-sensitivity echoes a longstanding debate in career guidance and research. There is a rich array of research and theorising in the career field that explicitly deals with culture and context and how it affects career. For example, from a similar starting point, Arulmani (2014) argues that because religion and spirituality are ingrained in the Indian way of life, career needs to be understood as a journey through life, learning and work profoundly affected by the way religion organise society with e.g. castes and patriarchy. Offering a more general theory, McMahon (2011) shows how context is a layer-on-layer social system that extends from what is close to the individual to more distant, where reciprocal influence between the layers affect career choice and experiences. Gottfredson (2002) offers the understanding that social systems shape individual choices, as young people through social learning come to understand what is acceptable and not. There is also a vast and expanding knowledge base on cross-cultural career research, where e.g. measures of career phenomena and assessment instruments have been compared across contexts (e.g. Cohen, Duberley, & Ravishankar, 2015; Diemer & Gore, 2009; Leong & Hartung, 2000; Mayrhofer et al., 2016; Watson, Duarte, & Glavin, 2005).

However, writing and research on career guidance in Norway have followed its own path, and a characteristic of the Norwegian debate has been a focus on systems and structure for provision and the career counsellors’ role rather than theoretical concepts and issues of content. In the following section, I will therefore examine the Norwegian field of career guidance and counselling in more detail and discuss how career concepts are seated within the field.

2.3.1 Discussing structure

It could be argued that the role of counselling and the counsellors within the Norwegian education system carry a history of having an uneasy position within the system. Teig (2000) describes the history of the Norwegian field of counselling as starting in the 1950s, but counselling as pastoral care was an integral part of the teacher role before this. However, the first counsellor was employed in a Norwegian school in 1957, and discussions on the role, function and competence requirements for counsellors in schools followed. At first vocational guidance had priority, but in the decades that

followed social pedagogy and administrative tasks were introduced, shifting the priorities of the counsellor role. The question about competence was a heated debate between representatives of the educational authorities and teachers and practitioners in the field, where the latter felt that counselling demanded in-depth pedagogic-psychologic competence. At the same time, the former asserted that being educated as a teacher and having a shorter post-graduate course was enough.

The counsellor-role was defined in the revised curriculum of 1964: the counsellor should be employed as a teacher with an additional role as counsellor and be part of the teacher collegium, with no additional competence requirements attached (Teig, 2000). The lack of resources to execute the role, lack of clarity in tasks and place within the organisations and fragmented educational possibilities, have contributed to a wide variety in school counselling, with the debate on competence requirements and a demand for professionalisation going parallel to this. After 40 years, Teig (2000, p. 10) sums up that 'little has happened (..). The problems raised at the beginning of this period are just as relevant today'. Later research often emphasises the uneasy role of guidance and counsellors in the education system, where issues like counsellors competence, mandate, practical challenges, position within institutions and resources are discussed (Buland & Mathiesen, 2008, 2014; Buland, Mathiesen, & Mordal, 2015; Holen & Hovdenak, 2014; Mathiesen, Mordal, & Buland, 2014; and Paper 4).

It could be argued that research and scholarly work on career guidance have centred around the role of career counselling and the counsellor in the Norwegian education system, i.e. the discussion has not necessarily emphasised concepts, methods and theories for career guidance. In their review of Norwegian literature on educational choice in the transition from lower to upper secondary, Holen and Hovdenak (2014) show that research has in no small extent centred around issues of social reproduction and class, gender and ethnicity. They argue that research focusing on theory and methods for career guidance emphasise that structure is related to the outcome of individual processes. For example, attempts to support the identity development and choice process of young people and theories on choice readiness saw as a central issue that the school system prompts choices before the students are ready/mature. Hence, discussing educational and vocational choice and the role of guidance can be seen as coming from a system perspective which emphasises structure and the role of guidance and counselling over the content of the guidance and career theory. As such, it is a parallel to Norwegian employment/work culture research and theory, which also emphasise a system perspective (Fischer & Sortland, 2001).

Perhaps the affinity for systems was part of the appeal when Norwegian educational authorities decided to go for the career guidance for lifelong learning-system that OECD (2002, 2004, 2014) and

later the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) (2012) proposed. Introducing career guidance to Norway started with developing structures such as county-level partnerships for career guidance and the creation of a new career learning subject in lower secondary schools. However, the competence requirements for the career guidance counsellors who were meant to counsel clients and form the competence-base for the career guidance field in Norway and the new career education subject in schools was left open and up to employers and school leaders to define. This left the qualitative aspects of career guidance in Norway still undeclared.

2.3.2 Discussing content

In other words, while the discussion of the structures and systems for career guidance has been ongoing for several decades, the content and method for practice have been discussed to a lesser degree. It could be argued that the lack of competence *requirements* for counsellors that left the issue notoriously undeclared made it difficult to put down what is important and noteworthy about career, what career guidance theory and method do they need to know to fill the role. As the organising and content of the career learning subject Educational choice have been unclear (Lødding et al., 2008), it could be argued that for a long time, the qualitative, the what, the *content* of career guidance was not clear, and the career concept was missing in these debates. Telling to this point, Holen and Hovdenak's review of research literature on career guidance in the transition between lower and upper secondary school from 2014 shows that in addition to fewer articles focusing on teenagers' individual and identity development, only 6 of 52 papers reviewed had 'career' in their title. This was even though they used 'karriere' (career) as an explicit search term.

Buland et al. (2011) argue that theories of person-environment fit are relatively known and well-used by counsellors, but Kvalsund (2015) argue that the use of career theories from a test-to-fit paradigm presented a challenge in the more non-directive educational tradition in Norway. However, after the introduction of the new subject Educational choice in lower secondary school and the establishment of career guidance centres, the need for knowledge was apparent. In response, there has been an increase of writing about career guidance, and several textbooks and anthologies introducing the subject and career guidance theory have been published, e.g. Andreassen et al. (2008), Gravås and Gaarder (2011), Svendsrud (2015), Høsøien and Lingås (2016), Røyset and Kleppestø (2017), Kjærgård and Plant (2018), and Haug (2018). These books discuss career guidance, what it is and how it can affect well-being in life, learning and work through focusing on choices and transitions. They commonly refer to career guidance as being recently introduced to Norway and refer to the importance of giving its audience an introduction to career guidance method. However, there are few discussions on the underpinning philosophical tenets of the theories, i.e. investigations of the

relationship between the context it originated in and the Norwegian culture or discussions of why it may be that career is a new concept in Norway.

Notable exceptions are writers who are concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of career theory, such as Kjærgård (2013) discussing the governmentality of career guidance as an object for policy in Norway as well as globally. Kvalsund (2015) discuss how matching theories used in Norwegian school counselling represented a tension between directing and non-directing counselling. Norendal (2018) discuss the possibility for adapting Life Design (Savickas, 2012) to a Norwegian context, where she argues that the six questions that make up the framework for the method need to be adapted. Also, Lingås (2018) cautions about the possible consequence of importing what he sees as the instrumentalism inherent in western career guidance theory, where individuals are means to meet political and economic aims. Kjærgård (2013) argues that career guidance has a history of being a 'soft policy tool' towards a neo-liberal world order also in Norway, and the other writers also argue that there are some issues about career guidance that presents a challenge when introduced to Norway. A common thread in these works is the tension between directive and non-directive approaches to career guidance and a need for a cautious approach to using career theory. These issues reflect the content of theories and competence of practitioners, e.g. the difference between a specialist/therapist counsellor or a pedagogue.

However, the optimism about career learning and the new CMS framework for thinking about career that appeared in the international career field inspired developers. It instigated much work to adapt and introduce CMS and Blueprint frameworks to local contexts, and in Norway actors in the career field asked whether the CMS or Blueprint perspectives could be relevant also here. A project exploring the possibility of a Norwegian version of CMS was commissioned by education authorities in charge of the development of career guidance in Norway, and an expert panel of practitioners, researchers and policymakers considered the evidence and the pros and cons of the European CMS idea (Haug, 2014). The report concludes that CMS frameworks are appealing and that the concepts used and processes described are recognisable, but that it was not directly transferrable to a Norwegian context. For a large part, scepticism towards the philosophies and different traditions underpinning the CMS frameworks reviewed, in addition to scepticism towards emphasising one theoretical approach to career guidance, left the panel hesitant. They found it difficult to recommend them as an overall national approach to career guidance, even though the competence goals were seen as essential for career development.

Haug (2014) argue that from a policy level perspective the Norwegian career guidance field was small and relatively weak, with a lack of research and theoretical debate making the career learning

perspective known and relevant to actors in the career field. The possible contribution of career guidance both for individuals and society was not made clear, even though work to develop systems for career guidance had been ongoing for several years. However, as the expert panel recognised many elements from CMS in practice, e.g. competence goals, and reported much enthusiasm about them in the field, the report raised the issue of what can be gained by connecting ongoing work in the career field to an overall framework. Evidence for career guidance systems often emphasise that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, i.e. it is the combination of career learning events and interventions that make up a good quality system for career guidance (ELGPN, 2012). In other words, the expert panel was ambivalent about the CMS idea, or at least the direct transfer of a specific theoretical and methodological framework for career guidance practice.

The report discussing CMS in a Norwegian context recommended designing a new and local framework for career guidance to strengthen the competence of practitioners and provide well-suited methods and tools (Haug, 2014). Research into the quality of career guidance in the education system stated that quality was highly variable because of different levels of competence in addition to different ways of organising career guidance and education in schools (Buland et al., 2014; Haug, 2016). Hence, though the panel was hesitant to adopt the CMS or Blueprint frameworks, the need for a 'common ground' for conversations about the content and purpose of career guidance was supported.

2.3.3 Resolving the awkwardness of career?

Getting to the end of the story about the Norwegian career field, where the 'end' is simply the moment of writing this in June 2020, a 'common ground' for conversations about career and career competencies has been presented. After a two-year highly consultative process, the national skills agency Skills Norway has presented a new framework for career competence, practitioner competence, quality, and ethics in career guidance (Haug et al., 2019). Attempting to establish an understanding of career to firmly replace an everyday, traditional, hierarchical understanding of it, the framework defines career with a 'wide understanding'. Career is something everybody has got and reflects the complexity of living a life and at the same time working on the structure of it, understood in a lifelong perspective. It is not dependent on participation in work; hence, career also happens before being established in work and after pension. Adding competence delineates focus to what is related to education and work, and it is a starting point for a career conversation where exploring the relation to other life areas is important to develop and handle career. To 'handle' implies being actively engaged and in control, and competence also refers to understanding and reflection (Haug et al., 2019, p. 45). As such, the new framework is underpinned by career learning

theory, where career is conceptualised as moving through life where continuous learning helps the career actor understand what is going on.

Furthermore, in terms of conceptualisations of central tenets, the suggested framework defines career competence *areas* to be explored and learn from instead of career skills, where oxymorons mark oppositions to be negotiated. The pairs are me – context, horizon for possibility – limitations, choice – coincidence, change – stability, adjust – resist, and gives the career actor room to explore preferences and positioning related to these oppositions (Kompetanse Norge, 2020). The competence areas do not set out competence goals or measure when ‘good’ or ‘enough’ career learning has taken place. Instead, they are topics for conversation where the exploration and learning come from career actors seeking to position themselves between these extremes, concerning choices and situations they are facing. Different life situations give different opportunities, e.g. change – stability, where some phases of life will pose different challenges and opportunities, for instance, family life with small children or after they have grown up. Taking a stance towards challenging structures by positioning oneself related to adjust – resist, helps career actors understand the struggle, making it possible to see how different situations pose these challenges differently. These oxymorons make it possible for career actors to position and re-position themselves, in a continuous negotiation between understandings of self and context. In other words, helping individuals with their career is non-directive, and the individual is assumed to be competent, to handle and be in control.

At this point, the Norwegian career field is in an advantageous position of both having a system for career guidance and career learning in schools and career centres, and a framework for the content of career conversations. As such, it could seem that the awkward position of career in Norway is in the process of being resolved and that the career field in Norway is taking shape in a way that signals something unique. For example, interestingly the word pairs could be argued to mark an opposition towards an urge to define and delineate career management skills, and as such, rather provide individual space and self-determination within a framework.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter, I have used developments in the international career research and policy field to show that there is a difference between designing career theories and interventions and using them in practice – especially when they are taken out of context and applied in a different one. I have shown that this applies to frameworks for career learning as well as concepts, as they implicitly refer to underlying philosophies and worldviews that can be contradictory to each other. I have argued for context-sensitivity being a concern both for international career theory, as well as a Norwegian and

Nordic field of career guidance. Hence, I have also discussed the development of the career field in Norway as a precondition to further discuss philosophical underpinnings of a context-sensitive career concept, arguing that early developments were concerned with the system of guidance and the role of the counsellor, rather than content. A discussion on content has emerged over the last two decades, where writers in the field have focused on introducing career guidance to a Norwegian audience. Some writers have been concerned with the transference of theory and underlying philosophies, and in line with a project investigating the possibility of using CMS in Norway, a general conclusion was that there is a need for 'something else' in a Norwegian context.

The call for 'something else' in the Norwegian career field, has now been attempted answered by a newly published framework for career guidance ethics, competence requirements, career competencies and quality standards. For example, the framework suggests career competence areas where counselees can position themselves, rather than competencies and skills to be achieved. The framework is promising and has received attention and praise for being innovative and proposing concepts that are rooted in a highly consultative development process, and arguably as such must be context-sensitive. The new framework answers the call for a comprehensive system for lifelong guidance. However, it still leaves the question about what it is specifically about the Norwegian context that makes it require its *own* career learning framework open.

While I am optimistic about the new framework and see it as intuitively 'right' for Norway, I am also interested in finding out why other suggestions, as measures of career competencies and skills in detailed frameworks are 'wrong'. The answer to these questions lie on a deeper level of analysis, and we could come closer to such an answer by looking at how career and career guidance give meaning on a profound level.

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter will elaborate on the two central concepts that lie at the heart of this thesis, those of career and culture. The concept of career can be viewed as richly ambiguous (A. G. Watts, 1998), and it would be possible to argue that the concept of culture is equally obscure (Jahoda, 2012). The concepts of career and culture can be theorised and understood in multiple ways, and in this section, I will discuss them aiming to provide a conceptual grounding for my thesis.

The first section of this chapter introduces Koselleck's (2004; Koselleck & White, 2002) theory on *conceptualisation* as an analytic tool to understand what concepts are. The system he proposes will be important in my later discussion in chapter 6. I will then continue with a discussion of the concepts culture and career, starting with culture. These discussions aim to get a clearer understanding of what talking about culture and career entails, and I will use this learning in my later discussion in chapter 6 about how culture works as a context and framework for conceptualising and experiencing career. Offering an understanding of culture that is rooted in sociology, I find that connecting the concepts of career and culture using the Careership theory (Hodkinson, 2008; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) which builds on related concepts, is meaningful.

3.2 Understanding conceptualisation

I use Koselleck's (2004; Koselleck & White, 2002) ideas about concept formation as an analytic tool to address the concepts of career and culture. He developed a methodology to investigate how concepts are formed, changed and re-formed for his *Begriffsgeschichte* – history of concepts. As I have suggested in the literature review, career concepts in general and career learning in particular has been understood differently across contexts. Thus, the mechanisms Koselleck describe is useful in this thesis as it illustrates the importance of looking into how concepts are formed, understood and described.

The *Begriffsgeschichte* theory holds that concepts bear certain meanings and are signified by words, but it is important to note that words and concepts are distinguishable. An important difference is that words that are *not* concepts are used unambiguously. In contrast, words that signify concepts are ambiguous and the content they refer to is constantly being redefined and re-formed, and this is what makes them concepts. When used ambiguously, all words can be concepts – what matters is the meaning given to the word. Later in this chapter, I will show how the concepts of work and career have been constantly redefined and reformed by changing content and the meaning they give. Koselleck (2004, p. 85) gives the example of ‘we’, where using it articulates or creates a group identity, while the use of ‘we’ becomes conceptually intelligible when it is connected to collective terms like ‘nation’ or ‘class’. These terms give the word a certain meaning, and it delineates an identity – the word ‘we’ is substantiated through these expressions at the conceptual level. *Who* it is that defines and gives meaning to words and makes them concepts, thus becomes an important question, as defining a concept delineates what is considered important about it.

Koselleck (2004) argues that defining concepts can be associated with a certain agency on account of the actor. It is not only about how history and experience with objects, events or ideas are understood to be a part of the concept, it also stretches into the future aiming to say something about what the concept can or should be about. Defining concepts thus implies defining a certain space by defining ideas. They also delineate what is possible to think and do in certain contexts, and it implicitly positions actors in relation to this (Koselleck & White, 2002). I associate this feature of delineating what is possible with sociologically based theories on culture and career, notably the Careership theory (Hodkinson, 2008; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997), which I will discuss later in this chapter.

There are two important points concerning the positioning of actors, and the first is that concepts are a battleground for different social actors. They struggle to define how the past should be understood and what the future holds. The other important point is that positioning one aspect implicates positioning the other, and Koselleck (2004) holds that there are in particular three pairs of asymmetrical counter-concepts that underpin the formulation of concepts and consequently positioning. First, there is a difference between experience and expectation, or before/after, where the present is found in the tension between them. The second pair is inside/outside, or more explicitly: friend/foe. The third pair is up/down, showing dominance and subordination (Koselleck, 2004; Skovhus & Felby, 2020). Later in this chapter, I will refer to the distinction between seeing career as a journey or as a race (Law, 2009), which I see as counter-concepts.

In summary, I aim to show that the word career is substantiated by career actors and theorists' ideas about career, with the consequence that attempting to define and 'catch' career is underpinned by thoughts about what it should be. As a contextual factor, culture works as a framework for such ideas. Furthermore, in the same way as actors struggle to define and take ownership of career, the idea of struggle and positioning also implies antagonism and an urge to exclude or disengage with some aspects of it. In this sense, conceptions directing choices of action are also inherently normative – organising experience, considerations and actions into one set of strategies that applies, means formulating an idea about what 'does not belong'. As the formation of concepts are dependent on experience as well as being attempts to foreshadow the future, context is also closely related to concept formation. Context frames history from a certain perspective, and culture is an important characteristic of context. In the following, I will explore the concepts of career and culture in light of Kosellecks (Koselleck, 2004; Koselleck & White, 2002) ideas on concept formation and see how they are connected.

3.3 Culture

Starting with the concept of culture, I go back to the research question for this synopsis and I lift the concept of culture from its specific Norwegian context and ask *how cultures work* as context for conceptualisation. To illustrate the problem of culture, E.T. Hall (1976) states that 'any Westerner who was raised outside the far east and claims he really understands and can communicate with either the Chinese or Japanese is deluding himself' (E. T. Hall, 1976, p. 2). In other words, there is something implicit and tacit that goes on in social clusters that make them different from each other, making communication and joint action difficult. One of the elements presenting difficulty is the understanding of concepts. Concepts, as abstractions of experience with both practical and theoretical elements, directing action and being formulated as words, will necessarily be formed in relation to contexts. Analysing concepts also means discovering which thoughts can be thought, and which actions are legitimate in a specific context or culture.

In the following, I will discuss the concept of culture and hold that when using the concept it is important to clarify how it is used, and using sociological understandings offered by Reed & Alexander (2009) I show how I will use the concept.

3.3.1 Culture is a metaphor

The word culture, as it is used today to denote certain aspects of a phenomenon, is a metaphor. Thus, it helps to explain an idea or make a comparison. The ancient Roman orator Cicero borrowed the word from agriculture to describe the cultivation of the soul to develop a philosophical soul, the highest possible ideal for human development (Jahoda, 2012). In other words, for a long time culture

denoted the 'best that has been thought and said in the world' (Arnold, 1869, 2003, p. 7). By this definition, culture was defined both as an intellectual, artistic activity and by the artefacts these activities produced. To *have* culture was to have the ability to understand these artefacts and have developed the taste to differentiate between the good and the bad ones. Reed and Alexander (2009) argue that the western universities perpetuated this definition, and a focus on high culture brought with it the construction of the literary, dramatic and musical canons, and would later be criticised for being tools of social exclusion and maintaining hierarchy. However, scholars discussing culture in the 20th and 21st century have created a vast and complex field of research and theory, where definitions abound – but are tightly connected to certain perspectives or lines of thought and debate.

Theories of culture will typically say that it has three characteristics: Culture is acquired and not innate; the different aspects of a culture are interdependent in such a way that interaction with one cultural phenomenon creates reverberations through to other phenomena in the same culture; and culture is a phenomenon shared between its members and defines what constitutes a group (E. T. Hall, 1976). Trying to sum up several contemporary suggestions as to how to define culture, Jahoda (2012) reviewed a sample of recent texts offering definitions of culture and found that they could be roughly divided into groups of definitions arguing that culture is external, internal, or both. Both within and across groups, he found that definitions and descriptions were contradictory. In the end, Jahoda (2012) argues that there cannot be any generally agreed definition of culture, it is a construct of 'extraordinary malleability' (p.299) and not a thing but a social construct vaguely referring to a vastly complex set of phenomena. Looking back to Kosellecks (2004) point about concepts necessarily being ambiguous to be useful as concepts, culture is a concept of great use as it is a part of everyday vocabulary to understand and categorise. For example, when combined with an adjective to indicate some undefined property of a category, e.g. 'consumer culture' or 'adolescent culture' it points to characteristic behaviours of groups. Hence, from Jahoda's (2012) perspective, defining culture is impossible and efforts futile, but the word culture should still be used. More important, however, is that when it is used, it is necessary to explain the way it is employed in a specific context.

3.3.2 Culture affects people and their behaviour

While Jahoda's (2012) contention that culture is an undefinable concept has been met with resistance (Mironenko & Sorokin, 2018), the point about the usefulness of culture and the need to define how it is employed is worth hanging on to. For this thesis it is assumed that culture *does* something, it works somehow, the career concept is changed as an effect of encountering it. However, as agency can only be mediated by the people that belong to it, seeing culture as something that affects the *people living in it*, who in turn shape the career concept is more precise.

To that end, I find that cultural sociology's notion of culture as having a *role* rather than being something that just *is* helpful (Reed & Alexander, 2009). To use the concept and explain its role, Reed and Alexander (2009) give culture a concrete and an analytic definition, where the concrete refers to social objects and activities which are symbolic in their intent or function, mentioning art, music and sport as examples. The analytic definition refers to the symbolic and ideational element of any social action, social relationship or historical pattern, which I understand as the meaning given to social objects and activities. 'Culture is signifiers and what they signify, gestures and interpretation, intended and unintended meanings, written discourse and effective speech, situational framing and scientific paradigms, moral ideals, and so on' (p.380). Culture is both expressed in the concrete and understood analytically, connecting behaviours to concepts by the meaning they are given. Thus, if career is the way people go about their lives and the choices they make for education, work and life issues, then the meaning of it and the understanding of how it should be done is an expression of culture.

The goal of researching the products of culture is to explain social action and to critique and reform the structures and meanings behind it. Cultural structures are seen as what shapes the institutions and interactions of the world, both formal and informal, verbalised and tacit, the taken-for-granted and the assumptions of morals and values. If cultural structures influence action, then understanding how this happens implies conceptualising the relationship between them.

One strand of theorising takes on a means-to-an-end approach. A culture-for-action-approach, where culture sets the ends that are met, e.g. saying that ideology and norms will determine behaviour. For example, definitions of culture holding that culture is a term used to describe what people have in common as a society may fall in this category. When it comes to precisely what culture generates in terms of conceptions, beliefs, customs, rituals, etc., one example could be that 'Culture is a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting. (...) A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members (Goodenough, 1980, p. 41). Understood on a deeper level culture can be understood to create an internal environment, it structures subjectivity and orient action. 'Social actors respond to sets of typifications of the social world and thus are dependent upon meaningful symbolisation in setting their goals and imagining how they can go about meeting them' (Reed & Alexander, 2009, p. 382). People learn rights and wrongs and how to operate in their context by the example of others (Goodenough, 1976). The symbolic forms an internal environment for action within the individual, where rich narratives and morally and emotionally loaded oppositions guide behaviour and thinking.

Finding a way to assess the characteristics of cultures has led several researchers to attempt to pinpoint the way that cultures differ and produced famous examples such as Hofstede's (2001) analysis of cultural differences. While encountering the practical consequences of cultural differences through his work with organisational development in multinational business, he formulated six dimensions of cultural difference. The dimensions were power distance, individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance index, masculinity-femininity, long term-short term orientation and indulgence-restraint. His work is widely used but also thoroughly criticised. It could be argued because of the same reasons: the relatively simple, neat and orderly system of national cultures is appealing, but critiques point to assumptions of universalism, the conflating of nation-states and cultures and argue that the framework is not methodologically or theoretically sound (Baskerville, 2003). Hofstede (2001) has also been criticised for a static and unsophisticated understanding of culture (Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). Later work, reiterations and new attempts from other scholars have left the research on cultural dimensions 'enriched and messy' (Maleki & de Jong, 2014, p. 107). In this vein, one way to answer my research question is to look at the characteristics of the Norwegian national culture. Exploring the dissonance between a theoretical career concept and Norwegian culture implies looking for characteristics of culture (Paper 1 and Paper 2). This can be referred to as a culture-for-action perspective (Reed & Alexander, 2009), as it attempts to detail the cultural values or norms underpinning the motivation for behaviour.

Another way for the relationship between culture and behaviour to work is what Reed and Alexander (2009) call culture-in-action. Swidler (1986) provides an example of the culture-in-action approach, arguing that values and interests have little explanatory power because will or ideals do not guarantee end results. For example, people can often be found to act in opposition to values. Specifically, Swidler (1986) oppose the idea of the 'unit act' (p. 276), saying that people do not choose their actions one at a time and build sequences piece by piece to maximise given outcomes. Rather, action is integrated into larger bundles, called strategies of action, where culture has a causal role as it 'shapes the capacities from which such strategies of action are constructed' (p.277). Strategies are not plans, but a bundle of behaviours and actions connected to a certain experiential theme. They are tool kits for acts and behaviours connected to e.g. family life or career, which are not built from scratch but based on some prefabricated links, shaped and organised by culture. In other words, it is not so that individuals do not learn from what surrounds them, but the end goals are rather defined by what is possible to *achieve* with these tool kits. Acquiring new tool kits can be costly and hard to achieve, and culture shapes action through a repertoire limiting the available range of possible actions. In this way,

strategies of action are cultural products; the symbolic experiences, mythic lore, and ritual practices of a group or society create moods and motivations, ways of organizing experience and evaluating reality, modes of regulating conduct, and ways of forming social bonds, which provide resources for constructing strategies of action (Swidler, 1986, p. 284).

Action comes first, and then it is understood, and the bundles are the characteristics of a culture. This also means that 'when we notice cultural differences, we recognize that people do not all go about their business in the same ways; how they approach life is shaped by their culture' (Swidler, 1986, p. 284). In this vein, it is possible to see the discussion of cultural values in Paper 3 as tool-kits, where e.g. egalitarianism is discussed in relation to gender stereotypes and segregation in the employment structure. It could be asked if the construction of egalitarianism as bundle of strategies simply does not include the gender issue for these teenagers, as they have little experience with it – or at least the negative effects of it.

E. T. Hall's (1976) idea of high and low context gives an example of how a culture-in-action perspective theorises how culture works. Akin to Swidler (1986), E. T. Hall holds that culture can be seen in what people do, but from his perspective, one way to look at this means looking at the way people within a culture communicate. He sees 'culture as man's medium: there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture' (p.16), and his main interest is the way culture works to affect people in tacit, implicit and non-verbalised ways. One important way to separate between cultures is whether they are high or low context cultures, and the difference lies in the integration of cultural context in communication. High-context and low-context messages are on different ends of a continuum, where the difference between them is to what degree they are loaded with information. A high-context message has little coded, explicit information because the information it conveys is either in the physical context or internalised in the person. It means that the recipient of such a message will understand what is being communicated based on experience and cultural knowledge coming from e.g. socialisation. A low-context message is the opposite, packed with information in explicit code because all the information must be given within the message. E. T. Hall (1976) gives the example of twins. Because they share a history and experience and know each other well, they can communicate economically. In contrast, two people who are new to each other will need to disclose much information to get to know each other well.

Saying that no culture exists exclusively at one end, E. T. Hall argues that there is still some stability as to how cultural members communicate that can characterise cultures. To some extent, it is connected to the culture's history, where longitudinal development and older topics and concepts give a richer and more integrated context. Looking back to concept formation the theory holds that

concepts are re-negotiated and re-formed when used and re-defined by different actors and related to high context and low context cultures the question is whether they respond to new concepts in different ways. I.e. *are* new concepts – such as career in Norway – up for discussion, or do they ‘fall out’ of communication because they are not grounded in the context? Relating to Paper 4, again it is worth reflecting over the lack of presence of central concept in peoples’ lives: if ‘career’ has not been a part of the tool-kit, neither as word or as bundle of strategies, it is not connected to action and events.

There are numerous problems with such an approach, for example, the assumption that culture is relatively unstructured and primarily the possession of individuals, found in the way they make sense of things as they are solving them. ‘Collective meaning formation melts away in the face of agency and knowledge’ (Reed & Alexander, p.384), and there is a danger of creating a philosophical and methodological ‘hero’, so reflexive, aware and knowledgeable about one’s place in the structure that an investigation of the structure is vitiated. Rather, there is a need to acknowledge the *interplay* of individuals and the structures they live with, to avoid determinism and explain why social structures can predict some outcomes, but not all. The habitus concept of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2010), argues that the habitus is the internalisation of context-specific behaviours and the externalisation of context-specific beliefs about behaviours. In addition, it is something uniquely individual and specific, it is ‘the internalisation of the external and the externalisation of the internal’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 205). As such, culture is expressed in how individuals navigate their social world, as the external context has a certain rule-based structure the individual must learn to function, but there is always something unique and individual about the way it is done.

In summary, as there are many ways to use and understand culture, I draw from this discussion that the first important task when wanting to use it is to explain how it is used. Hence, I adopt the argument that culture is a concept that can be used to refer to some defining characteristics about a group, and as such, it delineates a scope. The culture concept shares this characteristic with the process of conceptualisation. I also adopt the argument that culture works on two levels. These two levels are understood in different ways, as something concrete corresponding to an abstract level which is connected by reciprocal meaning-making. It can also be understood as something internal, a psychological environment that communicates with an external world. The individual integrates culture which will affect thinking and behaviour, while the individual also forms idiographic versions of culture, the habitus.

In the following sections, I will scrutinise the concept of a career similarly, to be subsequently combined with culture and habitus in the last section of this chapter.

3.4 Career

Careers are at the forefront of our attention. They provide us with our daily bread, our sense of identity, our means of achievement. (...) they are what we judge our lives by. They determine our happiness, self-esteem, self-fulfilment and mental health (Inkson, Dries, & Arnold, 2015, p. 2).

There is an extensive tradition of theory and writing that looks at the concept of career from different directions. It can be argued that career is an important concept through which we can understand both culture and individuals in society – even if the concept is not recognised as relevant. As the above quote states, these writers represent a cultural view where career is of high importance. As it is also assumed by the ‘provide daily bread’-phrase in the above quote, paid work is often assumed as a part of career, but the relationship between paid and unpaid work and career is debated. In times of austerity, can work and hardship be a career (Blustein, Kenna, Gill, & DeVoy, 2008)? When not having to work for sustenance, can the activities that make us happy, and provide the sense of identity and means of achievement and give self-esteem be what makes up a career (Irving, 2018)?

In the following section, I will look at career theory and literature and show that work with the concepts of work and career have structured debate and delineated what is important about work and career in people’s lives and for society. Metaphors and conceptualisations of career guide career behaviour through the agency that comes from conceptualisation. Debating concepts of career is also debating ideas about how career is supposed to work and the benefits it can bring.

3.4.1 Career is also a metaphor

Career does not *literally* mean progress or series of work and/or life experiences. The word is derived from Latin and denotes travelling along a road, and when *careering*, it means travelling at high speed (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020a). Using the word career to denote progress or series of experiences is a metaphor. Projecting the term to contexts where it was non-existing runs the risk of anachronisms, but one could argue that the history of *thinking* about and *theorising* careers go back in history to the first writings known to man, especially when work is seen as central to career. For example, Svendsen (2011) makes a general, and generous, distinction between two ways of appreciating work in the history of philosophy: while the ancient philosophers viewed work as a meaningless curse, the post-reformation thinkers saw it as a meaningful calling (p. 22). When work was voluntary, as when one of the heroes in *The Illiad* builds a ship because he wants to but could have had a slave do it,

work is meaningful and good. The work of a poorer man or a slave who is forced to work is less worthy, and the degrading aspect is the lower social status that made it necessary to work and the lack of autonomy in doing the master's bidding, not the act of working in and of itself. Svendsen (2011) notes that the etymological roots of the different words for work in some languages go back to ideas, objects and states that signifies discomfort, e.g., the French *travail* descend from the Latin *tripalium*, an instrument of torture, and the German *arbeit* meant adversity and misery (p. 13). While the Reformation in the 16th century caused a turn of events where work was now a way to serve and praise God and thus giving work a new, elevated meaning (Kjærgård, 2018), individuals' working to serve also lead to prosperity and wealth. Moore, Gunz, and D. T. Hall (2007) argue that this was one of the stepping stones for the development of capitalism and industrialisation from the 18th century. However, as noted by Moore et al. (2007), using career as a term to denote a series or progression of work experiences first surfaced in the 19th century, and became more common in the first half of the 20th century.

In other words, the metaphors have shifted, and work and career are reconceptualised and reformed. As Law (2009) notes, as is the case with every other metaphor, every time we use it we could have used another one instead, and the difference between understanding work as hardship and misery versus a meaningful calling makes a difference. Hence, how we use the career metaphor says something about what work and career mean to the career actor, as conceptualisation delineates scope (Koselleck, 2004) and actions in the concrete signify ideational and philosophical content in the abstract levels of culture (Reed & Alexander, 2009). Listing nine metaphors for career, Inkson (2004; et al. 2015) argues that career actors enact their careers in ways congruent with the metaphors they use to describe it. Understanding career as inheritances, cycles, action, fit, journeys, roles, relationships, resources or stories, implies different ways to approach career and work as life projects, where the determination of inheritance or the exploratory journey implies different perspectives and appreciations of opportunities and limitations. Once, being curious about the career of a man who had finished a doctorate to then start a business as a carpenter, I was explained that people are either farmers or fishermen, they cultivate the land and stay connected, or they float around looking for opportunities. He was not finished looking for opportunities. Law (2009) also sums up the metaphors in one distinction, between the career as a race versus the career as a journey, arguing that this is the basic attitude towards a career project: either it is about winning or it is about exploring.

3.4.2 Negotiating careers

Linked to understanding the career concept and how it is seen as significant to human behaviour and meaning-making, is getting an oversight of the field of research and theorising on career. It is

commonly argued that the career field is a conglomerate of theories and influences from psychology, sociology, political studies, education, anthropology, economics, management and organisational studies (e.g. Inkson et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2007; Patton & McMahon, 2014), and there is probably more. It is reasonable to argue that this is because career is a crucial point of interaction between individuals' internal and external worlds, where features, abilities and competencies meet the demands and possibilities of the external world. It is where systems and individuals interact. Different theoretical perspectives investigate and theorise about career from their respective angles and see different aspects of career theory and career guidance theory as most important (Kjærgård, 2013). Bergmo-Prvulovic (2018, p. 151) describes career as a 'bridging object framed by conflicting perspectives'; hence the concept of career is *necessarily* diverse and many-faceted.

The career concept had a long history before it landed in Norway. Aptly put by Moore et al. (2007, p. 14), 'people have been thinking and theorising about the purpose of work in their lives' long before someone thought about delineating it as a specific field of science and research. Claiming that career theory tends towards 'ahistoricism', Moore et al. (2007, p. 14) warn that introducing something new while in fact reinventing the wheel because someone has thought of it and written about it already, is a constant possibility. Attempting to outline the history of careers can suffer the same fate as career theory reinventing the wheel. For example, it is always tempting to introduce the career field in a chronological manner, which means starting by introducing the big cannons of our field and move on with a neatly ordered account of events. But such a representation can be misleading and give an understanding of the development of the career field as a neat and orderly trajectory. Rather, I will emphasise that different theoretical foundations have produced different career concepts, and thus different ways to practice career, and different ideas about how career works.

3.4.2.1 Social order versus autonomy and freedom

As a starting point for discussing career, the development of industrialisation meant a profound change to the nature of work. Sociologists of the 19th century such as Durkheim (1984) and Weber (in Weber, Gerth, Mills, & Turner, 1991) observed that this presented some new challenges to the working man, where the move to organise work in organisations and bureaucracies changed the conditions for the activities that jobs consisted of. They saw how work became divided and organised into systems and hierarchies of meritocratic specialisation, with an allocation of roles, qualification and power rising from the need to create efficient systems for production. These were systems of interdependence and had another way of designating status; by experience or qualification rather than heritage and pedigree. There was thus a possibility to climb such a system (Moore et al., 2007). But they also saw that these systems had an inherent limitation to the freedom of workers. In other words, Durkheim and Weber debated the issue of the human need for autonomy and freedom

versus social order provided by systematic organising of work, and as such, they also debated if and how the organising and bureaucratisation made working life meaningful for individuals. While Weber was pessimistic about the freedom and autonomy of individuals in bureaucratic systems, Durkheim was more concerned with the positive effects of organisation and interdependence and believed that the new working life could provide communities and connectedness (Moore et al., 2007). The tension between the need to organise and the value of autonomy can be seen as an underlying theme affecting the debates about career theory in the century to come.

As in the notion of paradigm shifts (Kuhn, in Chalmers, 2013, pp. 100-120), theories on career develops because what is held as best practice or theory is challenged, leading to new theory and practice. As such, trying to produce an account of careers, we are presented with an array of alternative lines of debate and developments, all of which make up the career field. Peiperl and Arthur (2000) emphasise four lines of debate in the career field that emerged during the 20th century. In their account, discussions on how to understand career centred the debate around views of structure versus action, stasis versus adaptation, universalism versus particularism and institutional versus individual knowledge. On one side, conceptions of both career, the career actor and the context they operate in are that they are fixed, unchangeable and possible to control because we can look for systematic knowledge in aggregate numbers and the structures of society. On the other side, conceptions are fluid, adaptive and unpredictable, and the knowledge is to be found in individuals' understanding of the world. In Peiperl and Arthur's (2000) four lines of debates in the career field, the grand schism of the philosophy of science can be recognised, the one between empiricism and interpretative, constructivist theories of science (Chalmers, 2013). Career theories and research based in the logical-positivistic tradition like vocational and psychological theories of learning, intelligence, aptitude, and personality testing aim to measure and predict. In contrast, constructivist theories aim to construct and understand.

To understand the theorising of peoples' relationship with work and how it developed into a career field in the century following Durkheim and Weber, I further look for the tension between freedom/autonomy and social order in the theories and research that followed, and how it was attempted solved. For Parsons (1909), the main aim of his social project was to get people into work. The three-principle strategy of Parsons (1909), where knowing the world, knowing yourself and reflection about the relationship between the two, makes it possible to look for a good fit between individual and job. Further, assuming that if this was done right and the fit was good, people would enjoy their job and prosper at the good of both the individual and society. As such, he was a social reformer motivated by the contention that getting people into work and off the street would help

bring about social order. But he also believed that the process of exploring the possibilities in work was a process of self-actualisation (Moore et al., 2007), and thus inherently an autonomous one.

The opportunity for career and work as an arena for individual freedom was appealing. The final move to emphasise the uniqueness of individuals and human capacities was much owed to e.g. humanistic psychologists like Maslow (1970) and (Rogers, 2012) where freedom lies in actualising potential and becoming 'more fully in reality who we are in potentiality' (Maslow, 1971, p. 55). Career theories further developed into systems of understanding how individuality is expressed in relation to context. For example, Super's (1953; Super and D. T. Hall, 1978) life-rainbow stating that people develop during a life career that includes more roles and tasks than only the work-related. The RIASEC model of (Holland, 1959, 1997) can be argued to be a positivist, deterministic matching paradigm, but the RIASEC model also seeks to create a system for people to express their individuality by finding work environments that communicate well with their personalities.

When D. T. Hall (1996, p. 8) made the famous declaration 'the career is dead – long live the career!' and introduced the protean career, he pointed out that the structures of employment and working life had changed to such a degree that career was now no longer determined by organisations and institutions. The career actor now being autonomous, the system that directs career needed to be found within the individual, as e.g. the boundaryless career (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) or the Life design approach (Savickas, 2012) exemplifies. Here, the capabilities of the individual are deconstructed and then reconstructed and given a new, better narrative to guide life, learning and work projects. However, at this point, writers argue that the individual autonomy and freedom career actors have, responsibility the career actor to the detriment of some (Sultana, 2011).

Echoing the debate of Durkheim and Weber, it could be argued that the debate between the need for social systems versus the freedom and autonomy of individuals is ongoing. Currently, the individually or socially transformative potential of career guidance is a major debate in the career field, where career guidance is argued to be a tool for societal change and social justice. For example, conceptualisations of work and career that emphasise work as enabling positive relationships can mitigate negative aspects of precarious or indecent work (Blustein, 2011). Getting career actors to come together and discuss and react to social issues can potentially transform negative social structures (Hooley et al., 2018a). Looking back to the theory on conceptualisation (Koselleck, 2002) and the idea that concepts are denoted by agency pointing towards the future, career guidance is conceptualised as an activity that can touch individual lives, and be an opportunity to craft the agency and motivation of individuals to better their lives into projects working on the social structures that frame work, education and life issues. While the individual perspective (e.g. Savickas,

2012) may be associated to neo-liberalism as it is criticised for responsibilising the career actor (Sultana, 2018, 2014), the perspectives can be argued to be connected by the idea of the powerful capacity of discussing life projects and how they are linked to peoples' ability to work for change.

In summary, concepts of career are multifarious and have shown their potential to be what they need to be to emphasise or give room for what social actors and career writers have deemed important. Work and career are activities with considerable agency, they are activities undertaken to achieve something, and ways to conceptualise career has channelled this motivation. The reciprocal meaning-making of the abstract and the concrete thus give shape to a framework for thinking about career, which has changed with time. Career could be a mechanism for social order, where people were neatly put in systems of activities that helped them support themselves and contribute to the prosperity of society. It could also be a strategy for touching the lives of individuals and groups to release the potential to work for change. Conceptualisations of career developed to incorporate the growing understanding of the importance of life projects as e.g. family and partnerships. In contrast, today the call for support in a precarious employment structure is strong.

However, while career can be conceptualised in many ways, I hold on to the notion that at its core, career concepts denote individuals' journeys through life, learning and work. From my discussion of culture, I draw with me that this happens in a certain cultural space, and in the following section, I will look at one particular idea about how this happens, i.e. the Careership theory.

3.5 Hodkinson and Sparkes' Careership: A Sociological Theory of Career Decision Making

I choose to use the Careership theory of Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) to complete my story about career and culture.

The concept of 'opportunity structure' as proposed by Roberts (1968), holds that the context individuals live in holds a certain set of affordances defined by the political, economic, geographic or demographic structures. They will not be the same across contexts, and they will be experienced as posing different sets of challenges and opportunities for the people that inhabit it. Law's (1981) community interaction theory builds on this contention and adds that individuals live their lives in relationships with other people – in communities. Arguing that Robert and Law are the only writers that do justice to a sociological perspective, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) still contend that the community interaction theory was 'somewhat tentatively sketched' (p. 32). In response, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) offer a theory of careers and context that attempts to explain how they work together. As such, they attempt to solve a tertiary problem arising from Law's (1981) secondary attempt to solve the problem that was raised by Roberts (1968) primary contention about

‘opportunity structures’ as societal structures offering different opportunities. Where Law (1981) made the point that careers happen *between* the micro/individual and the macro/opportunity structure, in the space where people live their lives and make life decisions together with other people, he did not explain what goes on in this space. Applying the central concepts of *habitus* and *field* from the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) offer a model, not of ‘community interaction’ per se, but of the *integration* of community and individuals and how this affect career.

Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) and (Law, 1981) agree that people do not ‘shop’ for careers, and the idea that young people choose freely is an ideal inherent in the politics of the free-market economy. Neither do people follow determined and predestined class-based trajectories of career development, while structural determinants are important and major trends can be seen, individuals’ careers still move in unpredictable and surprising ways. Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) add that they contest the view that career choice is an individual process consisting of technical-rational decision making where factors determining choice are under the control of the individual. Instead, they suggest a theory that ‘blend social and cultural factors with personal choices’, that offers a ‘more sophisticated model of [social] learning, and that merge individual preferences with opportunity structures in a way that incorporates serendipity’ (p. 32). The clue is how individuals are marked by, and individually navigate, their culture.

Understanding culture as ‘the socially-constructed and historically-derived common base of knowledge, values and norms for action that people grow into and come to take as a natural way of life’ (p.33), gradually learning and integrating this in a personal, individual way is how *habitus* is developed. Quoting Bourdieu (1977, pp. 72, 95) habitus is explained as a

‘strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations (...) [in a] system of lasting and transposable dispositions (...) integrating past experiences’.

It is an all-encompassing experience, as it is more than just perceptions – it includes the body, as described by the ‘being in the world’-phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (Jérôme, 2014; Matthews, 2002).

In terms of career, habitus determines career by individuals gradually learning about what a career is and what is important about it from living in their context and learning from the people and the cultural signifiers in it, trying it out and moving on, while they individually shape idiosyncratic versions of it. There is always room for variations, meaning that individuals can see different things as important or see different possibilities presenting, and the likelihood of individuals picking up on

these opportunities is dependent on how it connects with their habitus. Positive experience with a male-dominated vocation being integrated into habitus can lead to a young girl choosing it for her career, while lack of experience makes it irrelevant for her friend, while they both have integrated a traditionally gendered employment structure. Hence, it is not the identification with the culture that is important; it is the understanding of the culture combined with experience with it and belief in how it is possible to live in it.

A crucial point that also helps explain why individuals develop such different habituses and see things differently is the idea of the vantage point, perspective or *horizon for action* (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). Horizons for action delineate the arena where 'actions can be taken, and decisions made' (p. 34). Both the individual habitus, what can be 'seen' by the individual, and the objective opportunity structure, affect perceptions and decisions about which opportunities are available and appropriate. While there is always knowledge about opportunities that may be behind the horizon, they are not within the delineated space of what is do-able and reach-able for the individual, and the notion of vantage point or positioning increases the complexity. For example, while any young person in Norway has the opportunity to access higher education, as there are no tuition fees or other costs per se, whether or not this is within their horizon for action may be dependent on other factors than availability alone. It depends on whether habitus as a strategy generating principle opens up the possibility to move, to take up a student loan, to live outside the home, or blankly whether it is within the habitus to pursue higher education. Living in a city near the university campus may make this easy for some, but if the general opinion around the individual is that higher education is costly and unproductive, that may make it irrelevant for others – no matter how close to university they live. The latter explanation of how the horizon is delineated may give associations to social class differences and socioeconomic issues, and these are often connected to education trajectories for Norwegian young people (Hansen et al., 2014; Hjellbrekke & Korsnes, 2014). However, there is an inherent danger in aligning the horizons for action-concept to that of social groups. Group membership could instil expectations about certain behaviours that are associated with such groups and explain all behaviours because of group membership (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). This creates a tautological and normative explanation model, where change, variation and what happens unexpectedly will not be understood.

While the horizons define the individual's 'patch', it is a part of the larger social field, in community with other individuals. The field is often likened to a 'game', where specific systems and rules apply. The employment market is a part of overall society, but it is still a game of its own where people are met with certain expectations and are meant to behave in certain ways, which may be different from the way the education-game may be played. The analogy of the game helps to explain why the

individuals occupying the field do not always move in predictable ways. As players, they have different vantage points, they bring with them different capitals and different sources of power and may work towards different goals and ends. However, the game decides what capital and which resources are needed.

Opposing the idea of career trajectories because careers most often do not happen linearly and predictably, Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) proposed that career development is shaped and directed by individuals acting out of their habitus. Their dispositions and their understanding of the field is interrupted at *turning points* characterised in different ways, followed by periods of routine that either confirm or disconfirm the action taken at turning points. Building on Strauss' (1962) contention that human courses of action are 'open-ended, tentative, exploratory, hypothetical, devious, changeable and only partly unified' (p. 65, in Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997, p. 39), understanding what happened comes in hindsight. However, when either self-initiated or imposed events challenge a routine, and a change of ways of going about one's life is needed, these new ways are dependent on the individual habitus and how the field is understood.

Hodkinson (2008) later argued that it could be difficult, arbitrary and sometimes directly impossible to see the difference between turning points and routine. The process of change can sometimes be swift and sometimes longitudinal, sometimes it hits hard, and sometimes it is unmarked, and sometimes change and routine is even parallel. Hence, emphasising the notion of turning points is equally arbitrary and unfruitful. However, the principle of *pragmatic rationality* (Hodkinson, 2008) encompasses what happens at turning points. Being the opposite of technical rationality, where decision making is individual, cognitive, discursive, instrumental and based on calculating factors for the best end results, pragmatic decision making can be seen as the 'strategy-generating principle' that counts for the open-ended, tentative, exploratory, hypothetical, devious, changeable and only partly unified. Discussing pragmatic rationality, Hodkinson (2008) refer to realisations about career decision making from earlier research, as not completely articulated or investigated, but based on a hunch or intuition and only partial information. Also, career decisions often involve other people because a personal relationship influences action and priorities. Hence, emotions and attachment are important elements in decision-making processes, in addition to individuals' appraisal of position and their cultural capital.

3.6 Summary

I adopt the definition of culture as offered by cultural sociology saying that culture has a concrete definition and an analytical one. This means that to know a culture we can analyse artefacts and activities in a culture in addition to symbolic and ideational elements of any social action, relationship

or historical pattern. In other words, we can look for how culture manifests itself in what it produces of both behaviours and artefacts, and we can look for ideational and philosophical patterns in what is communicated about it. Concepts communicate cultural content, as concept formation is done by cultural actors making sense of their context, whether it is 'before' or 'after' behaviour.

What I draw from the Careership theory is the emphasis on the individual's situation as positioned within a social or cultural field, where life worlds – what is possible to do and achieve – delineates the concrete and career, affecting what the individual can 'see'. Experience and learning make scenarios either possible or not. People are shaped by their backgrounds, influencing how they enact their careers. The pragmatic rationality that people use in their career gives room for strategic thinking and calculating if this is part of the dispositions of the individual. Still, there are always tacit, unknown components that give rise to individuals' understandings and priorities. While concept formation is discussed on a universal level, it could be argued that as a part of individuals' reflexivity, experiences are monitored and sought to be understood and find meaning directing agency – they are conceptualised.

However, an important assumption in my thesis is that the word career and the concept of career have an undeclared or even awkward position in the Norwegian culture. I ask whether an important aspect of this problem is that the concept of career and the cultural content that describe working life has been incommensurable. At least, I ask whether the career concept and the ideational and philosophical signifiers of working life have been so. The concept or the word career have not been a part of the Norwegian journey through life, learning and work, because the concept has not been the way that people see their working life. As I have argued in my papers, traditional understandings of career typically emphasise individual achievement, hierarchy and advancement. Still, the scaffolding structures in the Norwegian working culture emphasise equality, system-orientation, co-determination, community. The gesture and the interpretation did not match.

Looking back to Koselleck's (2002) idea about conceptualisation, career is a concept that brings with it experiences and learning about education, work and life issues and when formulated, it reveals agency and some hopes and expectations about the future. The actions that conceptualisation prompts are in the present, tightly connected to context and culture. Conceptualisations of career contain both a recognition of individuals' experiences of structural limitations at the same time as an understanding of the possibility for action and agency. In other words, conceptualisations are not neutral but are advanced by particular actors.

But it seems clear that some conceptualisations stick and are hard to get rid of. I ask if it could be that the understanding of career as something that does not fit the idea of working life has been

perpetuated by a cultural slant towards re-conceptualising negative aspects of career and positioning these aspects in relation to what Norwegian work-life ideally is about. Furthermore, it is important to understand career conceptualisation as working on at least two different levels, the theoretical/universal/general, and the individual. As culture has theoretical, abstract aspects that are connected to something concrete and lived, it is arguably also so for career. The philosophical and ideational aspects of career can be discussed on a theoretical, abstract level. In contrast, its' lived counterpart – the lived career – navigates the concrete and tangible in a rule-based field. The habitus experience how the career really works and by conceptualisation reform and renegotiate the career concept in the ideational and philosophical. The lived career can signify a new career concept. While making meaning of career can be related to culture on a general or theoretical level, the real-life experience of career may look different, and learning from connecting the lived experience to the career concept holds the potential to reconceptualise career in a Norwegian context.

4. Methodology and metatheory

Methods are the actual actions and steps taken to conduct my study, whereas methodology and metatheory is the underpinning philosophy for the choices made (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this chapter, I will describe and discuss the methodological choices I have made in this study and how they connect to phenomenology, the metatheoretical perspective I apply to clarify my ontological and epistemic position. The following section is a discussion of metatheory and methodology for both the theoretical and the empirical lines of inquiry in the thesis, and I will bring back the overall research question because the discussion about the phenomenon of ‘experience’ is a pivotal point for the investigation:

How does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors?

I will then move on to show how this is translated into methods and how those methods were implemented.

In sum, being curious about different experiences and understandings, and crafting a research question meant to capture idiographic perceptions of phenomena, lends itself to qualitative approaches rather than quantitative ones (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Zahavi, 2015). However, having made this choice, it is important to detail *how* a qualitative approach is employed (Creswell, 2013), and when research is grounded in phenomenology, a metatheoretical discussion of the philosophy of science is especially expected (Zahavi, 2015). Hence, this is where I turn next.

4.1 Philosophy of science and my metatheoretical position

Fuchs (1991) holds that there are a few issues and some disagreement about the necessity of metatheoretical discussion as part of theory building, saying that those critical of metatheoretical discussions may claim that such discussion does not add anything new. It is merely discussing earlier

work related to new problems. Proponents of metatheory argue that it has a concrete empirical referent, the empirical science itself. Metatheoretical discussion is a 'reflexive but empirical self-inspection' (Fuchs, 1991, p. 288) of the science. This, according to Bloor (1976, in Fuchs, 1991, p. 288), makes science, and in this case sociology, 'able to explain itself', as it is a theory of a theory. For the purpose of this study, I see metatheorising as a way to explain myself and detail what I look for to attain a deeper understanding of theory. As a prelude to theory development, it is important to detail my ontological and epistemological position, and in the following section, I will discuss the phenomenological perspective as an approach to research on experience. I will start by discussing how the question about what experience is and how to investigate it made it necessary for me to sort out the relationship between naturalism and constructivism before landing in the 'no dualism'-approach of Merleau-Ponty.

4.1.1 Understanding experience – the ontological question

Becoming a researcher is maybe not a process that really ends, as knowledge can never be complete: the field of science is vast and the array of possible research problems never-ending. As a researcher, your interest develops and changes direction. Kuhn (1963) is ambiguous about the scientific dogmas, saying that they are efficient and productive when they are not too firm. But being presented to an array of scientific metatheory is also akin to being presented to an array of possible belief-structures to adopt. More precisely, choosing a metatheory to underpin a research project is more than finding a framework that 'fits' the research question and the results aspired for, it is also about assuming a position about how reality is constituted and what we can know about it. It means choosing an ontological and epistemological position. In that respect, choosing a metatheory can be compared to 'choosing a religion', defining a base where the basic assumptions about reality, research and the role of the researcher are embedded.

Having set out to do research exploring how the career concept was perceived and experienced, the first issue at hand was the ontological and epistemological problem of defining experience and arguing for a strategy to capture it and understand it. The problem of using such a word as 'experience' is that it can be used to explain different things. Experience, explained by different dictionaries can be: 'knowledge gained by actually doing or living something', or 'an exciting or noteworthy event that one experiences first-hand'. Or yet another, as a noun: 'a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something', 'the process or fact of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing something', 'the observing, encountering, or undergoing of things generally as they occur in the course of time', 'knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, encountered, or undergone', 'Philosophy: the totality of the cognitions given by

perception; all that is perceived, understood, and remembered'. Or as a verb: 'to have experience of; meet with; undergo; feel', 'to learn by experience'.

In these definitions, experience is both something that is immediate and present at the moment, and it is something stored in consciousness. It is something individuals obtain when they direct action outwards, but it is also something happening to the individual. It is abstract, and it is concrete and practical, it is both something that is felt as a bodily phenomenon, and it is in cognition. Experience is a part of existence that is both objective and subjective, and trying to grasp a teenagers' experience of career can give me many different answers depending on which one of these perspectives comes naturally to the teenager I am talking to. The scientific paradigms as understood by Kuhn (1977) have different views on what can be counted as an experience and how to gain knowledge of it. The potential conflict underpinning this single word – experience – was at the heart of my exploration into the sphere of philosophy of science.

4.1.1.1 Naturalism vs constructivism

The two different traditions of naturalism and constructivism fundamentally disagree on how to access the phenomena they study (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). They also disagree on what they constitute as real, the ontological question: the things in the world that are observable externally must obviously be real, or oppositely arguing that nothing can be real unless we think it is real. They differ in what they regard as valid knowledge, the epistemological issue: can we know something about reality through subjectivity, or is the only way we can learn about phenomena in the world through objective logic (Chalmers, 2013)?

Being educated in psychology and as such coming from a naturalist perspective, I have previously learned that an experience is a direct impression on our sensory apparatus, creating explosions of biological phenomena that provoke our perceptivity, where the perceived impression is then connected to the memories of earlier and similar impressions stored in nodes and neurons in the brain (Pinel, 2000). Through complex mechanisms that science is only beginning to understand, but that the concept of mechanism illustrate is thought to be functioning in the same predictive ways across all individuals, the web of associated perceptions and the memory of past impressions make up a meaningful whole. And this is in turn connected to the autonomous nervous system, which if activated, can produce an affective state and thus might add an emotional aspect to both the perception and the understanding of it—an *experience* of perception, understanding and feeling.

From this view, the human mind, as complex and mysterious as it might be, is still a web of electrical wires where things that happen outside the body are translated into information coded to fit the receiving apparatus, and the only thing we need to do is to figure out how this apparatus works. The naturalist tradition can be seen as reductionist, claiming that all phenomena can be explained back to some minute, biological and 'real' phenomenon that can be studied directly through a microscope (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The question is whether this holds true for social phenomena. Can social phenomena be reduced to biology, or at least something experiential, something that is physically observable? No, is the constructivist tradition's claim (Moses & Knutsen, 2012; Patton & McMahon, 2006). The only way to study social phenomena is *through* people's experience of it and trying to reduce that experience to biological phenomena excludes the understanding of it. The constructivist way of looking at experience is that the human biology makes up the apparatus where all human phenomena are to be found, but there is a sharp distinction between what we can know about biological mechanisms and what we need to know in order to comprehend the complexity of the mind, the human way of understanding, learning and feeling (Cerbone, 2015). So even though biology determines humanity, the human mind is connected to it in unpredictable and incomprehensible ways, making it impossible to make the regularities of biology and physiology a starting point for investigation of the mental life of humans.

4.1.1.2 No dualism: subjectivity is not separated from embodiment

Phenomenology emphasises the actor's point of view and how meaning is imposed on the world (Benton & Craib, 2011). Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty connected this to Gestalt theories where the relation between the part and the whole was a central theme (Jérôme, 2014). As a psychologist, he saw the scope of psychology as too limited, and as such and considering my own reflections about experience mentioned earlier, I find that his theories on phenomenology and psychology can open up the concept of experience for me as well. Merleau-Ponty expanded on phenomenological and Gestalt theories in order to 'understand the relations of consciousness and nature: organic, psychological or even social' (Merleau-Ponty, 1942, p. 3, in Matthews, 2002, p. 5). His notion of the relation between the mental and the physiological opposed the dualistic conception prevalent in his time, i.e. of two orders of reality that are external to each other and therefore can only be causally related. To Merleau-Ponty, psychology was made 'scientific' by applying classical materialism and making the mind an object in the world. Brain processes can from this perspective be studied in relation to what happens in the body. Another way of studying the mental was 'critical thought', i.e. to distinguish between 'analytic psychology' and bodily mechanisms, or look for mental phenomena through behaviours. The underlying assumptions in these approaches to the study of

humans is what Merleau-Ponty calls realistic analysis and causal thinking: the belief that consciousness, or the mental, can be taken seriously as a reality only if it can be considered an object in the world. It must be separate from other objects such as the body, which is in a causal relation to them. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy was a critique of this assumption, and he emphasised gestalt psychology which emphasises form, structure, meaning and intention. This means that he could not separate the body and the mind, and rather saw the being-in-the-world with both biology and consciousness as a central idea. Our inner life as conscious persons necessarily develops out of the impersonal physiological life of a certain organism, the human being (Matthews, 2002).

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (2000, in Matthews, 2002) argued for a phenomenologically based concept of perception that equates it with our active involvement in the world, not with a detached awareness of objects. Describing experience as 'sensations', discrete and without meaning, fails to acknowledge how we actually experience sensation in his view, as packed with meaning and connected to consciousness and experience. Kant and Descartes, viewed by Merleau-Ponty as 'intellectualists', postulated that the mind imposes meaning and structure on experience. However, Merleau-Ponty's view was that experience has, or gives, structure and meaning in itself, because of the simultaneity of existence. Adopting the Heideggerian phrase of being-in-the-world, the human experience implies a view of inseparability of subject and world. 'The world of objects is not something apart from us as objects, acting upon us causally, but the place we as subjects inhabit' (Matthews, 2002, p. 8). Hence, the ontological question of experience will from a phenomenological perspective be that knowledge is possible because the human body makes it possible. However, they are reciprocally constituting each other – it is not possible to know without a body, and it is not possible to have a body without knowing it. The rejection of the idea of dualism develops my understanding of experience into a research object where completeness of being, i.e. recognition of being physically present, underpins what I am looking for.

Every subject looks out on the world through a certain perspective, a 'here and now'. From Merleau-Ponty's perspective then, experience is both the knowing and the known, object and subject, both what is felt and what is thought, all at the same time. Being-in-the-world is necessarily embodied. Consequently, experience is also situated, i.e. defined by time and space. As such, human freedom can never be absolute; it is constrained by the nature of the situation in which we find ourselves, akin to horizons for action (Hodkinson, 2008; Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). Our past can impose these constraints because an individual engages with the world not only to pursue biological goals but as a member of society, the individual being-in-the-world is a profoundly social experience where perspective, limitations and possibilities are determined by history and culture. 'The meanings that

we find in reality are in part social or cultural meanings, and the world we inhabit is in part a social or shared world, in which we join with others in common activities' (Matthews, 2002, p. 21). Relating to my discussion on concepts and culture in chapter 3, I find that the being-in-the-world-perspective arguing that existence is profoundly social, further emphasise the need for understanding how culture works as a part of the context individuals are situated in. Furthermore, perspective, limitations and possibilities are determined by history and culture and the meanings to be found are social and cultural. I relate that back to the argument that concepts are formed by drawing on experience and history combined with an understanding of the present. As such, concept formation can be seen as a way for the individual to *understand* its being-in-the-world, which from a dynamic view will be a continuously recursive process (Paulsen, 2020) in a hermeneutic process of going back and forth between understandings.

4.1.1.3 Coming to an understanding - learning

The notion of being situated, of experiencing the here-and-now, of seeing just as far as you can see, was a predecessor to the sociologically connoted theories of Bourdieu (Jérôme, 2014). Bourdieu's concept of habitus 'denotes a form of intersubjectivity or socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 77). It is a way of doing things, an emerging logic of action, a practice, and echoing Merleau-Ponty it is both conscious, unconscious and embodied at the same time. In the concept of habitus, Bourdieu seeks to overcome both subjectivism and objectivism. He rejects this opposition, just like Merleau-Ponty rejects the ontological difference between the physical and the mental (Jérôme, 2014). At the basis of this concept, lies the belief that individual action and belief is always culturally and socially situated, because we are all born into a social setting, and the dispositions of individual beliefs and perceptions are located within positions or social structures.

In addition to being situated, individuals are also *positioned* in relation to other individuals, most markedly in terms of social class and rank. Still, the concept also lends itself to the notion of being positioned in terms of gender, ethnicity or similar grouping constructs. The concept of habitus encompasses both the individually subjective and the objective social networks and cultural traditions where people live. The notion of habitus then, adds to Merleau-Ponty's idea of being-in-the-world and experiencing constraints. From the perspective of the individual and in the field that is defined by contextual facts and forces, one develops a set of habits, of actions based on experience and knowledge of this particular context – it *learns*. '[Habitus] is a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks'. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). People do not only act on a rational understanding of the world and

themselves, but there are also some preconditions, something that is learned and integrated that leads to certain outcomes.

In summary, I understand that Being-in-the-world encompasses the entirety of human existence and emphasise this as *the human experience*. This is one way to answer the ontological question: there is only human existence, and humans are both biology, mental and social phenomena, there is no ontological difference (Jérôme, 2014). I also find the notion of being-in-the-world as *situated* interesting, it gives a certain perspective, or a certain overview over the part of the world that the person can take in. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology emphasises that in addition to the social and collective spheres of history and culture the human experience is tied to time and place. It gives a certain perspective or outlook on the world (Matthews, 2002). The idea of constraints also implies that the individual can know or understand only a part of reality because the world stretches out beyond what we can perceive – it is inexhaustible. Still, there is a defined space of opportunities where the individual can act. The phenomenological perspective holds that there is something constant and 'real' in human existence represented by the physical facts our bodies and the tangible world is made up of, and the conscious experience is closely connected to this. At the same time, it operates based on the abstract social world, a notion that I relate to cultural sociology posing that culture is to be found on two levels, the concrete and the abstract (Reed & Alexander, 2009). In conclusion, what I am looking for is experience understood as belonging to the individual at the same time as it is conditioned by external factors. It is delineated, constricted by what individuals can hold in their consciousness and mentally experience, in addition to being delineated by space.

4.1.2 Delineating the scope – the epistemological question

As the ontological question asks 'what can we know', the epistemological question asks 'how can we know about it'. In the previous section, I discussed the phenomenological position arguing that there is only the all-encompassing human experience, and I also implied that concept formation is a way for human experience to understand itself. In this section, I will discuss the second, epistemological question where I bring with me the assumption that the individual is not only a being that experiences, it will also try to understand and give meaning to its existence. In the following, I will argue that tapping into the meaning-making process of conceptualisation is as such one way of getting to know and understand the human experience, helping me investigate how Norwegian culture frames the experience of, response to and adapting of the career concept

4.1.2.1 The suspended and the intermediate – where concepts live

I find that a place to start discussing this is going back to the argument that consciousness cannot be separated from the world, as it constitutes the world. Different from a physical object that can be scrutinised, the human experience changes as attention shifts and consciousness wanders, making experience elusive. 'Describing an experience turns out to be like describing an object that fades into thin air the moment it is as much as glimpsed' (Cerbone, 2015, p. 17), but it is still from this transitive experience that the world is perceived and understood. And it is from individuals' account of their experience, that I, as a researcher, can learn about it. In this lies a question about objectivity. In naturalist/empiricist/positivist scientific theory, the belief in objectivity as a requisite for being scientific makes this principle impossible. In contrast, others would argue that this perspective is what makes phenomenology interesting or even powerful (Zahavi, 2015). Zahavi argues that the power lies in phenomenology's ability to explain itself, by 'rather than engaging in first-order claims about the nature of things, phenomenology concerns itself with the preconditions for any such empirical inquiries', and 'investigates the basis of that knowledge and asks how it is possible' (Zahavi, 2015, p. 2). In other words, phenomenology is interested in what comes *before* objectivity.

Cerbone (2015) argues that a central point to understanding the relationship between consciousness, experience and objectivity, is the 'belatedness of the latter in relation to the former: objective thought is a product of perceptual experience, but one that effaces its perceptual origins' (p.19). Hence, one could argue that phenomenology is interested in what *lies ahead* of experiencing events or objects, what are the preconditions for phenomena entering consciousness. This negates the concept of objectivity and holds that there is nothing more than subjective experience. What is an interesting object for me to study then, is *intersubjectivity*, what is common and shared between individuals and experiences. Going back to the idea that situatedness implies a delineation, where the space delineated by horizons are culturally contingent, then what is common between individuals' accounts of experience is an object of study for me. In terms of the research question for this study, the question posed assumes that cultural influence underpins peoples' experiencing and processing of the career concept. Hence, ahead of career experiences lies a specific set of assumptions about the relationship between individuals and their context.

Further, the question assumes that there is a certain conflict between context and concept and concept and lastly, underpinning the question is curiosity about whether the concept of career can be experienced and give meaning in a certain way. When being understood in this cultural framework, are Norwegians capable of seeing career for *what it really is* as they move around the cultural field of Norway in their habitual way of navigating life, education and work issues? The problem of the objective gaze is that it wants to define the determinate features of an object, and

describe what is seen. There is a question of whether something hard to see can be seen. The phenomenological principle of *recognition of the indeterminate* can help illuminate this problem.

Using the example of Polly, his camouflage-coated younger dog that likes to wander off, Cerbone (2015) explains how he, when looking for her in shadowy foliage where he expects to see her, he does not see her before after having looked at her for several seconds, realising that she was there right before as he shifted his gaze. Not being able to reproduce the Polly-less experience from before he saw her, he asks how to describe the visual field as it looked before actually having spotted Polly. But not knowing she was there – would a description of the visual field include Polly? Was the dog absent or present? Technically she was present, but experientially no – however, the important aspect of this example is that the ‘visual experience immediately before noticing Polly explicitly is *suspended (or indeterminate)* between Polly-there and Polly-not-there’ (p. 18). The experience of spotting her where she had been all along is different from finding the dog by having it running into view.

In summary, the space between Polly-not-there and Polly-there is related to my research question in the following way: As people cannot be anything but subjects of experience, there is never a void where there is objectively nothing. Subjectivity, as in personal history and dispositions, are to be found in the suspended and the indeterminate, in what exists at the moment before something comes into view. Just as Cerbone’s (2015) expectation of finding Polly, presuppositions reside in the suspended. For my argument, this can be culturally contingent assumptions. While what is to be seen is still indeterminate because it is not yet defined, subjectivity, expectations and assumptions guide what we are looking for. For example, looking back to discussing the concept of culture as being something that is both abstract and concrete (Reed & Alexander, 2009), developing the argument about the suspended as the home of cultural influence could be to say that the space before experience is where we find the abstract concepts of culture. It is where we find the subjective understanding of the symbolic and ideational element of any social action, social relationship or historical pattern – like the way that people enact their career.

4.1.3 Summary – important principles applied

How can I use a phenomenological approach in my study? I adopt the ‘being-in-the-world’ perspective of the phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (Jérôme, 2014; Matthews, 2002). Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (1977) was a successor to Merleau-Ponty’s thought and bridged the notion of being-in-the-world as situated, based and looking out on the world through a certain perspective and belonging to certain contexts – cultures – shaping perceptions and experiences in specific ways. As

mentioned, several assumptions about Norway and the life world of teenagers underpin the research question, and I wanted to explore if my subjects experience with career would come into contact with any of them. However, an important element of phenomenology is the question of what lies ahead of experience that shapes and conditions it. For this, I see the element of the suspended and the indeterminate as an important and interesting element of phenomenology. Culture, when understood as a personally integrated perspective through which people look out on the world, resides in the suspended. Together with concepts, when abstract are indeterminate and not actualized, they still gives certain expectations of certain shapes and appearances, so that when career 'comes into view' it is expected to have a certain shape and function.

However, phenomenology does not only advise me how to understand my research object and what way I should go about investigating it, it also provides some learning about the role of the researcher in this investigation. Jérôme (2014) points to Bourdieu's call to scientists when applying phenomenology, reminding researchers that *they too* are beings-in-the-world, situated, positioned, experiencing and experienced. Bourdieu, and Jérôme (2014), call for reflexivity in research where the researcher's relation to the subject of research must be an object of constant consideration. This heavy emphasis on reflexivity is the basis of developing *critical phenomenology*, where the critical factor is the relation between the researcher and the object of research, and the researchers own position. It urges me to look for methodologies that allow for interpretation of my research object, experience, but from a frame of reference – my *own* experience. Gadamer (Benton & Craib, 2011) advocates the need for having positive prejudice and presuppositions, like having discipline as a frame of reference for doing research, which necessarily implies that the researcher cannot meet the research object like a blank slate (Benton & Craib, 2011). The goal of the research is to expand her horizons and understanding (Moses & Knutsen, 2012). As such, I am a part of the *hermeneutic circle* (Moses & Knutsen, 2012), and I recognise this.

When it comes to advising on method, it could be problematic that phenomenology has been criticised for being a tradition in name only, without any coherent methodology or program (Zahavi, 2015). However, phenomenology has also been argued to be one of those scientific metatheories that *require* researchers to adopt certain methodologies and analytic approaches, because the connection between the philosophical underpinnings and methodological approach is strong (Creswell, 2013). While there is seemingly a disagreement about the importance of adhering to a certain set of principles for conducting research, I use that to my advantage and use phenomenology as a philosophical perspective and a qualitative approach to research design. However, I apply Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, & Terry, 2018) as an approach to analysis. In the following section, I will detail the choices and practical implications of this approach.

4.2 Methods

Key topics for this chapter are the methods used for the two lines of inquiry in this thesis, the theoretical with my two literature studies and this synopsis, and the design and analysis for the empirical line. Having these to twin lines of inquiry makes it necessary to apply a design of blended methods and I have approached the research question using methodological pluralism and the principle of triangulation (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012). Triangulation of research methods, i.e. applying different methods to explore a question from different angles, can be used to seek convergence, correspondence and corroboration, to illustrate a complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Aiming to do this, I have approached the research question in an overall qualitative manner by exploring Norwegian work culture and conceptions about career theoretically and philosophically through literature studies, and empirically through interviews.

I chose a qualitative approach because the concept of career was relatively new and under-theorised in the Norwegian research literature (Gravås & Gaarder, 2011; Haug, 2016; Holen & Hovdenak, 2014; NOU 2016: 7, 2016; Thomsen, 2014). Obtaining rich/thick descriptions of the research topic is an asset of qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods can be 'used to explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understandings' (Stern, 1980, in Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Writers in the field of career and vocational psychology have been discussing context-sensitivity and transference of career concepts for some time (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Hooley et al., 2013; Hughes & Thomas, 2006; Leong & Hartung, 2000; Watson et al., 2005; Young et al., 2007), with efforts to address theoretical concepts from a Norwegian perspective, e.g. through studies looking at career management skills and career competencies (Haug, 2014, 2018; Svendsrud, 2015), and Life Design (Norendal, 2018). Wanting to be more explicit about culture, I found that I could use the rich literature on Norwegian working/welfare culture as a starting point. From here, I could explore how the particulars of Norwegian culture communicated with the concept of career which equipped me with a conceptual understanding which were useful for later empirical exploration. For me, further investigation into understandings of concepts pointed towards interviews, as exploring different understandings and experiences necessarily mean talking to different people, and not test or verify my own, theoretical idea.

In the following sections, I will detail the steps I have taken to investigate my research question, starting with the historical research undertaken in Paper 1 and Paper 2, followed by outlining the procedures for the empirical work described in Paper 3 and Paper 4.

4.2.1 Theoretical line

In this section, I will describe the methodology for Paper 1 and Paper 2.

Being asked to contribute to an upcoming anthology (Kjærgård & Plant, 2018), I got the chance to develop my questions about culturally contingent understandings of the career concept that I had left with my master's thesis in 2008. It is reflected in the research question I designed for Paper 1: *How is the development of a distinctive Norwegian work culture significant for thinking about career in Norway?* Paper 2 was actualised in a similar manner. The call for papers on an upcoming book on Nordic career guidance (Haug, Hooley, Kettunen, & Thomsen, 2020b) allowed me to develop my questions about Norwegian culture as a perspective for career considerations on a new level, the Nordic welfare culture, to which Norwegian culture is closely related. The question for the second paper was: *What are the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as a concept?* Hence, I had a direction and a theme, and I went into the literature from this starting point.

I find that the approach of historical research applies to the process of writing Paper 1 and Paper 2. Historical research is an approach to examine past events or combinations of events to construct an account of what has happened. As such it is not just descriptive, it is also interpretative (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). It is a 'flowing, fluid, dynamic account of past events that attempt to recapture the complex nuances, individual personalities, and ideas that influenced the events being investigated' (Berg, 1998, in Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 468). The researcher interprets and communicates an understanding that provides a rich account and gives an idea of the circumstances shaping events. Historical research is appropriate for identifying the relationship between the past and the present and help understand the culture we live in. Hence, as I was looking for connections between historical developments, culture and a modern career concept, I find this a useful framework for an exploratory and interpretative process. This process was suitable for both Paper 1 and Paper 2. However, Paper 1 more explicitly discusses a historical development than Paper 2, and Paper 2 discusses welfare ideology as a result of historical processes.

The methodology of historical research varies between researchers. Still, a common methodological outline is often to 1) identify research problem or question, 2) collect data or review literature, 3) evaluate materials, 4) synthesise data, 5) write a report or narrative exposition (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 471). However, overlap and moving back and forth between these steps is common.

Having a starting point, I started reading widely, looking for information about the cultural phenomena I was investigating, looking for insights about what characterises Norwegian and Nordic

work- and welfare culture. I used electronic search tools, as ORIA, a search tool for both digital and hard copies of academic works, which is of common use by libraries in Norwegian higher education. I searched IDUNN, which is a leading Nordic search site for scholarly journals and open access books; and Google Scholar. I looked for literature detailing the history of Norway and the Nordic region, and theoretical literature analysing aspects of the culture. I studied both research (Alestalo et al., 2009; Berger, 2016; Berntzen, 2017; Jalava, 2013; Knutsen, 2017; Marklund, 2017; Meagher & Szebehely, 2011; Plant, 2007; Ryner, 2007; Wahl, 2007) and theoretical (Berg, 2007; Dølvik, Fløtten, Hernes, & Hippe, 2007; Esping-Andersen, 1990) literature. Some examples of the literature studied can be viewed as primary sources, e.g. Thrane's (1957) *Petition to the King* or the Employment Act (2005), but in my reading and analysis I emphasised secondary ones, created by scholar historians and sociologists.

As I was reading I followed threads in the literature leading me to other articles, and as such, I used a snowball sampling approach (Goodman, 1961), which is also known as citation chaining or pearl growing (Booth, 2008; Schlosser, Wendt, Bhavnani, & Nail-Chiwetalu, 2006). I kept reading and using the literature until I found that I had reached a point of saturation in regard to my research questions. The method of analysis that I employed used a common approach where material was acquired, organised, read, and written about as a process of reflection and analysis (Rempel, 2010). The analytic process resulted in creating a narrative based on the great inflow of material to complete a picture of the events of interest into a comprehensive, coherent whole.

4.2.1.1 Bias

The research and analysis for Papers 1 and 2 were done before finding a methodological framework for it. The immediate consequence of this is that reading methodological literature about specific methods to work by (e.g. Giorgi, 2009) cautions the researcher about specific problems related to the method, to think about issues of quality before and during – and not only after – the research process. Undoubtedly, this makes it easier to argue for validity and reliability in the result. Using primarily secondary sources, evaluating the reliability and validity of the sources using internal criticism means evaluating the accuracy of the information in the sources collected (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). For me, one important evaluative aspect is that the sources I collected came together in a theoretical universe with a high degree of corroboration. For example, while some writers are highly critical of the workings of the welfare state (Wahl, 2009) and others praise it (Dølvik et al., 2007), the Nordic welfare model is described in consistent ways throughout the literature, further corroborated by later reading (e.g. Leonardsen, 2015).

Another key issue related to bias is the particular and longstanding curiosity and theoretical interest underpinning my research. There could be a possible bias in sampling and reviewing literature that 'fitted' my interest and ideas. From the starting point of organisational psychology, with its system-oriented perspective on individual functioning (Fischer & Sortland, 2001), I ventured into a theoretical realm of a more sociological nature, focusing on the dynamics of social systems (Reed & Alexander, 2009). Being allowed an interpretative approach by the framework of historical research and rather than holding that Paper 1 and Paper 2 provide objective and generalisable research results, I offer them as accounts of *my* scholarly and grounded understandings of what is important about Norwegian and Nordic culture and the concept of career.

In summary, the methods applied for the historical research undertaken followed an implicit and intuitive logic of gathering and trying to understand information. While I acknowledge that there is a potential bias in my approach, I recognise my method in the literature and find correspondence and support in writing on similar topics.

4.2.3 Empirical line

Paper 1 and Paper 2 detail the findings from the research on literature described above that was conducted during the project, and Paper 3 and Paper 4 describe the empirical research, to which I will turn to next. The research question formulated at the outset of the project, how do Norwegian tenth graders experience making career choices, lead me to plan for interviewing tenth graders about their forthcoming transition to upper secondary and investigate how that related to the career concept.

4.2.3.1 Why teenagers and counsellors

There are many interesting people to talk to when researching career experiences. I wanted to understand how culturally specific ways of understanding and valuing the role of life issues, learning and work presented themselves in career choice experiences, in addition to the education system being a hotspot for career guidance in Norway. I wanted to focus on teenagers as their transition into upper secondary presents the first career choice they need to take full responsibility for in their educational trajectories. Having had three years of Utdanningsvalg (Educational choice), I found it reasonable to expect that they at the point of choosing upper secondary had been given a framework for thinking about themselves, education and work that was rooted in a consensual idea about what is important to know about education and work. Following from the logic of the Nordic model of education and the socialisation process of danning, I assumed that the teenagers at this point had integrated the cultural framework of the welfare culture to some degree and that being prompted to make career choices elicited ideas about life, learning and work that related to cultural

ideas in various ways. However, I also assumed that as 15 and 16-year-olds, they would have relatively limited work experience and have garnered their ideas and knowledge about work from education, or from learning about work and education from their contexts. I hoped that this stage in their lives would be a good point to tap into their socialisation process.

Having visited two schools and interviewed teenagers, I sat down with the counsellor at the third school for a short conversation after the last interview. I found that the counsellor had many interesting reflections about the teenagers' situation and that the counsellors could expand the tenth graders' accounts with a bird's eye view of the process they were going through. Being responsible for career counselling and sometimes career education, they had first-hand knowledge of their students' career choice processes, in addition to broader contextual knowledge. I asked to be allowed to record the conversation. I started over, doing an interview more closely aligned to the interview guide and the topics I had originally planned, only from a third-party perspective. I brought up topics from the interview, however taking care to anonymise topics and not identify statements as coming from specific students. In addition, as teachers and counsellors they were often the ones who planned and provided career learning and counselling, and I could ask about the intention behind their strategies and career guidance activities, which was especially interesting when we discussed understandings and use of concepts. This led me to decide to include the counsellors' perspective in the project, and I consequently planned for counsellor interviews after interviewing students at the schools I visited. I later interviewed the counsellors at the first two schools I visited by telephone.

4.2.3.2 Data collection and sampling

As described in the introduction, Norwegian geography and demography pose some specific challenges in terms of varying living conditions due to the difference between living in the urban-rural, coastal-inland, or north-south. Hence, my first decision about design was to sample from north to south and coast to inland, from small communities of approx. 1000 inhabitants to a city of approx. 200.000, to get a sample that was rich and varied in terms of the geographical and demographical issues mentioned above. To achieve a rich and varied sample along the urban-rural, inland-coastal, north-south dimensions, I decided to employ a non-random sampling technique and do a purposive and convenient sample (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena, & Nigam, 2013; Devers & Frankel, 2000). I recruited tenth graders in lower secondary schools based in communities and locations after certain criteria. See sampling frame in table 1 below.

Table 1

Location	Criteria for inclusion									
	No US	US	US +HE	Variation of industries, varied employment possibilities	Little variation of industries. less varied employment possibilities	Urban	Rural	Group interview (No. of students in group)	Individual interviews (No. of individuals interviewed)	Counsellor interview
Medium, Fjord		x		x			x	x (8)	x (2)	x
Large, Fjord, 2			x	x		x		x (8)	x (2)	x
Large, Fjord, 1			x	x		x		x (2)	x (2)	x
Small, North, Inland	x				x		x	x (7)	x (2)	x
Small, Mid-Nor, Coast		x		x			x	x (9)	x (3)	x
Med, East-Nor Inland,		x			x		x	x (8)	x (2)	x

Note. US: Upper secondary, HE: Higher education

Table 1 Sampling frame

4.2.3.3 Localities

I sampled along the before mentioned dimensions and recruited 6 schools from 5 communities, from small (approximately 1000 inhabitants) to medium (approximately 5000-10,000 inhabitants) to large (approximately 200,000 inhabitants). Of the sampled communities were 2 inland, 1 coastal, and 2 by fjords with a diverse opportunity structure with both agriculture and aquaculture. In the smallest communities, there were no upper secondary school. This meant that the students needed to move away or commute to continue with their education. The medium size communities had local but limited varieties of upper secondary programs and no higher education. The large community had all upper secondary and higher education programs available. To summarise the sample, the empirical part of this study is based on 5 group interviews, 13 individual interviews with students, and 6 counsellor interviews, a total of 24 interviews and 49 interview-subjects. The sample has a distribution of female/male of 22/21 for the teenagers and 5/1 for the counsellors.

4.2.3.4 Approval from ethics authority and consent

The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) because no sensitive data was to be collected¹. Sensitive data is considered to be information about ethnicity and race, religious, philosophical and political views, union membership, genetic and biometric information, sexuality, sexual orientation and health (Datatilsynet, 2020). I could have chosen to only have participants give their verbal consent in the interviews as the Norwegian privacy laws allow for individuals over the age of 15 to give their consent to participate in research where sensitive information is not required (NSD, 2020). All my interview subjects were over the age of 15. But I decided to ask the schools to distribute and collect consent from parents in advance, as I would have to travel to visit the schools and wanted to ensure that the participants were ready and that parents were informed beforehand to avoid confusion and risk having interviews discarded. All schools provided signed consent from all parents, in addition to ensuring verbal consent from the students before the interviews started. These consent forms are now destroyed for anonymity purposes.

4.2.3.5 Interview sessions

I contacted the schools via e-mail sent to the head of the school and the school counsellor, and in most cases, I would stay in contact and make arrangements with the counsellor. I sent an invitation to participate, explaining the project and asking for permission to visit the school and interview students in tenth grade at the school (see appendix). When confirmed, I would ask the school to prepare a group of 8 students from tenth grade for a group interview, asking the counsellor or the

¹ Based on the planned design, I used NSD's application form to report my study and detailed how I planned to work with sensitive information, and received notification 09.05.2016 that my design was approved for handling information. See nsd.no for more information.

head to put together a group across school classes, evenly distributed between male/female, and diverse in terms of personality and educational preferences. In other words, as I would not myself be able to recruit interview subjects, I aimed to get the schools' help to put together a heterogeneous group. I reasoned that asking the schools to find 'suitable' interview subjects gave more risk for bias in the sample, as I worried that they would recruit all students based on some criteria unknown to me, e.g. a good relationship with teachers. I reasoned that asking for a heterogeneous group made me feel more secure that I would interview more varied groups. As the schools in the two small communities of approximately 1000 inhabitants only had one tenth grade class, of 7 and 9 students respectively, I did a group interview with the entire tenth grade at the school at these locations. At the end of the group interview, I would ask for two volunteers, one male and one female, to do a subsequent individual interview. If there were more than two volunteers, participation was decided by drawing lots. However, at two schools, I deviated from my preferred mode. I did three individual interviews at one of the schools in one of the small communities in addition to the group interview, as I had the impression that some information was missing after the group interview and the subsequent two individual interviews. This led me to recruit one more student for an individual interview. At one of the schools in the large community, the school counsellor had not prepared a group, but two students for individual interviews. All interviews were recorded, and recordings were deleted after being anonymously transcribed. All interview subjects were given pseudonyms; students with new, ordinary names, and counsellors with 'counsellor' and a letter to distinguish them.

4.2.3.6 Interviews

I decided to use interviews as mode for data collection and to combine focus groups and individual interviews. Focus group interviews were chosen to learn from participants discussions. This strategy is commonly used when exploring attitudes and the meaning of concepts as it allows examining how group members think and feel about a topic, where the group dynamic can help bring about other aspects of the topic than individual interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Group interviews were combined with subsequent individual interviews to further explore individual perspectives of issues that came up in the group interviews (Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2009). It allowed for discussing issues of a personal nature that was more easily explored in a one-to-one setting.

From my experience, I believe that the strategy of having a group discuss aspects of career choice and subsequently talk to individual students and discuss them one-to-one was very informative. It gave interesting results which I would not have obtained by choosing only one or the other. For example, the dynamics of the groups varied. After some of the group sessions, I was left with a

feeling that interesting topics were not explored in enough detail because the discussion in the group was either slow or went into a new direction. At other times I was left with an impression that topics were not being discussed because something was going in the group. In these cases, I would bring the topic back up in the individual interviews, both with students and counsellors (anonymised and in a general way) and discuss these issues more detailed. In the case of one group interview, I learned from the subsequent individual interview that there was rivalry between the two tenth-grade classes at the school, where one class was 'nerdy' and the other 'cool'. This had made it difficult for one of the students to express herself during the group interview, as the group had been dominated by three students from the 'cool' class. I also had the experience that the groups could easily develop a consensus, e.g. from group interviews in rural communities where the group 'consensus' seemed to be that it was important to move out to get education and work. The students who wanted to stay in the communities could not express these wishes without defending or explaining themselves.

The quality of the data collected in the group interviews are necessarily affected by the group dynamics. The quality of the individual interviews are necessarily affected by being after group interviews, as the group interviews in many ways 'set the agenda' for the individual interview in ways that may never have happened if the individual subjects had not been primed in such a way.

I had a concern that there are some implicit and culturally contingent ideas about career, and I wanted to find ways into conversations about the career concept and career choice experiences without letting stereotypical ideas about the career concept 'come in the way'. Just as researchers are urged to 'bracket off' and suspend their judgement through *epoche* in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013), I sought strategies to 'suspend' my subjects' judgment about the career concept until after having discussed their career choice experiences. In other words, I employed a strategy targeted at the cultural bias towards the word *career*. I decided to approach this problem through my planning of the interviews. I designed an interview guide in the form of a list of relevant themes, e.g. career education and counselling, influence of parents, peers and community, opportunities, limitations etc. As this was a guide and not a structure, I took an organic approach in the interviews and let the conversation direct exploration of themes, hence, I let the subjects talk about the issues they found important when making career choices. However, and crucially, I would not denote these choice processes as *career* choice processes before having discussed their choice experience/process at length and follow up with questions about the experiences discussed and how it connected to the career concept. By doing this, I aimed to tap into the experience of making career choice without being biased by stereotypical ideas about career, in addition to inviting my subjects to reflect on how adding the concept of career to the conversation and denoting their choice experiences as *career* experiences would possibly affect their ideas and experiences.

In the group interviews, the aim was to cover a wide range of issues concerning career choices based on a loosely structured interview guide. Still, I concentrated on the issues that elicited discussion in the groups. As I was concerned with finding ways to discuss experience in the interviews, I probed for thoughts, ideas, and how experiences were felt and understood. Interview topics developed between interviews, as I used the interview guide in all the interviews but learned something new in each interview that made it possible to adapt how I used it. For example, discussing emotional aspects of experiences was easier in the individual interviews than in the group interviews. The same topics would be brought up in the individual interviews with students and counsellors (anonymously/without referring to individuals in the groups) to further explore issues considered important at these locations. In all of the sessions with groups, individual students and counsellors, the participants were asked about the concept of career, what they thought of it, what they thought it meant and if it could be related to the situation of choosing upper secondary. The counsellors responded easily to questions about the career concept. Still, in the interviews with the teenagers, there was often a need to embellish the question or rephrase it, perhaps by offering an example or a perspective. On occasions, this would require further probing, for example, by offering a statement for the interviewees to respond to. This challenged the balance between the interviewer's role as moderator of, and participant in, the group discussion (Krueger & Krueger, 1998; Morgan & Krueger, 1998).

4.3.2.7 Analysis

The analysis processes of Paper 3 and Paper 4 were similar but different in important ways. I refer to the papers for separate descriptions of each of the analyses.

All transcripts were analysed in NVivo using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach (Braun et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). As noted earlier, using phenomenology as a perspective can have consequences for the choice of method for analysis, as some argue that the phenomenological method follows a phenomenological metatheoretical stance (Creswell, 2013). As such, there are requisites and conditions I needed to think of *before* collecting data (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009). However, I discovered this too late and was not able to comply with these conditions, so I needed to look for another approach to analysing my data. I chose RTA, which is a flexible and independent method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2018). RTA suggests synthesising and extracting themes from the material in six steps: (1) familiarising yourself with the material; (2) generating codes; (3) constructing themes; (4) revising and (5) defining themes; and (6) producing the report.

I can attribute my choice of RTA and my adaptation of the method to the messy process of research (Giorgi, 2009), but I would argue that this was a beneficial twist in my process. RTA was particularly suitable for me and the project because it is an open, flexible approach that underscores the researcher's role as interpreter and decision-maker in the analytic process. These aspects of RTA became especially important as I came to a critical point in my analysis for Paper 3. After having planned a project emphasising empirical work, I started with two theoretical papers (Paper 1 and Paper 2). This shifted the gravity of my project to a more theoretical one and gave it a thematically defined locus of welfare/work culture. However, parallel to writing Paper 1 and Paper 2, I was still collecting data under the conditions described in the design/sampling section. I was doing it with the idea that an inductive analysis could say something about the experience of making career choices for Norwegian teenagers, which was my original research question. However, as I was analysing for and writing my first empirical article, Paper 3, I had a major realisation about the real nature of my project. I got the experience of being at an important turning point.

My turning point implied having to reorient my approach to data analysis, from inductive to deductive (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). As I worked with the data and tried to see what came out of it before applying a fully fledged analytic approach to understand it, I found that a strong narrative in the data was the different experience of conditions and processes of career choice for the urban and the rural subjects. Having explored this in an early article (Bakke, 2018) and on several occasions in conference papers and teaching material, I was convinced that this would be the main result of my research. However, as inductive analysis using RTA for a large part confirmed my initial understanding, the first round of analysis did not connect well to Paper 1 and Paper 2 as the cultural elements I had discussed did not spontaneously appear in the material. I found this critical and felt that this jeopardised my entire thesis. However, having collected data in an open and organic way, the data was rich and varied. As the RTA framework emphasises the importance of the researcher as decision-maker and interpreter in the process (Braun et al. 2018), I found that I could decide to approach the material deductively. With the theoretical concepts developed in Paper 1 and Paper 2 as starting points, I looked for data that was conceptually linked to them. The structured approach of RTA was flexible and robust enough to allow me to shift in this way, without compromising the integrity of the analysis.

Hence, after familiarizing with the data (stage 1), i.e. transcribing, reading, re-reading and presenting aspects of it at various occasions, I coded the material by creating shorter statements akin to meaning units (Giorgi, 2009) (stage 2). Thus, I was making interpretations of my subjects' account to make the meaning clear. I created nodes for *collective individualism*, *egalitarianism* and *work-centrality*, and I reviewed the meaning units looking for those that from my interpretation addressed

these three concepts both explicitly and implicitly and coded them on to these three central nodes (stage 3). From this process, I had produced three groups of meaning units and going back to the raw data (transcripts) I reviewed and synthesised the separate groups (stages 4, 5). In the review and synthesis-stage, the content of the nodes *collective individualism*, *egalitarianism* and *work-centrality* showed different patterns of meaning. The patterns differed by the sub-themes *urban/rural dimension*, *teenager/counsellor dimension*, *the social significance of VET*, *social pressure*, *gender* and *status differences*, and how they appeared is shown in the table below:

Table 2

The appearance of sub-themes in nodes collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality

Sub-themes	Collective individualism	Egalitarianism	Work centrality
Urban/rural	X	X	X
Teenager/counsellor	X	X	X
Social significance of VET	X	X	X
Social pressure	X	X	
Gender		X	
Status differences		X	

Table 2 Appearance of sub-themes in nodes collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality.

It is worth noting that the urban-rural dimension still had a marked appearance in the analysis. Still, an important difference between my initial theories about the material and the completed analysis is that the urban-rural dimension here is one of six factors differently influencing the main themes of the analysis. Hence, the urban-rural dimension is arguably still important to my sampled teenagers and counsellors.

For the analysis for Paper 4, I wanted to investigate the part of the material where I had discussed the career concept specifically with my interview subjects. To do this, I created a new dataset from the transcripts by extracting excerpts from the interviews focusing on the career concept. The excerpts were delineated by the introduction of the career concept and initialising a discussion about the meaning of it, and the interview ending or the discussion moving over to a different topic. After having explored the new dataset through several readings, I created mind-maps, where I attempted to visualise the material and get an overview of it (see example in the picture in figure 4) (stage 1). In this phase, I saw that a difference between the teenagers and counsellors appeared. In stage 2, I did not want the appeared difference between the teenagers and the counsellors to lead the process of coding, so I decided to not generate codes from the material, but to code to predetermined nodes formulated as questions about the career concept echoing the topics discussed in the interviews. I then coded the material on to six nodes covering different aspects of the career concept: *what is it*,

how does it happen, when is it, who has got it, why do we do it, where is it. During the coding process, the nodes *emotional response* and *change* were added, as the initial nodes missed important content about subjects' experiences when discussing career in the interviews. Reviewing the content of these nodes and looking for latent material and focusing on a more implicit or conceptual level, I identified five themes across the nodes in the material (3): *unfamiliarity, future as worker/citizen, intentionality, risk, and realisation*. After rearranging the material into these categories, I further analysed and synthesised the content, and finally separating the teenagers and the counsellors' statements and fully analysed this as an important dimension of difference (4,5).



Figure 1 Example of a mind map for Paper 4.

Analysis of the data identified five main themes. The table below summarise the findings and illustrates key differences between the teenagers and the school counsellors in how they engaged with these themes.

The relief of realising that the research process can be fully driven by the researcher's analytic choices came at a critical point in my research process where I felt trapped by previous decisions that I had not been able to see the consequences of. But the realisation was both liberating and constraining at the same time. Liberating, as I realised that there is ultimately no inherent obligation to follow prescribed methods and do everything 'right'. Even though research involves rigour and transparency, there are many ways to approach data analysis, and the important factor is to choose one that fits the project and the research objects. However, decisions made are then a personal

responsibility, and they are underpinned by individual understanding, preferences, and knowledge. The reliability and validity of the results are a matter of being able to demonstrate what was done.

Table 3

Summary of themes identified – on the career concept

Themes	Teenagers	School counsellors
Unfamiliarity	Career is not about me. Career happens in the future. Career is not relevant in rural communities.	Career has negative associations. Career is not a natural part of the students' vocabulary. Career is about adults. Career represents a new dimension that needs to be defined.
Future as worker	Career is about work. One can have a career in any job. Career is about what you do for a living for the rest of your life. Career happens through goal-oriented activities.	Career is more than work. Career is about becoming someone and developing your identity and citizenship.
Intentionality	Achievement is doing what you enjoy. Choices are the core of career. Choices cannot always be planned.	Youth design their identity and career choice is a part of this. Career happens when students take responsibility.
Risk	Choices both close and open up opportunity. Choosing something runs the risk of closing other options. Using big words makes it feel riskier and more difficult.	Career is a big picture, and getting the students to transcend their immediate worries is important. Helping students to differentiate and nuance between what is important and what is not relieves tension.
Realisation	I recognise career in my life. I feel like my career is already underway. Choice of upper secondary feels more important.	Using the word 'career' in education and counselling opens up the discussion. I intend to use the word 'career' in my practice.

Table 3 Summary of themes identified in the analysis of interviews on the career concept with teenagers and school counsellors.

In summary, I had some important realisations in the analysis stage(s), about research in and of itself, and more specifically about the role of decisions in the research process. While the literature I have used on methodology describes these issues (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2018; Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 2009; Zahavi, 2015) and as such I may have cognitively known, the realisation is more powerful when emotionally experienced.

4.2.4 Limitations

A final point about methodology is the need to address limitations to this research, to suggest what I could have done differently, my concerns with the data and how to build on my study.

Starting with what I could have done differently, as I have mentioned above, it would have been beneficial to have defined a methodological starting point before starting off doing historical research for Paper 1 and Paper 2. Having defined such a starting point could have helped me plan and foresee issues of design and analysis. Perhaps the experience of the situation when I worked with Paper 3 would have felt less critical. It is also beneficial for the coherence of the study and the continuity of the research questions that they relate to the same underpinning ontological and epistemological position. However, while I see this as a problem with my study, I realise that experiences such as these are part of my education as a researcher.

In the original design of the study, I had planned for a qualitative first phase and a subsequent confirmatory, quantitative phase. I understood that the design perhaps would have to change and realised early on that I would have to exclude the second phase. However, I was not prepared for including the counsellors I met when visiting schools in the sample. While I had the interview guide for the interviews with the teenagers, as well as the topics they had brought up in the interviews as a basis for my interviews with the counsellors, I realise that having planned the counsellor interviews better may have given even richer data. This is especially important, as I now see that the counsellors make up an important dimension in both of my analyses.

The move from inductive to deductive analysis is also an issue to learn from in this study. As described above, I realised that I was not approaching the material in a way that helped me develop the rationale I had been working with while collecting and working with the data, the strong urban-rural narrative. Rather, I needed to develop the cultural values-thread developed in Paper 1 and Paper 2. While the data allowed me to 'turn my head around' and still find it relevant and informative for a deductive approach as it was rich and varied, it is a problem with my study that this important story is not being told in its completeness. Research on career and rurality is limited (Alexander, 2018; Alexander & Hooley, 2018), and especially so in a Nordic context (Öhrn & Beach, 2019). As the urban-rural dimension touches on e.g. issues of social class differences (Rye, 2011) which is a silent topic in the Norwegian society (Korsnes, Hansen, & Hjellbrekke, 2014), research focusing on this is of great importance.

In summary, my concern about the data and the study is that better planning could have helped me focus the study. Even though the diversions from the original plan were fruitful and opened new ground for exploration, working to secure the coherence of the project became more challenging.

How to plan for sufficient theoretical grounding while still being flexible and handle eventualities is perhaps the most powerful practical learning from this project.

Lastly, I have concerns about the story of the different experiences of the urban and rural teenagers that I will have to leave only half-told in this thesis. As such, it is an obvious venue for future research and writing.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter, I have described and explained my methodological perspective and the methods I have applied in the research process for this study. To formulate an ontological and epistemological starting point, I have explored the phenomenological perspective to better understand experience as an object for my study. I have discussed how to get closer to it where I find that the process of finding meaning in experience is a point of entry. I have described and explained the methods I have applied in both the theoretical and the empirical line of inquiry in my project and how I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to analyse the material. I have emphasised that this study has been a process of discovery and learning in both negative and positive ways about the possibilities and limitations in doing research.

All in all, I would like to sum up that even though I now understand what Giorgi (2009) says about research being messy and can add from my own experience that this can be frustrating, I also see this as strengthening, both for me as a researcher as it has motivated me to be more rigorous in my research, and also for the research result. For one thing, solving problems as they appear in the process involves important learning. Secondly, these experiences make it more important to find good, strong solutions that do not compromise the integrity of the research.

5. Findings

The papers deal with the research questions:

- **Paper 1:** *How is the development of a distinctive Norwegian work culture significant for thinking about career in Norway?* In Bakke, I.B. (2018). Norsk karrierekompetanse - Karriereferdigheter med kulturell bagasje [Norwegian career competence – Career guidance with cultural baggage].’ In Kjærgård, R. & Plant, P. (Eds.) *Karriereveiledning - For individ og samfunn [Career guidance – For individuals and society]*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.
- **Paper 2:** *What are the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as a concept?* In Bakke, I. B. (2020). The ‘idea of career’ and ‘a welfare state of mind’: On the Nordic model for welfare and career. In Haug, E. H, Hooley, T., Kettunen, J. & Thomsen, R. (Eds.) *Career and career guidance in the Nordic countries*. Leiden: Sense.
- **Paper 3:** *In what ways are Norwegian cultural values important for teenagers making vocational and educational (career) choices and for the counsellors providing career guidance and education?* In Bakke, I. B. Accepted for publication. Career and cultural context: Collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality in the career thinking of Norwegian teenagers. *British Journal of Guidance and Counseling*.
- **Paper 4:** *What are the barriers and opportunities to introducing the concept of career to tenth graders and their counsellors in Norwegian schools?* In Bakke, I. B., & Hooley, T. (2020). “I don’t think anyone here have thought about career really” - What the concept of ‘career’ means to Norwegian teenagers and school counsellors. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2020.1833242>

5.1 Summary of the papers

5.1.1 Paper 1

Paper 1 is a part of an anthology themed ‘career guidance for individuals and society’. Offering a cultural perspective, I look at the historical development of the Norwegian work culture to find a connection between community-oriented values that are important in Norwegian work culture and the career concept. I find that a traditional and everyday view of career is underpinned by ideas about career as self-centred, that emphasise personal development and individual self-actualisation and I compare this with the Norwegian work culture.

Tracing back, I start with the end of the union with Denmark in 1814. Becoming a new nation spurred much work to define what Norway was and should be, both in terms of setting up social structures and institutions and in terms of defining the Norwegian identity. As the industrial revolution and migration to the urban areas of Norway was concurrent with these events, it laid the ground for building an identity. It was based on an assumption of ‘sturdiness’, a protestant work ethic, a call for education, freedom and autonomy as citizens after having been oppressed in a feudal society, and the sense of community that the worker collectives of the newly industrialised society offered. Developments in policies and legislation perpetuated the idea of community and individual integrity through work. It was done through pension-schemes based on solidarity where those who work support those who cannot, and by developing comprehensive legislation for work-place democracy and work-designs that secured the opportunity to learn, develop and thrive in any job. From these developments, I use the term collective individualism, to sum up the idea that the social system of welfare and work enable individuals to act autonomously and freely within a framework of opportunities and obligations, which in turn assumes the support of the population through taxation and votes. While the turn of the millennium and the decades running up it saw the rise of neo-liberalism and a de-regulation of market-forces, the proponents of the welfare state see it as being in danger – but still standing, as the principle of the community supporting the individual still is evident.

Concluding the chapter, I argue that if the career concept is to be of use in Norway, the apparent clash between a community-oriented work-culture and an individually oriented career concept calls for a re-conceptualisation of career.

5.1.2 Paper 2

Being a part of an anthology on Nordic career guidance, the question ‘what *is* Nordic career guidance’ frame Paper 2. I give a part of the answer to this question by looking at the concept of *Nordicity* and the Nordic welfare model. While the Nordic model is vast and varied it connects to the cultures of the Nordic countries in important ways, and especially so when it comes to career, work

and the relationship between the citizen and the state. In this chapter, I draw with me the concept of collective individualism from Paper 1, and discuss welfare as important to culture, only from a wider, more abstract perspective.

Nordicity is in part a result of the coincidence of being five neighbouring states in-the-making at about the same point in time, being influenced by similar political ideas and currents, and having similar sets of challenges. However, the solutions to the challenges posed may not be similar. Later, a sense of cohesion and need for cooperation formed the basis for collaboration and coordinating, and for building the brand of Nordicity with the Nordic model for welfare as a cornerstone.

I discuss the Nordic welfare model and draw out important themes for thinking about career in the Nordic cultures. I discuss collective individualism in a Nordic framework, in addition to egalitarianism and work-centrality. While egalitarianism is a concept that is often brought forward as the defining feature of the Nordic model, citizenship and participation in society through work is a social imperative of the Nordic model, and hence an important aspect of thinking about career in the Nordic countries. Career is from this perspective a journey through life, learning and work where individuals find themselves in a continuing transactional relationship with the state.

In other words, the work-centricity of Nordicity, coupled with the idea that all take part on an equal basis in society means that producing different outcomes does not compromise being of equal worth. This means that career – when it encompasses work – can be informed by these cultural values and help develop a democratic career concept.

5.1.3 Paper 3

Paper 3 draws on the previous discussion of the cultural values egalitarianism, collective individualism and work-centrality from Paper 1 and Paper 2 and explores how they appear in conversations about career. For career guidance to be sensitive to Norwegian culture, the assumption that the welfare system and the education system are connected is important. An important function of the education system is to socialise young people into understanding, trusting and believing in the system of collective individualism in which they will participate as adults. The underpinning principle of danning holds that both scholarly education in addition to an encompassing personal development helps develop citizenship.

In the empirical part of the study, I have interviewed tenth graders both in groups and individually in both urban and rural communities across Norway, about choosing upper secondary and the concerns they have with these choices. Also, I have talked to the counsellors at their schools taking a birds-eye perspective on the teenagers' choice processes. Analysing the data from these interviews deductively to see if individual collectivism, egalitarianism and work-centrality can be found in these

conversations about career choices, I find that they are important but in different and complex ways. They vary along the urban-rural, teenager – adult, VET – academic dimensions. While both the urban and rural teenagers believe that they are free to choose, they experience social pressure and experience that family, peers or communities attempt to influence their choice. For urban teenagers, choosing between academic studies or VET implies considering social status, and rural teenagers perceive being held responsible for the future of their small home communities. The understanding of themselves as part of a larger picture as is implied by collective individualism is understood to be more of an adult perspective resonating with the counsellors in this article. The focus and positive outlook on a future as a worker is argued to echo work-centrality.

I conclude by arguing that there is a difference between ideas of cultural values and the lived experience of teenagers as career actors, especially in terms of egalitarianism and argue for differentiated strategies for counsellors addressing these issues. I also argue that learning to think about work as a positive part of the future can help future work-life balance.

5.1.4 Paper 4

Paper 4 was co-written with my main supervisor. In it, we discuss the career concept as a travelling idea in relation to excerpts from my interviews with tenth graders and counsellors about the career concept. Arguing that the introduction of the career concept to Norway is a part of a process of policy and theory lending and borrowing in the international field of educational research and policymaking, we argue that concepts such as career can be seen as travelling ideas. They bring with them some ideational content which when introduced to new contexts will be translated and transformed, not diffused. We use the terms ‘globalised localism vs localised globalisms’ to explain how concepts are either imposed on a context in a top-down process or rethought and remade to fit the local context.

The findings from the analysis show that the teenagers and the counsellors conceptualise career in different ways, but relating to the same themes: that the career concept is unfamiliar, that it denotes a future as a worker, that it comes to be through intentional choices, that it is associated with risk, and realisation. While the teenagers do not relate to the career concept, the counsellors report hesitation to use it because of cultural stigma. While the teenagers see career as something happening in the future and being related to finding jobs to thrive in and making intentional choices to get there, the counsellor sees career as being more than work and relate it to developing an identity and citizenship. While students feel that using the career concept to denote their educational and vocational choice heightens the stakes and sense of risk, the counsellors want the students to see the bigger picture and understand that their present choice is not the most

important one. However, both teenagers and counsellors agree that the career concept enables a connection between future as a worker and the present situation of making educational choices.

These discussions argue that career has a conceptual connection to *danning* in the Nordic Model of education. Thus, they are inherently connected to the cultural elements collectivistic individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality developed in the three previous papers. However, we argue that more importantly, these discussions make visible the ground level tension in policy lending and borrowing processes, where the counsellors can be seen as 'street-level-bureaucrats' adapting and reshaping policies to work in their context. We conclude by arguing that to release the potential value of new concepts and interventions they need to be recontextualised and re-grounded, which we argue in the Norwegian context, can be done by connecting it to *danning*.

6. Discussion

This section aims to draw together the findings from my four papers and the theoretical discussion from the synopsis and discuss the research question for the synopsis: how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does Norwegian culture influence the formation of a context specific career concept – both as a phenomenon and in the experience of the tenth graders and counsellors in this study? I will discuss the overall research question for the whole of the thesis in chapter 7.

To get closer to a suggestion of how culture works as a context for discussing and understanding the career concept, I will bring back the concepts from the theoretical discussion in chapter 3 and discuss them with my papers. I will propose a model that draws together different strands to help explain how I see culture working as a context for conceptualising. I will then relate this to my research and populate the model with the findings from my study. I will argue that a central point in my study is the apparent disconnect between a theoretical career concept and the lived career. This disconnect can be mitigated by reconceptualising career by connecting philosophical and ideational content to the lived experience of career.

Starting off my discussion, I would like to address a rather obvious concern about my research. A risky aspect of being curious about culture and concepts like career, is the inclination to question and problematise what many people take for granted, cf. the inculcated, integrated understandings of how the world works and how to operate within it that makes everything just function. Whether the cultural actors recognise themselves in the picture presented or not, becomes a crucial point, and if not, the validity of the rationale is jeopardised. In Paper 1 and 2, I have attempted to draw out some shared characteristics of the Norwegian and the Nordic culture(s) and argue that they affect how work and career are understood by cultural actors like tenth graders and counsellors, specifically collective individualism, work-centrality and egalitarianism. However, reviewing the book of which

Paper 1 is part, Højdal (2020) refers to Paper 1 noting that there is a question to be raised about using the concept of culture to capture the values of an entire population. She is also sceptical towards the idea of all actors coming together in the same project, collective individualism. I agree, because as I discussed in point 1.3.4, conflating ideal states and reality obscure important nuances and problematic elements. Related to this, and perhaps more dangerously, I also realise that trying to say something about culture and shed light on phenomena that influence peoples' worldviews and how they go about their lives, runs the risk of *essentialism*. Essentialism is looking for the essence, the one aspect that defines a phenomenon, a culture, humans; the element without which it cannot be, and as such risk reducing the phenomenon to an effect of its essence and lock it in a forever ongoing cause-effect cycle.

In postmodern historiographical research, essentialism is associated with the 'ludicrous nature of the pretensions of the social historian', i.e. those of trying to find 'the long-sought-after key which will open all historical doors' (Ankersmit, 1989, pp. 148-149). Perhaps this is also why Jalava (2013, p. 258) in the opening quote in my Paper 2 cautions that 'whoever enters the domain of historical and historiographical regions should be aware of venturing into a vague and oscillating space, which offers no steady ground under one's feet'. Trying to understand culture through history, is in Ankersmit's (1989) constructionist view, more about looking at what history (and culture) has produced and looking at how this communicates with the present. Comparing historiographical research with scientists trying to assess the nature of the trunk from which the branches and the leaves come, Ankersmit (1989) argues that historiographic research must rather look at the products, i.e. gather the leaves and look at the pattern that they make up in the present. 'We must not shape ourselves according to or in conformity with the past but learn how to play our cultural game with it' (p.153). While the linearity of history and explanatory power of historiographical research is dubious, there are still links between the past and the present and lessons to be learned. Especially from metaphors (Ankersmit, 1989) as they are linked to how phenomena are perceived, understood, reasoned, and also linked to conceptualisation as part of understanding the relationship between individuals, action, history and culture.

Coming from a perspective of rather than using history and accounts of culture to explain, I find that there are links between the past and the present that we can learn from. As such, egalitarianism, collective individualism and work-centrality are discussed as links to the past that help us understand the present, because current discussion always have the past as backdrop, as Koselleck's (2002, 2004) concept formation theory holds. In reviewing the book where Paper 2 is published, Svennungsen (2020) makes this point clear. She argues that this chapter is part of a section of the book that raises an important and critical discussion about the way that career and universal

understandings of career guidance are in an antagonist relationship with the Nordic cultural ideology. This challenges the Nordic welfare model and the practice of career guidance. And I will add: especially so because welfare and career guidance in the Nordic countries are tightly connected. I will let this clear-cut formulation be a backdrop for my further discussion of culture and career.

6.1 ‘How does culture work...’

Based on the theoretical discussion in Chapter 3, I propose the model set out in figure 5 as a structure for understanding the relationship between conceptualisation and context in relation to career and culture. I draw on the different theories that I have discussed and synthesise the learning that I have gained from discussing them. In the following, using the research question for the synopsis as headline, I will introduce the model and its central concepts, and briefly discuss how the concepts work together.

The model illustrates two levels of culture, based on Reed and Alexander (2009) argument that culture works on two levels, the concrete and the abstract. The two levels are connected by the meaning they reciprocally give to cultural phenomena, shown in the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

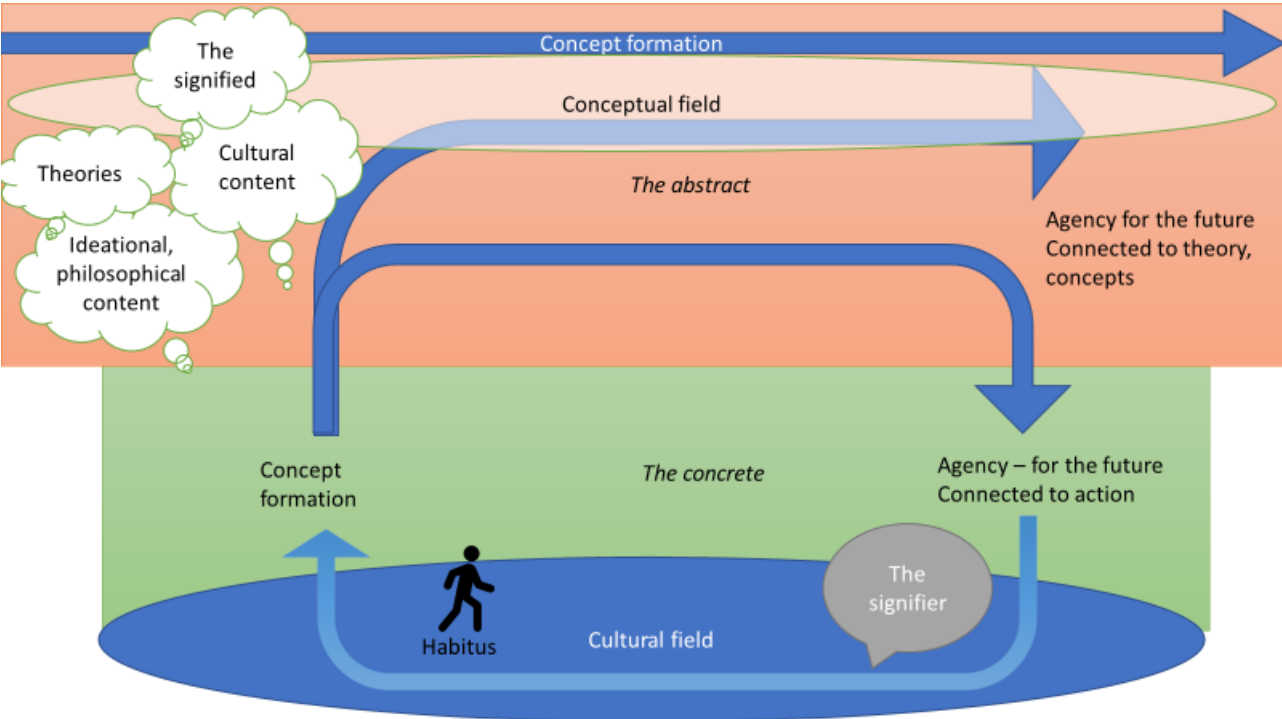


Figure 2 Illustrating the relationship between different levels of context and conceptualisation.

The concrete: The *concrete* refers to social objects and activities, and as such, they are what can be constituted as 'real'. They are the *signifiers* of abstract phenomena and expressions of culture. Based on Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) and Bourdieu's (1977) contention that social actors inhabit a social field delineated by a horizon, the model proposes that the *cultural field* delineates a certain scope of action for actors. Bourdieu likens the cultural field to a playing field and holds that the cultural field is ruled by *doxa* which is a certain set of rules that determine the nature of the game (Webb et al., 2010). This is the practical, real-world where people live their lives and enact their careers, this is where they are situated and where the all-encompassing experience of being is grounded (Jérôme, 2014; Matthews, 2002). This is where *habitus* as an individual expression of culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), or the career habitus (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) develops.

The abstract: The *abstract* refers to the symbolic and ideational element of social action or pattern, and as such, this is where we find *the signified* – the *philosophical and ideational content* that let us understand culture analytically. The abstract is also where we find abstractions as *theories*, e.g. career theories and career concepts. The abstract is connected to the concrete through reciprocal meaning-making (Reed & Alexander, 2009), but the abstract is where we can discuss e.g. cultural values (Hofstede, 2001; Maleki & de Jong, 2014),

Conceptual field: Akin to the way that the cultural field delineates a space, conceptualisation also delineates a *conceptual field*, by determining what is inside or outside the frames of the concept (Koselleck, 2004; Koselleck & White, 2002). Conceptualisation is also connected to context and culture by being abstractions of experience and understanding. In this way, there is a connection between a concrete cultural field and an abstract conceptual field.

Concept formation and agency for the future: *Conceptualisation* also involves *agency* and points to the future (Koselleck, 2004), and give direction to the actions, patterns and understandings related to the concept. In the abstract, conceptual field we can discuss how to understand careers, and following Reed and Alexander (2009) argument about the two levels for the pattern discussed, this applies to agency for the future as well. A theoretical, abstract discussion of e.g. metaphors for career (Inkson, 2004; Law, 2009) which through *concept formation* conceptualise career as a journey, gives agency for this career concept to invite people to explore rather than race. The race is rather understood as a counter-concept (Koselleck, 2004). Arguing for this conceptualisation of career, is also arguing that the career actor should believe in career as a journey because inherently there is a belief that this is a better career concept than that of career as a race.

In the same manner, as actors try to make sense of their behaviour conceptualisation is a part of this *self-reflexive process*. The feedback loop indicates that the process is *continuously* ongoing (Paulsen,

2020). Experience, and the understanding of it, is always connected to individual subjectivity (Cerbone, 2015). Still, through conceptualisation, the actor's own experience is connected to the abstract, conceptual space through meaning-making and use of common understandings, common concepts, philosophical and ideational content. In the same way that career conceptually can be seen as a journey, the career actor's conceptualisation of career either as a race or as a journey directs behaviour towards 'working to win' or 'working to explore'.

6.1.1 Discussing the model

In other words, forming concepts delineate possible understandings and actions, based on experience and understandings of past phenomena. Concept formation also has a future-oriented component, where agency points the concept in a certain direction. As such, conceptualisation does not only state how things are, but also how they are hoped to become. Culture and conceptualisation are tightly connected, as conceptualisation is a way of understanding actions, events and philosophical and ideational content characterising the culture. If we are to understand culture as operating on two levels, the abstract and the concrete, then conceptualisation is a way to understand culture as it can be seen as 'lifted' through abstraction. Conceptualisation lifts experience to an abstract, theoretical sphere, where social events can be scrutinised and connected to philosophical, ideational content. Hence, the up-down movement of abstraction and concretisation does not necessarily imply hierarchy; it can also imply a certain distance between the concrete and lived experience, and the abstract and theoretical concept.

On a general level, theory, research and public debate about social phenomena and how they connect to philosophical and ideational content, forms and re-forms the concepts of importance in a culture. As we have seen in chapter 3 this has been the case for the career concept, through discussing what it is and what it could be. The habitus, the individual expression of culture, operates in the cultural field, and conceptualise and re-conceptualise actions and events as a part of self-reflexivity and meaning-making, lifting these questions to an abstract level where it seeks to communicate with the conceptualised content of the culture it belongs to. However, as the phenomenology states that subjectivity of experience is unavoidable (Cerbone, 2015), conceptualisation will always be marked by already perceived and integrated concepts and cultural content that necessarily influence new conceptualisation.

In summary, understanding a particular concept as career and how it relates to culture, is underpinned by an acknowledgement that the theoretical aspects of career and the experiential aspects are separate. While a theoretical concept is an attempt to understand its concrete counterpart, the experience of it as an encompassing, being-in-the-world event will necessarily hold

different qualities, be highly individual and connected to habitus and positioning. It also implies that on an abstract level culture can respond to the career concept in one way by negotiating the theoretical aspects of it and debate how they relate to culturally specific ideational and philosophical content, as for example, the democratic career concept discussed in Paper 2. However, how individuals respond to the career concept is also to a high degree dependent on experience, or lack thereof, with it. In the following, I will discuss how culture works as a context for conceptualising career related to my findings, bearing in mind the difference between these two levels.

6.2 Using the model to understand culture and career

In this section, I will use the model proposed above as an analytic tool to discuss the two central concepts of culture and career. Concerning the concept of culture, I will use the model to develop an understanding of the way that cultural content frame understandings of the career concept.

6.2.1 '...as a context...'

I have argued in chapter 3 that a central aspect of understanding both the concepts of career and culture, is the realisation that they are concepts construed by metaphorical understandings related to contextual phenomena. Experience and understandings of both history and the present are by the principle of conceptualisation connected to words, creating systems of meanings. It is commonality and community of groups and social cohorts and the continuing questioning of 'who we are', that helps the aspects of culture to become acquired, interdependent and shared between members (E. T. Hall, 1976). Both Norwegian (Paper 1) and Nordic culture (Paper 2) came out of attempts to form and shape a cultural 'self-image'. This echoes the contention that culture has an abstract and a concrete aspect, connected by the meaning they reciprocally produce (Reed & Alexander, 2009). In Paper 1, I outline the historical development of the Norwegian work-life culture to make the point that there are historical facts related to how Norwegian workers sees themselves in relation to the employment structure and the wider system of Norwegian work culture, that in turn affect the way they relate to the career concept or any work-related concept. Cultural sociology sees culture as having a role. Whether it is by setting out frameworks for meaning-making by explicating the ideals and value systems that *guide* career behaviour (Hofstede, 2001), or whether it is by making meaning systems that *understand* career behaviour (Swidler, 1986), the Norwegian work culture sets out a framework that outlines the signified of work behaviour as an overall idea or value of participating in a system or a community.

I would argue that all the events I draw out in Paper 1 as important in the history of Norwegian work culture emphasise a 'we', and that conceptualisation of work-related behaviour connects to ideational and philosophical content that perpetuates the idea of community through work. The

breakout of state unions defines a national 'we', the education and enlightenment of the people to enable them to develop citizenship and participate in a greater 'we', the power of unions, cooperation, bipartisanship, dugnad, social security financed by taxation, legislation securing right to participate in work-place democracy and a pension scheme based on solidarity – they all emphasise the individual as taking part in a community, a system. As such, they are conceptualisations of past experiences in Norwegian society, concepts pointing towards the future denoting agency promoting solidarity and community values. The cultural phenomena of collective individualism, egalitarianism and work centrality that I further discuss in Paper 2 can be argued to be understood as ideal formulations about how this system *should* work, the principles by which it should function.

It should be so that all actors within this system are treated equally, everybody should be able to enjoy work and participation, and the continuous transaction of collective individualism should provide opportunities to realise individual potential based on a common system of support and opportunity. Taking this a step further, the 'cultural programming' (E. T. Hall, 1976) or socialisation processes of young people to grow up to become citizens and participate in this system, is an important need of the education system. Career choices and career education need to be connected to these understandings of how the working world operates or rather *should* operate. As concepts point to the future, the concept of danning point to a desired future where the young person acts as a citizen, upholding the values that are conceptualised as important in the Norwegian culture. In Paper 3 I argue that the tenth graders in my sample negotiate these cultural ideals in their career considerations, however tacit and implicitly, and sometimes they find that the ideals of culture are not always commensurable with how things work, in their concrete form.

For example, the teenagers report in Paper 3 that while they believe that they are free to choose the education and job they would like, factors are working against their free choice. Solveig says that '*it's up to you in the end, but there are many expectations*' (Paper 3, p. 12), and the tenth-graders feel these expectations in various ways. For the tenth graders living in rural areas the expectations centre around coming back to live in the community, and for the urban tenth-graders, they feel that they are expected to excel in education and academic and professional work. While social reproduction is argued to direct young peoples' educational and vocational choices also in Norway (Hjellbrekke & Korsnes, 2014), it could also be argued that the experience of social pressure the tenth-graders report is a part of the socialisation process into collective individualism, into an understanding that there are expectations and obligations to fulfil. However, feeling that you are a part of something bigger is an adult view. The counsellors bring up aspects of participation in society through work and citizenship and see career choices as necessary in the development towards becoming a full member

of society. But the experience of social pressure mitigates against the idea that individuals are free to make their own choices and that all choices are equally good.

An interesting aspect of the tenth-graders perception of equality is their ideas about gender in relation to career choices. In Paper 3, the teenagers see that gender reflects differences between people, visible in e.g. who chooses which education and vocation, but that these differences are unproblematic as they are thought to be caused by profound differences between the sexes. Rather, it can seem like there is a societal hang-up on gender differences, as *'everybody thinks that people think about it, so they think everyone thinks about it'* while *'nobody here has thought of this'*, Tora and Marianne explain (Paper 3, p. 15). However, the teenagers also note that, e.g. boys more often choose vocational education, which in urban areas are connected to lower status. However, this mechanism is rather understood as an aspect of academic ability. Gender differences do not in the teenagers' view lead to inequality, or at least not automatically at the cost of women. There is a divergence between abstract and concrete aspects of culture. They *understand* the cultural, ideational concept of egalitarianism and all being of equal worth, but their *experience* with it and the reflexive process of conceptualising it into a concept of equality they can act upon, leaves out the gender aspect.

As such, in relation to the Bourdeusian concept of doxa (Webb et al., 2010) they relate to the cultural principles that I have outlined in the way that there is a difference between ideal states and what happens in reality. As the counsellors in Paper 4 argue that the ability of the career concept to draw together important aspects of the teenagers' present and future career choices, they adopt the general policy theme about the importance of career guidance (NOU 2016: 7, 2016). But they experience that using the career word is difficult. Equally, as Swidler (1986) notes, people often behave contrary to cultural ideals and values, and the doxa is partly determined by the cultural actors participating in the game of the social field, what motives they have and the capital they bring in. Hence, it is difficult to argue that egalitarianism is the principle rule of the game, the system does not always behave in just ways, as is often confirmed by research on class differences and social reproduction in the Norwegian society (Korsnes et al., 2014). The teenagers form their own logic about equality, gender and career, applying the strategy-generating principle of habitus.

In summary, the cultural ideals I have outlined, the collective individualism, the egalitarianism and work centrality, point to end goals for educational and vocational choices and socialisation processes – they are cultural concepts pointing to a desired future for cultural actors and society in general. They are the 'bigger picture' that the counsellors see themselves as educators working towards, as they conceptualise career as being connected to the philosophical principle of danning underpinning

education – but it is difficult to use. Both the counsellors and the teenagers experience the cultural field as more complex and contradictory than it appears, and their habitus or felt experiences within the cultural space blends into the self-reflexive process of understanding and conceptualising patterns they encounter into something new. In other words, using ideational content to conceptualise and understand behaviour is dependent on an assumption of coherence or similarity, without which it becomes irrelevant.

6.2.2 ‘...for conceptualisations of career...’

In the previous section, I discussed how culture works as a context for conceptualisation and argued that experience relates to concepts by the appearance of coherence and relevance between the concrete and the abstract. In light of the discussion in the previous section, looking back to my initial interest in the career concept as stemming from the realisation that ideas about career were important for students’ likelihood to engage with future employers, I ask whether peoples’ understandings of work, education and life projects as *career* are necessary to connect theory to practice. Is it necessary to be aware of the career concept and experience career as relevant to seek out career guidance or to integrate career learning? Looking at the relationship between career and work through the workings of my proposed model could begin to answer this question, and in addition to my findings, I will start by using my own experience with the career concept as an example.

A central theme in my discussion of the career concept in chapter 3, is that work is central to career. As noted, I wonder if my habitus as I navigate a cultural field that emphasise the importance of work is priming me and has shaped my subjectivity towards such an impression. It is arguably also so that being educated in career guidance helps me connect the two, as being introduced to the career concept offered new ways of thinking about work. I could reconceptualise my experiences in work and education and connect it to an abstract and theoretical conceptual framework for thinking about work as important to career, which I later used to understand my experiences in working life. Parsons, Super, Holland, D. T. Hall and Savickas argue that work offers opportunities for self-realisation in some way, and the career concept offered me the understanding of both positive and negative experiences in my own career as being events in a lifelong developmental process which strengthened my career competence. Education and the emergence of perspectives arguing for a wider career concept gave more complex understandings of the role of career, and different metaphors to understand the career project. As such, we are back to the idea of concepts having a *role*, as systems through which concrete events are understood and connected to the abstract philosophical and ideational aspects that they signify, guiding the habitus as it tries to make sense of the world.

Discussing the relevance of career and ideas about work could be argued to be two different discussions in my sample of teenagers. In discussions in Paper 3 about vocational and educational choices and the future as a worker, the teenagers see their future as a worker positively. They look forward to entering the world of work as adults. Concrete experience in a cultural field where work is beneficial for both people and society (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012), offers a concept for work with positive agency. But as described in Paper 4, 'career' is seemingly not necessarily an apt concept for their working lives. It could be argued that for these teenagers, their experiences in the concrete has not connected to the ideational, abstract content of the career concept. While some teenagers spontaneously connect career to work, a more common response was seeing career as something that not everyone has, e.g. the singer or footballer career. Connecting career to all forms of work and making it relevant for all was a matter of debate and discussion. It was a process of reconceptualisation and an investigation of which events and behaviours can act as signifiers for the abstract and theoretical concept. The counsellors also describe in Paper 4 that they were hesitant to use the concept in career education and counselling. Although career was useful as a technical concept for the educators that opened up discussions about the connection between the concrete choice of upper secondary and abstract and ideational issues of citizenship and danning, the associations to achievement orientation could risk the intentions of career education to be miscommunicated to e.g. parents. Using it to talk about tenth graders and choice of upper secondary could be seen as alienating, as *'extreme and perhaps threatening and strange'* (Counsellor S, Paper 4, p. 7). This statement from Counsellor S can be thought of as showing a normative aspect of conceptualisation, as agentic ideas pointing towards the future adhere to the concept. The counsellor is hesitant about conceptualising the teenagers educational and vocational choices as *career* choices because of some ideational content that is at odds with an understanding of the situation the teenagers are in. There is a question about whether the counsellor is reluctant to 'disturb' the process the teenagers are in with the normativity of conceptualisation, the process of connecting events to ideational content to direct future behaviour.

The ideational content of career as discussed in chapter 3, can be seen as debating the tension between the need to organise society and the freedom and autonomy of individuals, but that the way career organises this has changed. It could be argued that conceptualisations of career have shifted from emphasising what is external to the individual, i.e. determined by the structures of organisations and society, to internal factors, i.e. depending on the capabilities and resources of the individual. While this can be perceived as liberating for career actors, as in constructionist career theory, the boundaryless or the protean career (D. T. Hall, 2004; Savickas, 2012; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) this shift has also been seen as responsabilising the career actor to a higher degree. The

discussions on the career concept in Paper 4 connect with these issues, shown by both the counsellors' hesitation to use the career concept and the tenth-graders' perception of increased risk when denoting vocational and educational choices as career choices. We argue in Paper 4 that these aspects are related to an understanding of career as a responsibilising technology.

However, the tenth graders and the counsellors appeared to experience a process of realisation about the possibility of the career concept to be related to choosing upper secondary as described in Paper 4. Debating the connection between choosing upper secondary, education and a future as a worker was a form of reconceptualization and discussing what it is in the concrete that can signify a career concept. Discussions made it clearer that the career concept could encompass all of this, by looking critically at it and connecting it to their experience and to their ideas about education and work. As these connections were spontaneously offered by only a few of the tenth graders, it could be argued that conceptualising career as encompassing both the present as well as the future is a crucial task of career learning. For Counsellor B it becomes clear that the responsibility for connecting these dots is on the education system, as *'I know I should have talked more about this and made them conscious that no matter what they choose they are making career choices'* (Paper 4, p. 11).

In summary, culture can form a basis for evaluating career acts. In contrast, the personal appraisal of career can be different, an incongruence the counsellors in Paper 4. They recognise this as they express belief in the concept of career, but at the same time, they often choose not to use the word in career education due to negative connotations in the wider community. Coming from a theoretical perspective, I have argued in chapter 3 that career is a concept that describes a crucial point of interaction between individuals and the external world. Still, it becomes clear that without being reconceptualised and re-worked and connected to real-life experiences, then that is what career may continue to be – a theoretical concept.

6.3 '... and how does Norwegian culture influence the formation of a context specific career concept – both as a phenomenon and in the experience of the tenth graders and career guidance counsellors in this study?'

In concluding this discussion and attempting an answer to the research question for this synopsis, I will bring back the preceding four research questions from my papers and work through all five of them:

1. How is the development of a distinctive Norwegian work culture significant for thinking about career in Norway?

2. What are the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as a concept?
3. In what ways are Norwegian cultural values important for teenagers making vocational and educational (career) choices and for the counsellors providing career guidance and education?
4. What are the barriers and opportunities to introducing the concept of career to tenth graders and their counsellors in Norwegian schools?
5. How does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does Norwegian culture influence the formation of a context specific career concept – both as phenomenon and in the experience of the tenth graders and counsellors in this study?

Starting with the first two questions, of how the development of distinctive Norwegian work culture is significant for thinking about career in Norway and the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and the career concept, an important point to be made is the apparent collision between the 'I' in the individualising, responsibility-orienting career concept as I have discussed it in Paper 1, and the 'we' that I have argued to be central in the community-oriented Norwegian and Nordic working culture. But both the 'I' in career and the 'we' in Norwegian working culture is more complex than it appears. Going back to Durkheim and Weber as initiators of a discussion about work and career (Moore et al., 2007), this discussion has centred around individuals and their place in the context. As such, a greater 'we' have always been a silent partner in career. The early career theorists debated the role of the individual in a larger social system, where work is the intersection and determine how individuals participate. Social systems imply relations to other people, and these early theorists debated if and how participating in them were beneficial, not only on an individual level but also for the community. The same can hold today, where career guidance as a strategy to support people in their lifelong learning process, is argued to be beneficial on a societal level as it supports peoples' ability to keep up with the higher pace of the employment structure (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2012; Haug, 2020). The 'I' is always related to something. Still, it is the individual's life that could be argued to have been the principal point of interaction for career guidance, where efforts to deconstruct and understand (e.g. Life design, Savickas, 2012), inevitably emphasise individual history, choices, abilities and concerns. But it could be argued that the increased awareness of a greater 'we' in career, as exemplified by Law (1981), was important to developing more collective approaches to career guidance. Thomsen's (2012) career guidance in communities argue that it is precisely the greater 'we' that hold the potential to help and guide the career actor because of shared knowledge and perspective. Going further, Hooley, Sultana, and Thomsen (2018b) argue that when done

collectively, career guidance is a shared learning process in which groups can think critically and foster agentic collective action, to, e.g. raise awareness or target problematic power structures.

The 'we' of the Nordic and Norwegian culture is equally ambiguous. The welfare model and the welfare culture are continuously debated, and e.g. Leonardsen (2015) and Wahl (2009) argues that while the ideational and philosophical content of the welfare model is priceworthy, the workings of the welfare state may seem contrary to its goals². As I have argued, the concept of collective individualism emphasises that in addition to belonging to a system or a collective marked by co-determination, it is coupled with individualism. Individualism can be explained as a cultural pattern promoting independence, with autonomy, agency and separation as markers (Hartung, Fouad, Leong, & Hardin, 2010), perfect for an achievement-oriented, hierarchical career concept. Scandinavian countries score high on measures of cultural individualism (Maleki & de Jong, 2014), and the confusion is complete. However, the relationship between collectivism and individualism is more complex, and especially so is the individualism-concept. Measures of cultural characteristics come in many versions.

While I am cautious about essentialism, I would argue that research from business- and organisational studies offer an interesting perspective, as they are concerned with how cultures mediate business partnerships where the consequences of culture can be found in negotiation and cooperation. For example, learning from the results of investigating Scandinavian cultures as a part of a global investigation in Project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness) (House, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), it is interesting to note that individualism is not included. Rather, the GLOBE model divides the construct into in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism, in addition to the dimensions uncertainty avoidance, assertiveness, performance orientation, humane orientation, power distance, gender egalitarianism, and future orientation as indicators of culture in the Scandinavian cluster. The research argues that the Scandinavian countries differ in subtle ways, e.g. as Norway scores lower on power distance, uncertainty avoidance and institutional collectivism, and higher on gender egalitarianism, humane orientation and in-group collectivism than its Scandinavian neighbours (Warner-Søderholm, 2012). While they are subtle, these differences can be argued to imply that the social structures based on hierarchy and rules are more common in the other Scandinavian countries. A notion of equality in support and opportunity to make individual choices mark the social systems of Norway, where the 'other', the partner and provider of support is the state (cf. stateness, in Alestalo et al., 2009). Gender egalitarianism is e.g. argued to come from giving men more opportunity to invest in their

² This is a discussion I will not raise at this point, as it is the ideational underpinnings that are the focus here. However, I refer to these writers for thorough critique of the workings of welfare in Norway.

parental role, rather than coming from relieving women of the responsibilities of motherhood. In other words, individualism does not necessarily mean a high degree of assertiveness (Warner-Søderholm, 2012); it is about opportunity and ability to make one's own choices.

Having worked on these concepts and going back and forth in my reflections about Norwegian culture, I find that especially the notion of collective individualism speaks about an inherently system-oriented mindset. The basis for thriving is trust in and belonging to a wider system that secures equal privilege and obligation. The Finnish journalist Anu Partanen (2016), sums up that the grand idea about the Nordic welfare model is that this social system provides security as a *precondition* for freedom and autonomy. There is less experience of risk connected to failure, which she argues is more outspoken in the USA to which she compares her Finnish experience. It could be argued that the new framework for quality in career guidance launched by Skills Norway (Haug et al., 2019) safeguards this 'freedom within a framework'-idea that underpins Norwegian life. It assumes that individuals can find themselves somewhere between the oxymorons that constitute the different competence areas. Being on a continuum of both and, but not pinned down and defined as either-or, can be argued to suit the autonomous and individual Norwegian well. So to understand the Scandinavian collectivism and individualism, the notion that there is no individual self-determination without solidarity (Sultana, 2011) makes sense. Autonomy assumes security, and social systems assume that they are supported by the will of the people. This could be argued to be the underlying principle of *danning*, which connects well to the choices people make about the future. As counsellor L states about wanting the local teenagers to come back to their small coastal community, where she wants to show them that this is a good alternative: they can choose to come back, choose the collective, *'because it is a good place for them to be in'* (Paper 3, p. 13).

Moving over to the two subsequent questions, where I ask how Norwegian cultural values are important for career choices and what can be seen as barriers and opportunities when introducing the career concept, I believe that these questions and their answers are connected by how the career concept is understood and used and whether or not it is allowed to be a part of conversations about career. As I have argued in chapter 2, debating educational and vocational guidance and counselling in Norway have been marked by discussing structure. The design of systems for provision and the role of the counsellor has received much focus, and the discussion on the content of career conversations came later. The counsellors in Paper 3 and Paper 4 demonstrate that career is a theoretical construct and an unfamiliar concept they are reluctant to use in counselling and education. But their ideas about the role of *danning* in education as the underpinning philosophy for their engagement with the career choices of young people show that these concerns about career choices and how they affect individuals' relationship to the community are very much real.

But the connection between learning and career seems to be 'blocked', at least in practice, and it could be argued by the instant subjectivity of experience, shaped by cultural concepts. However, there is an important question to be asked about the actual need to use the career concept in secondary school. Is it really necessary to discuss what we call it? Is not the most important thing that teenagers receive guidance, that they learn about education and work, and that someone talks to them about how they connect to life issues? I am inclined to say yes, and a part of the answer can be found in what is an important critique of counselling in the Norwegian education system as it is today, where educational and vocational guidance is criticised for focussing specifically on the *next* transition (Haug, 2017), from e.g. lower to upper secondary or from secondary school to higher education, and the connection between these choices and the wider perspective of work, employment and life is lost (Røise, 2020).

It is telling, that the main critique from OECD (2002) about the Norwegian system for counselling and guidance, was the lack of coherence between guidance in school and guidance in the employment structure. As I have argued in Paper 4, when the career concept is discussed to make sense of it, it is about the future as a working adult. Another issue that cast light on the argued disconnect is the matter of competence. As I have argued in chapter 2, as the guidance counsellors' role initially was defined to be an add-on to the teacher role with no further competence requirements (Teig, 2000), it was not clearly defined what theoretical framework or content was connected to the counsellor role. It has left undeclared what good quality career guidance is (Haug, 2016), and left the mandate and role for the counsellor to be a matter of local negotiation (Mathiesen et al., 2014). However, when partnerships for career guidance was established in the mid-2000s, they were thought to be career guidance competence hubs and instrumental in strengthening the intersectional work for career guidance. They were to support counsellors working with vocational and educational guidance and counselling (Buland et al., 2011; Helgesen & Feiring, 2007), both in schools and in the welfare administration. In other words, career guidance as key competence was still not a part of the school counsellor role. Rather, it could be argued, the most important thing about the counsellors was that they were available and approachable and a good conversation partner (Haug, 2017). Career guidance and education in schools is meant to be a part of the chain of support initiatives from school to work, and it is questionable if school counsellors argue that they do *educational and vocational* guidance, and leave the career guidance to other parts of the system. It could be argued that by letting this happen, the disconnect is perpetuated.

The rather obvious follow-up question from such an argument is: what is the advantage of conceptual continuity across these different segments of career guidance? I would argue that it is exactly conceptual continuity between these different modes that can help teenagers and

counsellors to ‘connect the dots’ and use the career concept to see across transitions and life phases, as some of the teenagers and counsellors experienced in Paper 4. However, there is a considerable caveat here, demonstrated by the perception of risk by the teenagers in Paper 4 as they discussed how their present choices connected to their future. Arguing that the choice of upper secondary matter in the long run, takes some of the innocence away. And it could be argued, not only for the teenagers. Conceptualising the school counsellor role as a part of a larger field of career guidance theory and practice also means assuming a position related to big questions within the field of career guidance, of, e.g. instrumentalism and governmentality, and of social justice and gender egalitarianism (Hooley et al., 2018a; Kjærgård, 2013; Kjærgård, 2020; Lingås, 2018; Schulstok & Wikstrand, 2020).

6.3.1 The democratic and the real career

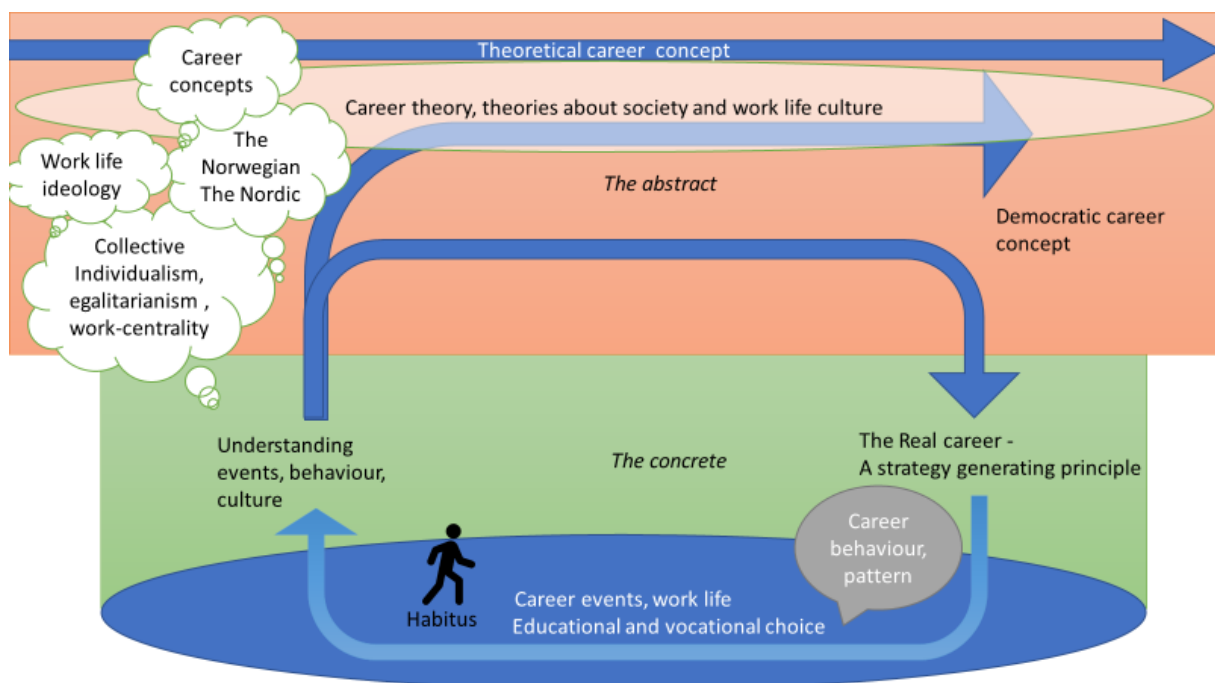


Figure 3 explaining conceptualisation and context – populated with findings and theory

The above version of the model is populated with findings and theory, and I will use it to introduce and explain what I term the *democratic* and the *real career*.

An important question is whether I should formulate a career concept to conclude my inquiry. I have argued that career concepts are continuously reconceptualised, re-defined and re-formed by the struggles of different cultural actors aiming to shape the career concept into something that gives meaning and direction. And further, that this is perhaps the most important feature of career – it’s malleability to contain and describe what social actors find important about work, education and life issues. The *real career* can truly be ‘a strategy generating principle’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). As Jahoda

(2012) concluded about the concept of culture, its strength is to be what it needs to be but using the culture-concept demands clarifying how it is used. In the same manner, actors in the career field, coming at the problem from different directions and arguing from different theoretical stances based on different experiences, debate how careers work and what it can do for individuals and society, factors which – as we have seen – will change. *The career concept needs to be continuously reconceptualised, re-formed, and re-imagined to be used.*

But as I have posed in the model, re-conceptualisation is a process of understanding concrete events that communicate with abstract or philosophical content. As is argued in both Paper 4 and in this discussion, career choices are inevitable in the process of growing up and conceptualising career as connected to the philosophy of danning is a possibility. However, as conceptualisation needs to *communicate with some theory or ideational content*, I propose that the democratic career concept discussed in Paper 2 can be such a framework. Here, the co-dependency of the community and the individual is at the heart of a Nordic career concept. I adopt the label *democratic career*, after Watts (2016) who argues that career is connected to citizenship through the social contract it proposes and that it encompasses all sides of life and is for all – hence it is democratic. The democratic career is about the role of the individual in a wider community, and it is an appealing conceptualisation. Because what is really a good life? It is *‘having a job, house and a car, kids and woman and all that. Then it’s ok’* (Bendik, Paper 3, p.1). A democratic career concept holds that whether career is a race or a journey, it is to be defined by the career actor as autonomy and equal rights are underpinning principles. Still, it reminds us that with opportunity there is also a responsibility towards the ‘other’, the community, society. A democratic career concept has *agency towards citizenship*.

I see a parallel between a democratic career concept as a framework for exploring one’s standpoint towards career and the career competence areas suggested by Skills Norway (Haug et al., 2019). The oxymorons suggested allows for autonomy and resistance towards being pinned down, as they invite the career actor to continuously discuss ‘where am I’ within these opposites. Similarly, I would suggest that while the democratic and the real career are not necessarily opposites, career actors *move between ideational conceptualisations and lived experience*. They move between what is wanted and what is possible, move between the democratic career and the real career.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter, when dealing with my fifth and synopsis-specific research question for my thesis, I have proposed a model for understanding how culture works as a context for conceptualisations of career, and I have gradually widened the scope of my discussion. By first explaining the model, then populating it with theory, and then using it to discuss the overarching issues of philosophical and

ideational content I have discussed how specifically Norwegian culture can be seen to influence the formation of a context specific career concept. The main point I have made in this chapter is that career needs to be reconceptualized and reworked to work in the Norwegian educational setting.

As I have also argued in this section that there is a co-dependency between freedom and frameworks, I have proposed a new word-pair as a concluding discussion, where I offer the word pair democratic and real career. The democratic career has ideational content that emphasises equality and the individuals' role in the community with agency towards citizenship, where the real career is connected to lived experience in the concrete. I suggest that while they are not directly opposites, the democratic career concept has ideational content toward which the career actor can conceptualise and understand the real and lived career, and vice versa – the real career giving content and meaning to a democratic career concept.

7. Conclusion and implications for future research, policy and practice

Finally, I bring back the research question for the entire study: how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors?

Attempting a conclusion to my overarching research question, I suggest that Norwegian culture constitute a cultural field where a big and defining narrative is the importance of individual autonomy within a community. While it is a barrier that the career concept is initially experienced as something that is at odds with this big narrative because of the inherent achievement orientation and hierarchical understanding of an everyday or traditional conceptualisation of it, there is opportunity in reworking the career concept and reconceptualise it as an integral part of the socialisation process towards adulthood and danning.

Another important question is, what can be learned about context-sensitivity in the overall career field? I would argue that efforts to understand the connection between concept and context is important. It is not enough to argue that it does not 'fit'. The definitions are not set, and the ambiguity of concepts allow for re-imagining, re-forming and shaping career into what it needs to be. Also, my inquiry into the career concept shows that there is a difference between career as a theoretical concept and career as a lived experience. Still, they can be connected by experientially informed conceptualisation.

This realisation holds a potential, for career actors as the teenagers in this study and their parents as well, and for the counsellors aiming to support them both. Culture, by nature, belongs to everybody. And while cultural content is sometimes tacit and implicit, it can be brought to the surface by asking 'who are we', 'what defines us', and 'what do we believe in'. What comes to mind about the community, the wider culture and the individuals who inhabit it is culture – the signified that connects to the signifier, which is what people do, think, talk about, how they act. In the same manner, discussing career concepts to figure out 'what they really mean' means reconceptualising

them, scrutinising theory, looking for relation to the concrete career events and discussing how career can be conceptualised to frame projects of life, learning and work.

7.1 Further research

Pointing towards the future and possible avenues for further research, I would argue that there is a potential in looking further into what effect conceptualising life choices as career choices could have. Could it give valuable insights about career, both for career actors and counsellors? Is there a potential for developing a method for conceptualisation, thus making career conceptualisation a tool for practice? Certainly, looking further into how career is conceptualised by career actors in Norway would give valuable information about the Norwegian career and inform further developments in career theory by keeping in contact with the real career as it is lived and experienced. For example, after having launched the new framework for quality in career guidance (Haug et al., 2019), research into how this is used in career conceptualisation and looking into whether it connects to the lived career of individuals could strengthen the framework and support further development of it.

Overall, I see two important venues for looking further into career conceptualisation, where career guidance and education for young people is one and guidance for adults is the other. Longitudinal work that follows teenagers as they develop and use the career concept could give insight into whether working with conceptualising career as relevant for the individual's life really *do* have potential to provide support and bridge transitions as I have argued. The other venue is the adult career, and it is in this sphere that ideas about career 'belong' in Norway today. From an 'everyday' or a traditional view, unqualified work or work that an individual did not choose is not associated with having a career, especially not from the teenagers' perspective (Paper 4). Further research into career conceptualisations for adults in working life could give interesting insight on how career can be understood in Norway, especially adults doing work that is most often not associated with having careers. I have posed the question in this thesis of whether it is necessary to be aware of and relate to a career concept in order to be interested in or seek out career guidance and learning services, and I would argue that there is a connection between seeing career as a relevant concept for the way people live their lives and the perceived relevance of such services. The provision of career guidance for the public is in rapid development today, with the growth of public career centres and online provision to be used for all free of charge. Research into these issues could inform the further development of career guidance provision in Norway today, making it easier to develop user interfaces that communicate well with the public.

7.2 Implications for policy and practice

While the new framework (Haug et al., 2019) is intuitively appealing and it is easy to be caught up in the gospel, it is important to remember that for some it is hard to see beyond their negative associations with the word *karriere* (career). The highly consultative process that led to the development of the framework is more akin to a bottom-up process or being a localised globalism as we discuss in Paper 4, but it is still worth to remember that around the schools of Norway there are many school counsellors that did not take part in this process. The implications for policy and practice from these realisations is to be mindful of the need to make career concepts relevant, to connect it to lived experience and conceptualise it in relation to ideational and philosophical content. This is also important for the counsellors, who give career guidance and counselling. It is important that there is room for such reflection, and the responsibility for giving such room is on the policy level when introducing a framework for practice or career counsellor competence requirements.

All in all, conceptualisations of career as relevant is arguably important, but I would argue that this particularly applies to educational settings. Career can be conceptualised as encompassing transitions in education as well as working life, thus mitigating against the apparent disconnect between education and work life. Counsellors, teachers and school leaders that do careers work in education need to go first and reconceptualise and find out how the career concept is useful in education and conversations about life choices. Encouraging and enabling such reconceptualisations is a responsibility for policymakers, because, without this, the introduction of career guidance theory may not reach that last, practical level where it is ultimately meant to support teenagers in their life transitions.

7.3 Final words

Finally, the ambiguity of concepts such as career can work to our advantage, as it allows us to shape them into what they need to be within the frames of the shared meaning, ideational and philosophical content they refer to. As such, conceptualisation is a process of assuming ownership of a concept and make it relevant.

This is important, because in career education and guidance, we cannot talk about career with hesitation and doubt; it jeopardises the legitimacy of what we are trying to achieve.

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Papers

Paper 1

Bakke, I. B. (2018). Norsk karrierekompetanse - Karrierferdigheter med kulturell bagasje. In R. Kjærgård and P. Plant (Eds.), *Karriereveiledning - For individ og samfunn [Career guidance – For individuals and society]* (pp. 88-109). Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag.

Translated version.

Norwegian Career Competence – Career Skills with a Cultural Baggage

Lead paragraph

In this chapter, I will argue that it is important to examine the relationship between what could be considered as the foundational components of the culture of Norwegian working life, and the concept of career. Career guidance has great potential to be established in Norway, but it is important to be able to understand its limitations. An important point in this chapter is that a vague understanding of the concept of career could be a limitation, simply because a traditional understanding of career is at odds with what is considered as desirable values in Norwegian working life.

Keywords: Norwegian working life, career, collective individualism

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the distinctive nature of Norwegian working life, and how this is significant for our thinking about career in Norway.

There is currently a forceful drive to develop career guidance as part of a framework for lifelong learning in Norway. And in this process there are many issues to consider. As previous chapters of this book call attention to, we would be well-advised to ponder whether career guidance could be a means to exert social control, as Kjærgård demonstrates in his chapter, while Lingås urges us to consider whether career guidance is something that validates an instrumentalist view of humanity. Sultana points out that when working with career one is in fact permitted to be someone who *wants to achieve something* and that wanting to contribute to making the world a better place to live is a valid goal. Career guidance could have the power to help people achieve their true potential and could contribute to substantial transformations for both the individual and society at large – just consider what Frank Parsons accomplished with his Vocational Bureau in Boston in 1905 (Svendsrud & Hagerup, 2011).

But sometimes we cannot see the wood for the trees, or perhaps we can put it this way: Would it be helpful to take a step back and contemplate what place career guidance should have in Norwegian working life and the foundations that career guidance can build on in Norway? Are we so captivated by the potential of career guidance that we sometimes forget to consider what we already have? What place and function does the concept of career have in the complex structure of attitudes, values, and behavior patterns that already characterises Norwegian working culture?

To shed some light on this I will start by introducing the concept of *life-mode centrality* (Plant 2007), to emphasise the fact that one's own values sometimes can get in the way of new insights. I will continue with a presentation of a conventional understanding of career, in order to demonstrate that what we are talking about is an understanding of career as a fundamentally individualistic endeavor. By using the concept of culture as a key element in a description of Norwegian working life, I will emphasise that the Norwegian work culture is largely characterized by collectivism, i.e. by values associated with community. Contrasting career as an individualistic endeavor with the emphasis on community in working life demonstrates that our understanding of the concept of career needs to be rethought for the Norwegian context. This will be explored in this chapter through an exploration of

the career literature and Norwegian cultural values and through a careful consideration of the concept of career and career guidance as a method.

The individualising career project – the only way to live?

An ethnographic study from Denmark introduced the concepts of *life-mode* and *life-mode centrism*, aptly pointing out that sometimes we see only what we *want* to see. Using a life-mode analysis, at least three different approaches to what it meant to be employed were identified: the careerist, the wage-earner, and the entrepreneur (Højrup, 1983, Christensen, 1997, in Plant, 1997; Plant, 2007). For the careerist, most things revolves around work and career, as it is challenging, fulfilling and an arena for personal growth. For the wage-earner, work is first and foremost a means to finance a fulfilling leisure time. For the entrepreneur, work is a state one can enter and exit based on one's needs and wishes, where the scope of work is defined by the project one is involved in at any given time.

These three life-modes have different starting points in their transactions with their surroundings, with each expecting different efforts and promising different rewards. However, the most important contribution of a life-mode analysis is that it highlights how – from the perspective of one's own life-mode and one's conception of what position and function work should have in life – one can be blind to the fact that others think differently – so-called life-mode *centrism* (Plant, 2007). One will see one's neighbour through the lens of one's own circumstances and thus lose sight of the essence of this person's life-mode. Trying to understand the life-mode of one's neighbor based on one's own perspective will contribute to a normative colonisation of his or her life: How could for instance a wage-earner, from the perspective of a careerist, be satisfied with holding the same job throughout his or her working life? How could the careerist, from the perspective of the entrepreneur, live with the notion that in order to be successful, one must adapt to a set of conditions shaped by someone else, conditions that also define what will be rewarded with a promotion? How can the entrepreneur, from the perspective of the wage-earner, get by without the security and predictability of a monthly paycheck?

Life-mode centrism also emphasises that it is not only *people* who have different conceptions of the place and function work should have in life. Also various outside professions that come into contact with people's working life could be centered around their personal understanding of the other's life. As mentors, counselors, teachers, researchers, theorists and politicians with an interest in career, we should perhaps ask ourselves whether our conception of working life as career is *our* life-mode centrism. Might it be that we are colonising alternative conceptualisations of working life in our eagerness to shape a concept of career that encompasses everything. For example, in a definition that I often return to: "... the career concept tries to encapsulate the complexity that arises from people living a life while simultaneously creating a framework for it" (Højdal, Poulsen, Heie, & Callesen, 2009).³ Nothing exists outside of this; based on such an understanding one cannot live without having a career. But I wonder whether positing such an uncritical, hegemonic and universalising definition of "career" and "career guidance" demonstrates at the very least a blind spot, an ethnocentrism, and, at the worst, something offensive to those who subscribe to a different life-modes.

In a national plan to introduce career guidance as part of a lifelong learning system, there is in other words good reason to keep in mind that being employed could have various meanings. Finding one's place in working life is a deeply personal project, regardless of life-mode. It is about who am I, where

³ All translations into English are by the author.

do I belong, what do I want. It is about having an awareness of one's identity, which, *inter alia*, emerges as a result of contextual and cultural influence. This suggests that what we understand as *danning*⁴ is dependent on the values and attitudes that are passed on one's upbringing, education, experience and other forms of socialisation, and on what behavior is rewarded and what is censured.

Regarding Norwegian working life, both institutions and individuals thus represent a way of thinking where new ideas and perspectives can be met with resistance:

When ideas from other cultures are imported to Norway, they will be measured against a more than a hundred-year-old Scandinavian tradition where working life democracy has been institutionalized through customs, legislation, organisational forms, and provisions (Irgens, 2016, p. 336).

Just as Norwegian working life has its traditions and history, so too do the career concept and career guidance.

Career and the career skill perspective

A traditional conception of career has in both the English and Norwegian languages denoted a person's progression up an ordered hierarchy with the aim of acquiring material or symbolic goods such as salary, titles, or status (Thomsen, 2014; Watts, 1998). This has typically taken place within an organisation or profession – in a “neat and orderly” manner (Watts, 1998). How one should go about building career was in many ways embedded in the structure, i.e. in the expectations from organisations and society of how an average employee should navigate the work sphere. The focus of career guidance was on how to identify the individuals and the attributes that could meet these expectations and thus be well-suited for the various tasks society and organisations needed to have solved (D. Hall, Lerner, Barclay, Meltzer, & Stagner, 1980; Holland, 1997; Savickas, 2012). Career scholars of the fifties, sixties, and seventies discussed *why* it was important to have a career, i.e. what motivated it. Career was seen as driven by the individual, where success and attaining one's objectives satisfy individual needs for recognition, security and status.

For instance, according to Donald Super's theory on career development (1963, in Savickas, 2002), the individual goes through five stages in life, from childhood through to old age, where each stage involves certain tasks and goals, roles and opportunities. Getting through the stages acts as a motivation in itself. The child is concerned with learning and with comprehending the world and is subordinate to its elders. Learning, maturing, and aging further one's skills and give the opportunity to take on new roles, to be more independent and to take more responsibility. As an adult, finding one's place in working life and starting a family become important tasks; later, one's focus will be on evolving in that role and increasing one's competence and status. All stages and roles revolve around working life, as the formulation of this theory makes one's choice of profession a realisation of one's self-concept, and the entry into working life becomes the manifestation of that self. From this perspective, personal growth through one's working life is a continuous process to refine the match between self and context.

Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend upon the extent to which the individual finds adequate outlets for his abilities, interests, personality traits, and values; they depend upon

⁴ The word *danning* is a Norwegian/Nordic idiom, connected to the Nordic model of education and describing a process of developing citizenship parallel to education, *utdanning*, see M. Alestalo, S. E. O. Hort, and S. Kuhlne (2009): The Nordic Model : Conditions, Origins, Outcomes, Lessons. In *Hertie School of Governance - Working Paper*, edited by C. Yinzhang, K. Petersen, P. Kettunen, S. Kuhnle. This term is not defined/explained in the original version.

his establishment in a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life in which he can play the kind of role which his growth and exploratory experiences have led him to consider congenial and appropriate (Donald E. Super, 1953, p. 190).

Maslow (1970) is a further example of someone who conceived of self-development as an internally driven process, deeply embedded in the unique being of the individual. Maslow's theory emerged from humanistic psychology. It posits a hierarchy of needs, represented as a pyramid, where the human being has a succession of needs that must be satisfied in a prioritised order: first the physiological needs, such as nourishment and rest, then the safety needs, such as protection and a sense of security. The next level is social needs, such as a sense of belonging and community with others, and then the need for growth, for social recognition and esteem. The final need is about self-actualisation, the optimal level of human existence, which entails reaching one's full potential by being who one really is. Maslow was not primarily concerned with career, but he saw work as a tool to achieve self-actualisation, as it is important to find a project that employs one's abilities in such a way that one's potential can become manifest. Inhibiting this could cause harm to one's psyche:

The people we call "sick" are the people who are not themselves, the people who have built up all sorts of neurotic defenses against being human. ... [But] we are not in a position in which we have nothing to work with. We already have a start; we already have capacities, talents, direction, missions, callings. The job is, if we are to take this model seriously, to help them to be more perfectly what they already are, to be more full, more actualizing, more realizing in fact what they are in potentiality (Maslow, 1971, s. 55).

The person-environment-fit was an important starting point for Frank Parsons' career guidance paradigm (1909, in Brown, 2002), this perspective was also important for other career theorist such as John Holland (1997). The idea is that it is beneficial that each and every one of us finds a place in working life where one's abilities and one's surroundings are in agreement with each other. A further contribution from the theories of Super and Maslow is that natural human needs for growth and advancement motivate the individual in their work and career, and that this is driven by something basic and constant in the human nature, where the hierarchy of needs and the stages in a person's life are predetermined and instinctive.

In other words, one can sum up a classical concept of career as "a sequence of positions occupied by a person during the course of a life-time" (Super & Hall, 1978, p. 334) and as an internal driving force that leads an individual forwards and upwards:

The term "career" has always, to middle class people, had an aura of adventure about it, not only to those who, like the authors of this pair of reviews, make a career of the study of careers, but also to ordinary individuals *in statu pupillari*, in the work force, in the street, and in the home. ... Like it or not, people do "pursue" careers, just as they "engage in" occupations, "get" jobs, "occupy" positions (Super & Hall, 1978, p. 333).

Within career theory, the traditional career is now considered to be replaced by a conception of career that takes into account that life is complex, and that all areas of life, all roles and challenges, impact one's career. In addition to the current conception of career attempting to incorporate a greater complexity, career also takes place in new settings. This puts new demands on the individual as working life no longer has room for neat and tidy progression. The structures creating order are no longer there: the hierarchical institutions, lifelong employment and a clear division of roles based on gender, race, and background are all outmoded (Hall, 1996; Watts, 1998). The structures of working life are disintegrating, so in addition to motivation one needs competence and "career smartness",

creativity and flexibility – both physically and mentally (Hall, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). In other words, the demands on individual capabilities are greater than ever.

The need for continuous learning and adaptation throughout a career also creates a need for a new form of career learning: If the traditional professions and institutions no longer are the pillars of working life that they once were, what competence is needed to enter into working life today, and – equally importantly – to be allowed to stay there? The recently emerging career learning perspective associated with the development of *career management skills* (CMS) emphasises meta-competences in addition to specialised professional competence. Translated into our communal Scandinavian language, we would call this perspective *karrierekompetanse* (Thomsen, 2014):

CMS [*karrierekompetanse*] refer to a range of competences which provide structured ways for individuals and groups to gather, analyse, synthesise and organise self, educational and occupational information, as well as the skills to make and implement decisions and transitions (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network, 2012).

There is much interest in this perspective in Norway, and scholars in this field recommend that Norwegian authorities take this into consideration in the further development of a comprehensive Norwegian system for career guidance (NOU 2016: 7, 2016). That said, the interest in and piloting of CMS internationally has shown that career competence is contextually dependent, and that successful career strategies in one country might be irrelevant or ineffective in another (Hooley, Watts, Sultana, & Neary, 2013; Sultana, 2012).

It is not my contention that Norwegian working life is a sheltered utopia in an otherwise slightly chaotic, global, postmodern working life; these changes are happening in Norway as well. But even so, there are powerful forces in our working life that uphold the foundational structures and principles that are seen as important and defining for Norwegian work culture, principles that are up for debate in cases such as the fathers' quota of the parental leave scheme, sick pay, and regulations for employment. The welfare state, which in Norway rests on the cultural conception that the collective has a responsibility for the individual, has in many ways been a break on some of these changes and contributed to a continuation of traditional structures and principles in the Norwegian version of postmodern working life. It is within this culture that career guidance must find its place.

Culture as context

Culture is the term we use to describe what we have in common as a society. Theories of culture will typically say that it has three characteristics: Culture is acquired and not innate; the different aspects of a culture are interdependent in such a way that an interaction with one cultural phenomenon creates reverberations through to other phenomena in the same culture; and culture is a phenomenon shared between its members and defines the what constitutes a group (Hall, 1976). When it comes to precisely what culture generates in terms of conceptions, beliefs, customs, rituals, etc., one example could be:

Culture is a system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting. ... A society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members (Goodenough, 1971, p. 41, in Fischer & Sortland, 2001, p. 154).

This system of meaning could be termed *homology* and constitutes a nucleus of conceptions or behaviors that are considered characteristic and defining for an ethnic group, a people, or a nation (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, in Krange & Øia, 2005). Cultural context entails in other words that a certain set of expectations are placed on the individual; some things will be right and some things will be wrong.

What is right and what is wrong is learned through experience, and the extent to which one can accommodate oneself to this defines whether one is “within” or “without” the culture. In a work-related context, we find notions of the “typical employee”, meaning that there is a shared understanding of what behavior, actions, and choices that are normal and correct when working, and how this should be rewarded (Iversen, 2006). So, one wonders, what is it that characterises our work culture? What does it mean to be a typical Norwegian employee?

A typical employee in Norway is attuned to, among other things, the regulatory framework and collective agreements of Norwegian working life, which is characterised by the understanding that shared constraints equal individual freedoms. This is a core Norwegian value. Put differently: Contributing – through taxation, or the ballot box – to communal arrangements such as collective bargaining rights, a right to education, a right to paid holidays, and the financing of various benefits is desirable as it makes it possible for more people to use their opportunities to realise more of their potential – including those people who have just what they need, but no more. On this basis, Hernes and Hippe (2007) conclude that a common denominator in Norwegian working and social life is the binary concept of *collective individualism*. Collectivism and individualism are concepts that normally are considered to be complete opposites, and when used to describe people, they are typically defined as in Hartung, Fouad, Leong, and Hardin (2010):

- Individualistic: One is independent and autonomous, working to meet one’s own needs, trusting in one’s abilities, wanting to be seen as separate from others.
- Collectivistic: One is dependent on others, working to uphold traditions, valuing conformity, living by in-group norms, placing in-group goals over personal goals, needs, and desires.

Hofstede and Bureid (1993, p. 65) also have a definition regarding individualistic and collectivistic societies:

Individualism is found in societies where ties between individuals are loose – everyone is expected to take care of themselves and their closest family. The antithesis to individualism, *collectivism*, is found in societies where from birth, people are incorporated into robust groups with strong internal solidarity, which will continue to protect its members throughout their lives, in return for unconditional loyalty.

Rather than being somewhere halfway between individualistic and collectivistic, striking a balance between the needs of the individual and those of the group, the contention is that Norwegian work culture is fully collectivistic and fully individualistic all at the same time. One is independent and autonomous and also dependent on others, one works to meet one’s own needs and also to achieve the goals of the group. How was this brought about? In the following I will take you on a journey back in time, examining some key events in Norwegian labor history and how they have contributed to this set of cultural values.

The Protestant work ethic

The starting point in an analysis of the Norwegian worker is the Protestant work ethic, which is premised on work typically being defined as performing actions to accomplish certain goals. But could work be enjoyable, or must it spring from compulsion or necessity to be defined as work? In various languages, words that translate into “work” have original meanings of “torture” or “slavery”. The ancient Greeks also held that work, when it *had to* be done, was of lesser worth, whereas volitional and unforced labor was noble (Svendsen, 2011).

The advent of Christianity altered this conception of work. After eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, humanity was condemned to a life in the cold outside the Garden of

Eden, with toilsome lives, giving birth with painful labor, struggling to survive: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Genesis 3:19). But work also gained new value, namely man’s *duty* to work in order to serve God. This notion gained ground after the Reformation with Martin Luther’s principle of work as a *calling*: The best way to serve God was to dedicate oneself to one’s vocation. Luther also held that all work – be it domestic, in the fields, or in commerce – was equally commendable, and that being successful, in all modesty, was a sign of how highly one valued the Lord. However, to rise in the ranks was a revolt against God’s divine order, and thus not desirable. Activities that were not work were seen as rather dubious (Svendsen, 2011). This is part of the background of the Protestant work ethic, integral to the Christian heritage also in Norway (Dølvik, 2007). In addition to being a necessity, everyone had a duty to work, and one labored for something else than personal gain.⁵

A history of community

The dissolution of the union with Denmark in 1814 was a landmark event in the story of Norwegian working and social life. The ideological and political currents in Europe that made emancipation from Denmark a reality also contributed to a general belief that the time had come for the people to gain their freedom, to rise up and participate in society. Governments in the infant Norwegian state were by and large left-leaning and hungry for reform, and they wanted progress – in opposition to their conservative counterparts in the old upper and landed classes (Kjeldstadli, Helle, Kjeldstadli, Lange, & Sogner, 2005).

One way to improve their circumstances was through edification, education, and labor. As political activist Marcus Thrane wrote in his petition to the king: “No truly advantageous and beneficial reform will be possible lest the people rise up in enlightenment; but with increasing enlightenment, every fortuitous reform will come by itself” (p. 14). The Protestant work ethic gave meaning to labor above and beyond securing temporal sustenance in that it was a service to God, but now working and being a wage earner also meant the promise of rising from misery and subjugation. Thrane (1957) saw this as particularly important for the propertyless, the former classes of *husmenn* (tenant farmers) and *leilendinger* (leaseholders). Everyone could take part in the efforts to build a new nation state with its own economy, legislation, system and civil servants, inspired by Romantic nationalist ideas of the authentically Norwegian and by the political struggle for self-determination and equality. At this time, a new set of values are associated with working, dismantling class differences, innate poverty, and privileges, as the new social structure provided some new opportunities for everyone. Work can lead to equality.

Industrialisation

However, will increasing personal freedom undermine the collective? In the case of the Norwegian working life, some concurrent factors may have contributed to a unique Norwegian labor unity: the dominant social discourse that revolved around cultivating the authentically Norwegian, a sense of fellowship from a new, rough-and-ready, truly Norwegian identity, a generally left-leaning and progressive political landscape responsive to new ideas, in a period when industrial growth attracted a large number of people.

Industrialisation in Norway brought with it a whole new array of challenges. The Norwegian poverty amendment program for the poor was based on the principle that benefits never should be seen as more tempting than paid work and was thus held on a bare minimum (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). So

⁵ See also the last chapter in this book by Kjærgård, “Work, calling and career guidance in the 21. Century”, for a supplementary discussion.

one had to work, the question was where and with what. Because of the massive influx to cities and industrial hubs also in other countries, paradigms of vocational counselling emerged, in Germany in the mid-1800s and the career guidance paradigm in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century. The stated goal was to assist the individual in finding their place in society through participation in working life (Plant & Kjærgård, 2016; Savickas, 2008). Also, in Norway, the benefits of public efforts to give guidance in a new and complex working life at the beginning of the twentieth century were recognised. As an example, at the public employment service (*Arbeidsformidlingen*) in Oslo, a division was set up that used psychometrics as a method for matching people and jobs (Fischer & Sortland, 2001). Ensuring participation in working life and the opportunity to provide for oneself and one's family was considered an important goal, and the public employment services in all major cities soon offered vocational guidance as part of their activities (NOU 2016: 7, 2016).

The growing work force, migration to the cities, and the lack of functional and comprehensive social programs had a disorganising effect. Workplaces were often dangerous, and workers were poorly paid and had few rights. There was much unrest (Mostue et al., 1988). But out of this situation grew a strong tradition for organising in unions, for both workers and employers. When organised in groups with a common cause, their demands had a greater impact. Labor unions benefited from the zeitgeist that also created communism and left-leaning governments and had thus a great impact. Legislation regulating working conditions, hours, holidays, wages, and sick pay was introduced in rapid succession during the first decades of industrialisation in Norway, culminating in the first comprehensive worker protection law in Norway in 1936. A common system would ensure that the state allocated rights, duties, and privileges fairly. Everyone who had employment and was organised, either through a union or the tax system, could now enjoy a safer workplace environment, regulated hours and employment, holidays, unemployment benefits, and sick pay (Dølvik, 2007; Wahl, 1999). Being employed thus meant safety, security, and strength in community.

One for all ...

Cooperation would also become integral to the efforts to implement a system for negotiations in the Norwegian employment structure. The employers were also organised, and they represented a strong conservative force in society. Through legislation, the state was made a guarantor for rights and benefits, and strict guidelines were introduced to regulate the right to strike and how conflicts in working life should be resolved. But cooperation between employees and employers in individual cases was challenging, and there was a need for a common framework for negotiations. This was the background for the two sides of industry entering into the Basic Agreement (*Hovedavtalen*) in 1935, which is still in effect. This was the parties' own agreement, committing them to take part in and contribute to the cooperation (Dølvik, 2013), thus inaugurating a period of class collaboration. The period of reconstruction after the Second World War, with social democracy, a community spirit, and political bipartisanship, is seen as a time when things were working particularly well and everyone cooperated in Norway (Wahl, 2009).

Toward the end of this golden era, two things happened that would consolidate the principle that cooperation is also connected to individual rights in Norwegian working life: the National Insurance Act (*folketrygdløven*) of 1967; and the LO/NAF collaborative project of 1962–1970. Prior to the National Insurance Act, Norway had legislation that guaranteed certain isolated benefits and insurance arrangements, but the new act encompassed all workers, binding them in a cross-generational pension contract where the governing principle is that those who work shall provide for those who cannot. Payments should be a function of the sum total of the premium paid. In this universal model, all workers stand in solidarity with the rest of the citizens. The traditional career logic suggested that upward progression consolidates one's position and leads to more working life

security. But the foundational principle of the National Insurance Act was that security came from a lifetime of working life participation, as one's pension was calculated based on the "all-years-rule". This means that not only one's best years, but *all* the years one had accumulated retirement benefits through employment, should add to one's pension (Rikstrygdeverket [the National Insurance Administration], 1997).

The second major event, the LO/NAF collaborative project of 1962–1970, adopted the principle of joint responsibility for good workplaces for both employees, managers, and the government. This project was initiated as the workers' union, LO (*Landsorganisasjonen*, The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), worried about the health of industrial workers due to more signs of wear and tear injuries. For their part, the employers' organisation, NAF (*Norsk Arbeidsgiverforening*, The Norwegian Employers' Confederation), was worried about dwindling productivity (Thorsrud & Emery, 1970). The starting point of this project would be theories of alienation, building on the Marxist idea that the fragmentation of labor into smaller and more routine tasks is unfortunate. The worker loses sight of the bigger picture and will feel less pride and joy in their contribution, thus lowering their motivation and endurance (Hernes, 2012). In preparation for the project, the research team formulated – on the basis of the current relevant literature – a set of psychological requirements for how, in their opinion, the workplace should be organised (Thorsrud & Emery, 1970, p. 19):

1. The need for a job description that requires abilities beyond sheer endurance, and that entails a certain amount of variation, even if that would not necessarily mean constantly getting new tasks
2. The need to have the opportunity for learning through one's work and to continue learning
3. The need to be able to make decisions, at the least within a limited area one can call one's own
4. The need for respect, at the least a certain degree of interpersonal support and recognition in the workplace
5. The need to see the interdependence between one's work and society at large, at the least so that one can see some connection between what one accomplishes through one's labor and that which is considered useful or valuable
6. The need to see that one's efforts are compatible with a future one desires, but which would not automatically lead to a promotion

Results from test projects showed an increase in both productivity and well-being (Thorsrud & Emery, 1970). The results from the pilots had a large impact and contributed towards making the principles they were based on the framework for the Working Environment Act (*arbeidsmiljøloven*) of 1977. They have remained part of the act until this day. The purpose of the act is to ensure a working environment that, in addition to being healthy, also should be meaningful.

On matters of participation, personal development, and workplace accommodations, section 4-2 of the act states that "arrangements shall be made to enable the employee's professional and personal development through his or her work, (...) employees shall as far as possible be given the opportunity for variation and for the awareness of the relationship between individual assignments"⁶ (Working Environment Act, 2005).

According to the psychological workplace requirements, work should be interesting, it should lead to personal growth and integrity, and it should be organised in such a way as to ensure this. In other words, finding dignity, recognition, and growth through work should be possible for everyone, and

⁶ Translated by The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (*Arbeidstilsynet*).

the conditions for a satisfying working life must be embedded in the structural context of one's work, regardless of position in the hierarchy. All needs – from the bottom to the top of the hierarchy, from security to companionship and recognition – should thus be covered.

The structures that have been established in Norwegian working life through legislation and agreements are thus imbued with the understanding that limitations on the collective equals freedom for the individual. It is not a question of balancing individual needs against the collective, they come together in one and the same project.

I would summarise the essence of Norwegian work culture as a system where the collective, in the form of a social safety net and legislation that ensures personal growth and integrity, offers an attractive arena for participation. A cultural value would be that finding a way to enter into this system and being allowed to stay there is a goal in and of itself. The experience of success as a gateway to security and recognition in working life will from this perspective become a personal need. Those who find success to be a personal necessity are thus set aside from the rest and no longer part of the collective. In short, the Norwegian model is founded on a 150-year-long history of the individual being empowered through the collective. We are thus not talking about a purely individualistic culture, considering the strong sense of community, but also not a purely collectivistic culture, considering the strength of individual rights.

That said, the individualism-collectivism dimension is in the literature perceived as multi-dimensional, with, for instance, a vertical and a horizontal dimension (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998, in Hartung et al., 2010). The horizontal dimension favors equality, the vertical differences and hierarchy. This means that vertical individualism considers inequality and competition to be resources, and that the world encourages positioning and competition because one sees oneself as independent and distinct. Horizontal individualism implies seeing oneself as independent, but with the same status and access to resources as others. The same logic applies to horizontal and vertical collectivism. As member of a group, a vertical collectivistic set of values would mean in-group classification according to rank, differences in status, and access to resources, and one will either try to dominate or else submit. Conversely, within a value system based on horizontal collectivism, all members of the group are equal and mutually dependent on each other.

Collective individualism could be seen as a cultural value that entails constant transaction: One must give to receive. Ideals of equal distribution of rights and privileges, and of the importance of integrity, are suggestive of the horizontal dimension of individualism and collectivism. If we assume dichotomy, horizontal-'ism' would reject the idea that any member of the group is of greater worth or has a right to elevate themselves above anyone else. I would suggest that this is part of the reason why the career concept, in its traditional understanding, is an anomaly in Norway, considering that a disposition for individualism and having a career carries the connotations of thinking that one is better than one's neighbor.

... All for one?

But community is history, one could object, after neoliberalism, the market economy, the liberation of women and the individual, and the booming eighties? In a globalised, knowledge-based, precarious world where structures are less visible, the strength of community cannot possibly be what it once was?

According to Dølvik, Hernes, and Hippe, we need not look further than to our nearest NAV-office (*Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen*, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) to realize that

solidarity within working life has prevailed and will continue to do so in Norwegian society. Free market capitalism, neoliberalism, women's lib, the boom in higher education – the overall focus on individualism, freedom, and the right to make one's own choices – were powerful forces that fundamentally upended society during the eighties and nineties. But, the welfare model still lives on. Two main factors could explain this: Rather than letting the market take full control and completely abandon a planned economy, Norwegian policymakers adopted the third way of steering the economic policy more in the direction of "politics with markets, not against" (Dølvik, 2007, p. 19). This meant giving more freedom and privileges to businesses, but also, through more taxation and supervision, greater responsibility. Thus, revenues from the private sector could help finance the welfare model. The second important reason why welfare models have strengthened their position is the will of the people. The collective experience of the Norwegian work force with this system is largely good, and positive experiences from being part of a public safety net are passed down through generations. The people want it, and not even free market enthusiasts among politicians dare take it away. The question is not *whether* there should be welfare, but how it should be done (Hernes & Hippe, 2007).

A basic principle of the current welfare model is the so-called *arbeidslinja* (the "working policy") – the idea that it's needs to be economically favorable to work, that being employed is meaningful beyond the work itself as one is part of something bigger than oneself and contributes to the greater good. An important aspect of the working policy is the idea that continuing to work, even after illness or injury, will have beneficial effects on one's health, because one is *in*, one takes part. If one's capacity is reduced due to illness, personalised adjustments in the workplace environment could facilitate participation and thus contribute to one being able to maintain one's remaining health and ability to work. By finding the balance between health and ill-health one can keep on working, perhaps part-time, and thus both the mental and the physical health are sustained (Thorsen, 2006; Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). The working policy is founded on the "less eligibility principle" that benefits should be the least appealing alternative, on the social democratic creed that work is both a right and a duty for all, and on the Protestant work ethic (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012, p. 18–19). That said, the working policy is not a strictly Norwegian invention: The welfare-to-work principle originated in the US of the eighties, and is pervasive in labor market policies in the entire Western world today. This principle is often referred to as "workfare", contrasting it to welfare, as focus is on continued participation in working life rather than public support (Wahl, 2009, p. 195). Thus the working policy, in addition to having emerged from the Norwegian model, can also trace its DNA back to the free market ideology that we associate with the eighties in general and the USA in particular. Because of the strong emphasis on the advantages of being employed, the working policy in Norway has come under criticism for placing all the responsibility on the individual, to heap blame on those who are unable to work by decreasing their benefits and pressuring them to seek employment (Wahl, 2009; Wergeland, 2008).

Critics of the working policy claim that a restructuring of NAV, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, has led to an unfavorable individualisation of its clients (Øvrelid, 2011). When every measure is tailored to the individual, everything NAV has to offer will depend almost entirely on personal resources and abilities. Given this emphasis on individual factors, it becomes harder to find fellowship in the collective, which is lost. Career guidance will become more and more important in the NAV system, and NAV is one of the most important institutions in the Norwegian partnership for career guidance (NOU 2016: 7, 2016). If my contention holds, that the traditional understanding of career is associated with a kind of individualism that makes self-assertion a prerequisite for self-preservation, and, additionally, that this is a way of presenting oneself that is frowned upon in a

community-oriented working life, it begs the question: How will potential clients of a career guidance service look upon this offer?

Can the concepts of career and career guidance – in light of a traditional conceptualisation of career as an essentially individual project – be construed as something that further individualises and isolates the clients, even if the intention were to help the client back into the safety net of the collective? Is the understanding of career as a concept that encompasses the complexity of life unique to *us*, to me and to you who read these lines, we who have studied all this?

Let's make career "greit"⁷ again

Considering the road ahead for career guidance in Norway, I would sum up by saying that it is important, going forward, to keep in mind that in Norway, the career concept is not only alien but for some also alienating. It will take time before people in general feel that discussing career is not a matter of getting ahead, and that they are comfortable using the word to describe their completely adequate working life. A Norwegian career concept can be founded on a set of values that says that transactions between the individual and the collective should be part of one's career, be they a strategic use of the opportunities offered by the welfare state or any other balance between personal needs and contextual opportunities and requirements. Lifelong learning can also be an aspect of goals that do not necessarily entail advancement. When advertising the long-term benefits of a career project in a Norwegian context, it is worth reflecting on whether this is balanced against the long tradition in Norwegian culture of seeing oneself as part of a bigger picture – as an individual, but with strong ties to one's group, which gives both responsibility and freedom, but without the sharp elbows.

Given this analysis, career competence could entail being mindful of the fact that working on one's own personal career project is situated in the context of a set of expectations: The individual should expect something from society, and society should expect something from the individual. But what? It is not about the best achievements, but about the *person's* best achievements. Coming into a position where one can participate does not mean that one is winning, it is a goal in itself. In other words, a Norwegian career skill is having the ability to find out what is "good enough". Some might sniff at this, as going for what is "good enough" could be seen as settling for something less than optimal. "Good enough" is for instance a core element in Gottfredson's (2002) theory of why and how young people adjust their self-image and their understanding of their opportunities when they make career decisions, and according to Gottfredson, "good enough" is a compromise between individual and context. It is about what is possible in the here and now – even if the young career starter is talented and could have aimed higher and accomplished more, were it not for contextual factors. But it is worth noting that Gottfredson is just another theoretician who discusses career on the basis of a traditional understanding of career guidance, where aiming high is a core principle.

But in our context, "good enough" is not a question of making compromises in terms of what one *could* have achieved, it is rather about being able to see oneself as equal among equals, because this is where the good life will be found for most of us. To quote Per Fugelli (2015)⁸:

⁷ Norwegian *greit* means 'acceptable', 'adequate', 'okay', and we use it all the time. It sounds more or less like *great*.

⁸ Translation note: Per Fugelli (1943 – 2017) was a Norwegian professor of socialized medicine, arguing that the modern society's pressure on individuals affected well-being, often advocating 'normality' and 'mediocrity' and the positivity of ordinary lives.

The average life project is beautiful and brave and demanding and rewarding enough. We don't need a high-performance culture that runs faster and higher and stronger in front of us with a portrait of Superman, demanding: Come, this is your self-image in which you must mold yourself not to be a deviant. ... The narrow-minded high-performance culture creates a schism between winners and losers, between the premiers and the masses, between the iron-willed and the 'invertebrates', between the superhuman and the sub-human. The ideal in such a culture is ambition, achievement, perfection – unlimited. Become number one – preferably in the entire world.

This extreme objective hurts both the human and the social health in many ways.

...

It is in everyday life, on a Wednesday, we make a good enough gravy, do a good enough job, have good enough sex, have a good enough self-image – despite our flaws and faults, we do our best to care for our flock. It is this Wednesday life that deserves our admiration, this Wednesday person that we should celebrate. This is where we are, almost all of us, most of the time, in the good enough, the reasonably well. This is where we must find well-being and build our self-images.

Career in Norway is simply about being, about the solutions people in general use to get by, and about one's working life transactions of efforts and rewards with one's surroundings. If career guidance is to become a useful tool in the Norwegian welfare model, the concept of career must be used, cultivated, and incorporated into the Norwegian work culture so that in the future it will connote the usual, the familiar, and the normal.

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Paper 2

Bakke, I. B. (2020). The 'idea of career' and 'a welfare state of mind': on the Nordic model for welfare and career. In E. H. Haug, T. Hooley, J. Kettunen and R. Thomsen (Eds.), *Career and Career Guidance in the Nordic Countries* (pp. 23-36) Brill: Leiden.

2. THE 'IDEA OF CAREER' AND 'A WELFARE STATE OF MIND': ON THE NORDIC MODEL FOR WELFARE AND CAREER

ABSTRACT

While they are independent states, the Nordic countries have common features. As well as democracy and a mixed economy, a key feature is their social democratic welfare states, often referred to as the 'Nordic model' where equality and universalism have guided policymaking. The model and Nordic culture are closely connected. In this chapter, I argue that work, and therefore career, are central concerns in the Nordic model and Nordic culture, and that welfare is organised to ensure maximum participation in work and equal access to employment. I then explore how the centrality of work frames the concept of 'career'.

INTRODUCTION

The ideology of the social democratic welfare model that underpins the Nordic political economy shapes the relationship between the people and the state and informs thinking about the nature of career in the Nordic countries. Career is often considered to operate in the interface between the individual and the state and so career is a key place where this uniquely Nordic relationship unfolds and develops.

PUTTING NORDIC INTO PERSPECTIVE

Jalava (2013, p. 258) cautions that 'whoever enters the domain of historical and historiographical regions should be aware of venturing into a vague and oscillating space, which offers no steady ground under one's feet'. Keeping this in mind I will proceed with care as I attempt to put the concept of *Nordic* into perspective.

The Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland have, as is discussed throughout this book, obvious similarities that often make it useful to consider them together. But, the heterogeneity of the Nordic countries, their different cultures, different 'styles' and national characteristics are evident with a closer look. The ambiguity of the cross-regional identity co-existing with clear national differences comes from a history of interaction and interdependence, but also one of conflict and striving for domination, distinctiveness and independence (Berntzen, 2017).

A part of the story of the Nordic is that the countries have been joined together under various constellations, starting with the Kalmar union in 1397. These constellations were characterised by various degrees of voluntariness, dependency and duration, but they resulted in a tight network of economic, social, cultural and political exchange since the Early Middle Ages (Jalava, 2013).

The way in which this history has been written has served a range of narrative purposes, often supporting the distinctiveness of the nation-states rather than highlighting the intertwined history of the region (Berger, 2016). For example, in light of a romantic nationalism and an emancipatory ideology, the new Norwegian nation state created after the ending of the unions with Denmark and later Sweden, nurtured, developed and remembered what was considered uniquely Norwegian (Bakke, 2018) at the cost of the history of Danish rule, commonly referred to as the 'Dark Ages' (Berger, 2016).

This period of co-dependency ended with the dissolving of the formal unions between Norway and Denmark in 1814, and later the dissolution of Norway's subsequent union with Sweden in 1905, the unions between Finland and Russia in 1917 and Denmark and Iceland in 1944. It was from this point, that the Nordic region became five separate and independent countries, with the addition of the self-governed territories of the Faroe Islands, Åland and Greenland (Berntzen, 2017, Alexander, Holm, Hansen & Motzfeldt Vahl, 2020 *in this volume*). Important concerns for these new states were cultural, economic and ideological nation building and solidifying the institutions and systems needed to operate the state. For these five countries, the high level of activity in legislative work was concurrent, and happened under the influence of major international events. Common for all countries was the ideological influence from Germany, which had introduced large-scale social insurance schemes during the 1880s. This inspired the Nordic states to develop and pass similar laws. The similarities in the outcome of the nation-building processes of the respective Nordic countries were a consequence of the concurrent timing rather than because of a shared Nordic agenda (Alestalo, Hort, & Kuhlne, 2009).

However, the common history, the common situation of being states in development, and geographical similarities due to being situated in the global north did serve as a basis for a sense of community. Even though

Nordicity as a meso-regional identity was built into what it meant to be a Dane, Swede, Norwegian, Finn or Icelander rather than being an overall concept, there was a clear Nordic identity in the region. This identity can be understood as commonality and *Nordic-ness*. Allied to these cultural and ideological elements of Nordicity was a more pragmatic understanding of the benefit of cooperation and coordination in matters posing similar or common challenges (Jalava, 2013).

The need for cooperation led to the establishment of the Nordic council as an inter-parliamentary body, the joint labor market and the harmonisation of social security laws in the fifties. This, and the co-occurrence of similar innovative legislation gave the Nordic countries status as the ‘avant-garde of modernity’ in the period from ca 1945 to ca 1990. This was partly an intentional, ideological strategy, demarcating the Nordic as different from Europe: a democratic, protestant, progressive and egalitarian North against a catholic, conservative and capitalist Europe, as well as the communist eastern bloc (Jalava, 2013). This was intended to serve as a mobilising vision and to engender cohesion (Ryner, 2007).

Marklund (2017) argues that since the 1950s, the Nordic countries have been actively building a ‘brand’ as a base for cultural diplomacy, taking advantage of positive international interest in their economic and social policies and ability to combine the interests of capital and labour in a democratic and efficient way (see Hooley, 2020 *in this volume*). The book *Freedom and Welfare* (Nelson, 1953) published by the Nordic council addressed current trends, issues and policies of the Nordic countries at this time, establishing the welfare state as the common ground for Nordic cultural diplomacy, and a key part of the external image and the common Nordic identity. At the same time, the Nordic countries competed for attention, especially from the US (Marklund, 2017), and chose different strategies for international cooperation, with Norway and Iceland not entering the European union, and Sweden and Finland not entering NATO (Iso-Markku, 2018).

In other words, as well as being a description of tangible co-operation between real countries, the concept of ‘Nordic’ is also a phenomenon of discourse constructed and reproduced to serve diverse purposes. As such, the geographically specific set of structures that comprise the Nordic region create a socio-spatial unit where the everyday life of citizens are influenced in concrete ways (Jalava, 2013) by the policies and practices of the governments, and cross-national ideology. The identity of Nordic is, in other words, both pragmatic and ideological.

In the following sections in this chapter, I will focus on the Nordic model for welfare as a cross-national Nordic feature and important to the ‘avant-garde’ of the Nordic countries. I will look at the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as concept. The rationale for doing this is that in addition to being a type of government, welfare model ideology is a set of beliefs, values and opinions about how the state should work and what it should do for society. In that respect, because of the pervasiveness of the model, the ideological base is also a part of a shared culture, where culture can be understood as ‘the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category from others’ (Hofstede, 1984, p. 21). In that respect, the collective programming from the Nordic welfare model make up a part of the social structures influencing the lives of the Nordic population.

THE CONTEXT OF THE NORDIC MODEL FOR WELFARE

One assumption about culture as collective programming, is that it works as tacit, internalised knowledge. For Nordic citizens, understanding the Nordic model and expressing the specifics of it can be difficult, as it is just ‘there’, fostering implicit expectations about how systems work after generations of experience with them (Dølvik, 2007). The Nordic model can be thought of as constituting a cultural field in a Bourdieusian understanding of culture (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2010), a playing ground defined by a certain system and a certain set of rules: the doxa. The process of internalising the doxa and the system, and the actor’s behaviour navigating this field, is understood through Bourdieu’s analytical tools as the development of the habitus. In the following sections, I will look at research on the Nordic welfare model to clarify what it is, how the cultural field is constituted and how the doxa operate in order to influence habitus, particularly as this relates to individuals’ understandings of career.

The various local specificities of what is considered the Nordic model for welfare makes the concept ‘broad, vague and ambiguous’ (Alestalo et al., 2009, p. 2). Kvist, Fritzell, Hvinden & Kangas (2012) would even claim that there is no generally accepted definition of welfare. But, while I recognise a level of conceptual ambiguity, I believe that it is helpful to adopt Johannson’s (2001) definition of welfare as having command over the resources required to live a good or decent life. More specifically, it can be defined as having what one feels is needed ‘in terms of money, possessions, knowledge, psychological and physical energy, social relations, security and so on by means of which the individual can control and consciously direct her conditions of life’ (Johannson, 1970, p. 25, as cited in Kvist et al., 2012, p. 2).

An individual’s standard of living, and hence the concept of welfare, is multidimensional. ‘What is needed’ will vary, and is dependent on both individual and context, but the concepts of welfare relate to the experience of not having to struggle to experience a sense of security and comfort. It is a complex mosaic made up of many factors that are easy to recognise but not as easy to directly define, as they are explicitly actor oriented, interrelated, non-

comparable, and variable (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007). Individuals' appraisals of material and intangible resources will vary, and collective resources will be important in different phases of one's life. Even more importantly, as actors operate in contexts and systems, conditions will promote or constrain individual agency variably among different groups, for instance stratifying them by socioeconomic factors.

The influence of politics on these enabling or constraining factors and how they are present in peoples' lives make them an issue of politics and ideology, for instance policies emphasising equal opportunities and equal access to education and welfare rights (Kvist et al., 2012). In an overall pattern of welfare, governmental policies and systems play an important role, and social factors like cultural influence, history, socioeconomic factors, urbanity, rurality, and societal players like organisations, unions and employers as well as the individual itself, co-determine patterns of welfare. 'What is needed' is not the same for the have and the have-nots, those in a job or in education, people living in an urban context or on the northern coast. Similarly, in the Nordic countries, the welfare model and the ideology underlying it will only be one factor in the complexity that make up a nation's character.

The welfare model concerns the extent to which politics influences these factors by systematically affecting the living conditions of citizens. It is important to note that models and ideologies as used in this article are understood as conceptual frameworks, to analyse and organise ideas. Weberian ideal types, abstractions that describe the most prominent features of a case, and how these ideal models describe the actual living context can always be contested (Ryner, 2007).

However, the extent to which states do or do not assume responsibility and give support for a citizen's level of wellbeing is considered one of the defining features of welfare states. Welfare states are not necessarily designed, but rather emerge from political debate and compromise and through the struggles of a range of different social actors. The recognition that welfare states are politically and culturally situated helps to explain the differences that exist between the Nordic countries which all espouse that they have a 'Nordic welfare state'.

One important distinction between welfare regimes highlighted by Esping-Andersen (1990) is how far they let economic markets operate and how far they are planned and managed directly by government. Esping-Andersen (1990) defined three clusters of welfare states, and argued that to do this, it is important to 'begin with a set of criteria that define their role in society' (p.32). All the three modes of welfare operate in the tripartite relationship between the state, the market and the family, but balance their importance or responsibility for the welfare of individuals in different ways (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007).

Esping-Andersen's (1990) first cluster of welfare states is the 'liberal' welfare state, typified by means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers and social insurance plans which mainly support the low-income, working class and state dependents. US, Canada and Australia are archetypical examples. Entitlement is associated with stigma, and the *less* needy can benefit from private but subsidised, market-based welfare schemes. This type of welfare encourages a market economy, and results in further stratification of social classes.

The second cluster is the 'conservative, corporatist' welfare state. This is exemplified by Austria, France, Germany and Italy and has traditionally not been preoccupied with market efficiency and commodification. Redistribution has not been an issue, as rights have traditionally been attached to status and class, for example by being entirely income based. As these regimes have developed under strong influence from the church, welfare benefits emphasise traditional family values. Support of women's status as workers through day care and similar family services is limited, and the state 'will only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted' (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27).

The third cluster is called the 'social democratic' type, and it is here we find the Nordic countries (Alestalo et al., 2009). The dominant force behind social reform was social democracy, and in these countries, the principles of universalism and de-commodification of social rights would include all citizens in the states' welfare regimes. The social democrats opposed the idea of differences between classes and dualism between market and state, and emphasised equality 'of the highest standard' (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27). Services and benefits would have to accommodate both the high standards of the middle class and guarantee the same quality of rights to the workers, for example by ensuring a relatively generous minimum benefit as basis, and calculate additional benefits based on past income.

Like the German welfare model, the objective of policies was to render social citizenship entitlements compatible with economic stability and international economic competitiveness (Ryner, 2007). However, in the German model the strategy was to continue class stratification to maintain social order (Esping-Andersen, 2009). For the regimes in the social democratic cluster, a levelling between societal classes is another important ideological principle with government and legislation in the fields of employment, education, healthcare and social matters frequently aimed at securing equal rights and opportunities.

By ensuring free education, universally affordable healthcare, family benefits and a comprehensive system of social security covering the loss of income during unemployment, sickness and retirement, the Nordic countries are considered progressive and work to reduce inequalities in individuals' chances to find a job, form a family and excel in society (Alestalo et al., 2009; Antikainen, 2006; Kvist et al., 2012). In that sense, in the Nordic model the states have assumed a higher degree of responsibility for individual welfare than in other clusters (Fritzell &

Lundberg, 2007) For example, in addition to equality, Alestalo et al., (2009, pp. 2-4) summarise the main characteristics of the Nordic model as stateness and universalism.

Stateness concerns the notion that the state is present in most, if not all welfare arrangements, and thus in individuals' lives. Compared to the liberal and the conservative welfare states, the Nordic states extend into the spheres of the market and the family. For instance for families, the low cost and easy access to care for children and elderly, makes it possible for women to work. Stateness implies a closer relationship between the people and the state.

Universalism implies that services and benefits cover all, as an important realisation was that the risk of injuries and precariousness is also universal. Universalism is a central idea in the social democratic project. Equality complements universalism as welfare schemes are designed to provide equal opportunities and access to welfare for all. In the example of parental benefits, equality is affected because gender differences will play less of a role in the economics of the family, when both men and women can qualify for parental leave and benefits. However, outcomes might be different, as benefits are calculated on the basis of past income.

As such, in the welfare model, non-poverty means not only sustaining a basic standard of living and as such diminishing the worry about money, but it is also about the ability to function, make choices and fulfil individual potential – as in wanting both fulltime employment *and* family. This means that instead of securing sustenance by minimum measures when problems arise, the focus is on prevention through social investment (Kvist et al., 2012).

THE CENTRALITY OF WORK

In addition to equality, stateness and universalism as main characteristics of the Nordic welfare states, Fritzell & Lundberg (2007) argue that the countries implementing the Nordic model have a commitment to full employment. An important dimension in the understanding of the Nordic welfare model's role in citizens' lives is the emphasis that is placed on supporting individuals' ability to *work*. Active labour market policies, generous benefit levels, high quality public care services for children and older people, high taxation and low poverty rates (p. 3) are connected by the master idea of guaranteeing access to employment. It can be argued, that the level of social investment in the Nordic countries is underpinned by the fact that societal structures exist to ensure that everyone, regardless of where, when and by who one is born, can access employment. Equality does not necessarily mean similar outcomes, such as prestigious jobs and high salaries for everyone. Rather people are offered equal opportunities, underpinned by forms of social support, to work towards the individual goal of having 'what one feels is needed' and to gain access to this through paid employment. Non-poverty thus means more than having eliminated worries about money. Looking back to Johansson's (2001) definition of welfare, the goal of the welfare state is not to *give* the individual these things, but to make sure that individuals will be able to secure them for themselves through work. Realising individual potential, by gaining knowledge, experiencing social integration, security of life and property, recreation, culture, and political resources is available to Nordic citizens through work.

Benefits and support come in bundles, designed to address the complexity of peoples' lives whilst ensuring access to work. An example is offered by looking at paid parental leave (see Schulstok & Wikstrand, 2020 *in this volume*). Although the impact of this policy is contested (Dahl, Loken, Mogstad, & Salvanes, 2016), it aims to make it easier to combine work and family (Meagher & Szebehely, 2011). When this policy is combined with subsidised childcare and the payment of child benefits following parental leave, the incentive to continue working is strong for parents. Similarly, the state provision of care for disabled people and older people lifts the responsibility from individuals and allows them to continue working. The centrality of work is also demonstrated by the way in which unemployment benefits are paired with active labour market policies (Cort, Thomsen & Mariager-Anderson, 2015) and made conditional on participation in activities designed to speed up the transition back to work, where non-compliance can lead to harsh sanctions (Kvist et al., 2012). Within the Nordic model work is not just incentivised, it is expected. Being out of work is conceived as a problem for both the jobless person, and for society at large.

Taking advantage of the benefits of the system implies a psycho-social contract that will most often mean having contributed to it by having had taxable income, meaning that individuals are expected to pay back what they have received and pay forward what they are going to get (Kvist et al., 2012). In social research, the principle of exchange between the individual and the system in the Nordic countries has been coined collective individualism (Hernes & Hippe, 2007). Hernes and Hippe provide an explanation for the seemingly contradictory relationship between the individual and context in the Norwegian welfare system. Research on culture states that Norwegians are individualists, but the political settlement enshrined in the welfare state suggests a collective orientation. The concept of collective individualism recognises that fulfilling individual potential is possible because there is a collective system in place providing individual opportunities for all in the community. This is a system that all individuals must support and contribute to in order to keep it going, realising that their contribution will let other individuals take advantage of the system in ways that may never be relevant or possible for themselves. These individuals will later contribute and in turn make it possible for other people to take advantage of the system in

ways that will support their individual journey. Hence, the collectivism denotes the idea that all individuals contribute to a collective package of opportunity and security that may not benefit them directly and that they will not be able to take full advantage of, but that nevertheless is available for the individual when it is appropriate. To engage in and support such a structure, have been suggested to foster citizenship (Ryner, 2007).

The welfare system is dependent on as high as possible participation in the work force. The quote from Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 28) stating that in the social democratic welfare society ‘all benefit: all are dependent, and all will presumably feel obliged to pay’ summarises a positive vision of universalism where the wealthy middle class will pay its share both to contribute to the common good, but also to receive benefits from the system. But this quote can also be viewed more negatively as describing a system where dependency and obligation means that you *are* obliged to pay in order to be able to depend on the system. So while Kvist et al. (2012) states that the Nordic populations ‘share a passion for work’, the question is rather: is it possible to choose not to work?

NORDICITY, WORK AND CAREER

I have argued that the Nordic countries share a culture which is intertwined with a cross-country policy theme which can be described as the Nordic welfare model. This context provides Nordic citizens with a high level of security, though it is something they have to work for. In this section I will turn to the issue of career and explore how this context frames thinking about career.

A key definitional question concerns the relationship between work and career, and the respective understanding of work and career. Career is a word and a concept that throughout the history of its discourse has been understood differently and carried diverse meanings, it is a question that has not been resolved and probably never will. Although this may not be a problem, it is still a challenge that the concept bear different meanings in different contexts.

For example, in an exploration of the understanding of the career concept in Norway (Bakke, 2018), I argued that the Norwegian working culture can be seen as emphasising community values to such an extent that career, if viewed as an individualistic upwards movement in a hierarchy, can seem alien. I argued that this is why the word career, or ‘karriere’ in Norwegian, has not been used to denote normal, standard, lateral trajectories in any education and any work, but have rather been reserved for people in professions where upwards mobility is key. The twist in the story however, is that Norwegian stakeholders and policymakers absorbed OECD’s (2002) recommendation to make career guidance the primary framework for lifelong learning and guidance in Norway. Furthermore, a recent green paper advising on policy developments in career guidance in Norway in the years to come (NOU 2016: 7, 2016) recommended that activities within the field of vocational and educational guidance should be denoted by the word career.

The term ‘career’ does not have the same connotations in all Nordic countries (see Haug, Hooley, Kettunen & Thomsen, 2020 *in this volume*). For example, Swedish career guidance professionals have been called ‘karriärvägledare’ since the seventies (Plant, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to understand the relationship between understandings of career and the importance of work in Nordic culture. The centrality of work, and its endorsement in culture and policy, make it important to explore the relationship between career and Nordic working culture.

Definitions of career have varied from being a sequence of work-related experiences to being progression in work, from being about just paid work to being about both education, work and life roles, from being structurally bound to fluid and boundaryless, from being determined by the organisation or by the drive of the individual. Metaphors to describe career have been equally diverse, describing how they are experienced; e.g. as role, or a good or bad fit (Inkson, 2004). Law’s (2009) distinction between metaphors of career as a race or as a journey sums up the two poles around which understandings of career can be organised. Where career is seen as a race, people set their course, grit their teeth, compete and are challenged, they overcome obstacles and look for possibilities to get ahead. Where career is seen as a journey they can explore, perhaps divert and take a detour, where the experiences on route and the people they travel with are more important than where they end up. Neither of them is more right, because people prefer different things, but in the words of Law (2009), the understanding of the career as a race is the more dominant metaphor. And as Thomsen (2014) points out when writing about career management skills from a Nordic perspective, the understanding of career as progress up a hierarchy is the most common understanding outside of professional use.

As I have argued above, within Nordicity work is a central part of the culture, it is the means by which citizens participate in society and prove their worth. Work is part of the social contract, in the words of Watts (2016, p. 330), where citizens ‘agree to devote a substantial part of (their) time to wider social purposes’ in return for income for them to spend as preferred. To Watts (2016), (paid) work is only a part of career and he champions a broader conception where career is viewed as lifelong progression in learning and work. As such, the concept of career encompasses work but is not defined by it. It includes the idea that while work can release human potential in itself there is more to life than just work, and humans have great potential that lies *outside* the realm of work. This is also why career is a democratic concept and should be for all.

Understanding career in relation to the Nordic welfare state and the social contract it implies, where states assume the responsibility of providing a safety net for their members who are viewed as active, engaged participatory citizens (Sultana, 2011), means that whether it is a race or a journey, the individual is interacting with the welfare system throughout. From birth, through healthcare and childcare, through schooling and education, through employment, taxes and labor market politics ensuring paid parental leave, sickness and unemployment benefits, to old age through pension and geriatric care. As these benefits and services are universal, they can be factored in, both as planned and un-planned turning points like education, job-shifts, family planning etc, regardless of income. If career is to be understood as a journey through life, education and work, then the Nordic career is a journey where the individual is in a continuing transactional relationship with the state.

Individuals' careers within the Nordic context are therefore defined at least in part by their ability to navigate the welfare state and to integrate it into their career journeys. As such, the Nordic welfare state constitutes a cultural field within which individuals have to operate. Within this cultural field, a strong commitment to paid work is central to habitus. Work is both a moral imperative and a strong external expectation and both of these aspects influence conceptions of career, when it encompasses work. Successful careers are therefore not simply about extracting benefits from the system but rather about working within the doxa of what is acceptable in terms of making contributions on one side and drawing on it on the other.

Universalism and egalitarianism implies that contrary to liberal or conservative welfare models, the social democratic model ensures equal rights across socioeconomic stratification, meaning that both low earners and high earners can benefit from the same system. Being able to secure career opportunities for upwards mobility and higher income to finance starting a family, saving for periods of job insecurity, financing children's' education or your own retirement is to a lesser extent a pressing issue. The choice of job to maximise career prospects, which is central to neoliberal understandings of career, is less important in the Nordic context because participation and contributions made from all levels of the employment structure give equal rights and access to the social insurances.

The idea that the centrality of work in Nordicity makes occupational choice a less important part of career sounds like a paradox, but it reframes career as something different and less individualistic. The social contract implies that there is no individual self-determination without solidarity (Sultana, 2011). Career is from a Nordic perspective a democratic concept and the social contract is foregrounded.

This influences the nature of career guidance and individuals' career management strategies. While developing individuals' employability to access the high-level positions and win in the career race can be an individual preference it cannot define career. The welfare state ensures that quality of life is not dependent on getting a well-paid job, and so career can be pursued as a journey and the race can be left to the ones that find it amusing.

CONCLUSION

Some researchers claim that the fall of the Nordic welfare state is imminent (Baeten, Berg, & Lund Hansen, 2015). The economic recessions and the growth of neoliberalism as dominant economic and political ideology over the last decades have brought with it changes in the policies of the Nordic welfare states. Commodification, private insurances and less generous benefits and services have developed, to the point where some ask whether the welfare systems that exist can still be described as the Nordic model (Knutsen, 2017). As such, it might be conceived as naïve to be singing the praise of the Nordic welfare model at this time.

Similarly, the contention that the world of work is changing dramatically and fundamentally in the face of globalisation and technological development is a recurring theme. Practitioners, researchers and policymakers concerned with career face the question of how to respond to this change. There is a worry that automation will replace low skilled jobs, and that the future of work and employment belongs to the highly educated, flexible, resourceful and innovative worker, creating further distance between those who do well and those who do not. There is also a worry that career guidance will exacerbate these differences by responsabilising career actors (Hooley, 2018). These prospects are unsettling, and as the Nordic model is dependent on a high level of participation in the work force, the systems will struggle to sustain themselves if employment drops – even if the ideology of the Nordic model continues to withstand the pressures of neoliberalism.

At the same time however, the Nordic countries' high scores on various international measures of life quality, equality and welfare combined with a steady growth in GDP, gives other writers reason to conclude that generous and comprehensive welfare regimes are still viable, the proof of this is self-evident by their continued existence in neoliberal times (Dølvik, 2007). A similar point can be made about the future of work, how the power of continuity and slow change, combined with human hesitation because of undeclared ethical questions and lack of resources to implement radical changes slows the process down (Hooley, 2018). In other words, discussing career issues related to the context at hand and being cautiously prepared for change could be argued to be a fruitful approach.

The Nordic welfare states represent a cultural field within which career is enacted, defined by decades of stateness, universalism, egalitarianism, co-dependencies and critically by the centrality of work. They are also supported by Nordic cultural values which emphasise equality and citizenship. These values are lasting and provide a backdrop for further discussion of a democratic career concept. Nordicity reframes career conversations in ways

that do not draw so heavily on the responsabilising and individualising notions that have characterised the careers field in many other countries (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen 2018), In this respect, a Nordic concept of career has something to offer in the discussion of new conceptualisations of career and career guidance. In the discussion of the open and dynamic concept of life-career, Irving (2018) calls for deeper understandings and insights into how careers that are liberated from economic discourses and market relations in the construction of human value, social inclusion and cohesion actually function. There is also a conceptual link to collective forms of career guidance, where the collective come together, in what could be argued is a transactional process of learning, support and debate about the role of work, leisure and learning that support conscientisation and develop citizenship and community resources alongside the careers of individuals (Hooley et al., 2018). Research on collective forms of career guidance and a democratic career concept, and how they come together in theory and practice (Thomsen, 2012) has opened up a new field of enquiry. Exploring how this concern with community and collective guidance connects with the ideology of Nordicity is a venue for further research.

Whether collective or individual, career guidance itself can be said to be a part of the scaffold provided by the welfare state in the Nordic countries (Plant, 2007). Welfare states' concern with supporting their citizens in navigating the employment structure and negotiating the complexity of career and life by designing and implementing different systems for career guidance in school, education, employment and the welfare structure, can be viewed as one form of stateness. The guidance professionals' role is partly determined by the goal and ideology of the welfare regime. While career professionals and interested readers who have studied career guidance and theory realise that the career concept of today includes more than the individualistically driven and achievement oriented hierarchical career, this might not be the case for the people provision is intended for (see Thomsen, Mariager-Anderson & Rasmussen, 2020 *in this volume*). Emphasising that career is a democratic concept that encompasses *all* citizens is important, as states intervening in individual's lives to shape their careers can be deeply problematic if career is understood in hierarchical and racing terms. Career counselling can be a vehicle for fostering citizenship by encouraging participation in society and community, and career-counselling practitioners can be agents of social change (Thomsen, 2012).

In summary, the Nordic context offers an ideal laboratory for rethinking and recontextualising career theories and exploring how they can inform practice. This chapter has sought to explore the cultural field of Nordicity and show how it can inform the concept of career. The rest of the book will help to delineate the Nordic field of career guidance further in the light of this and explore what it is, and what it can be.

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Paper 3

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Career and cultural context: collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality in the career thinking of Norwegian teenagers

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ABSTRACT

Career guidance in Norway has seen major developments over the past two decades. Secondary schools have integrated career education and guidance into an education system which socialises young people to develop citizenship and take part in society. In this article, I explore how Norwegian teenagers' career thinking is influenced by Norwegian cultural values which are strongly associated with the Nordic model of welfare: collective individualism, egalitarianism, and work-centrality. Teenagers' and counsellors' thoughts about career are explored through qualitative interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis shows that in conversations about career choices, teenagers and counsellors refer to these concepts, but in ways varying most notably along the urban-rural, academic-VET, and adult-teenager dimensions. Implications for career guidance are discussed.

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Introduction

Do you think you'll have a career?

Everybody has a career. (...) It's about doing things. (...) It's not necessarily about success and stuff.

What's a good life to you?

A good life for me? Well, it's having a job, house and a car, kids and a woman and all that. Then it's ok.

Just normal?

Mm. Yes. Guess you don't need anything else! (Bendik, 15 y)

Career choices are complex. They entail considering future identities, how education might fit with these identities and weighing up how future selves might value what is a good life. In this article, I will discuss how Norwegian 10th graders, aged 15 or 16, reflect on career choices in the light of key Norwegian cultural values, which I characterise as collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality. The research question in this article is: *In which ways are Norwegian cultural values important for vocational and educational (career) choices, both for teenagers and counsellors providing career guidance and education?*

Career guidance as a field of practice, research and policymaking in Norway has undergone major developments over the last two decades, inspired by international developments in the career field. Career guidance has been debated as a way to support career actors in a time of an increasingly precarious employment structure, and has been connected to a policy view that it would benefit both individuals and at the same time contribute to public goals such as social justice, prosperity and sustainable employment (Bergmo-Prvulovic, 2018). The development of career learning and education

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perspectives have been seen as particularly important, as the rationale is that career actors benefit from developing career management competence in a lifelong learning perspective (Sultana, 2012), and career learning can be argued to be a cornerstone in the developing career guidance field in Norway (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2002; 2014; *Norges Offentlige Utredninger* [NOU] 2016: 7; Haug et al., 2019).

But international theoretical discussion of concepts may differ from how theories and concepts work in context and in practice (Bakke & Hooley, 2020). Work in the career field to transfer and adapt theoretical frameworks or process-tools across contexts has shown that contexts frame peoples' lives differently, and that people think differently about life, learning and work. For example, the transfer of the Blueprint framework to Lithuania proved to be difficult, as basic assumptions about society and the individual's place in it, affected career considerations in surprising ways (Hooley et al., 2013). Hence, career theory needs to be context sensitive and attending to issues of culture may aid theorists, policymakers and practitioners in their work.

Definitions of culture are debated, as both inter- and intradisciplinary agreement about which elements form the basis of it is hard to reach, whether it is to be found in the social, the individual or both (Mironenko & Sorokin, 2018). Common elements are often that the behaviours, ideals and values that define a culture are learned over time as members inculcate and perform them until they are integrated, automated and drop out of awareness (Hall, 1976; Sultana, 2017). More specifically, culture can be defined as "a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses processes, products and results of human activity, material and spiritual, transmitted from generation to generation in a non-biological way" (Mironenko & Sorokin, 2018, p. 338). An important assumption about culture is that while some culturally specific behaviours will be salient and readily observable and thus will be possible to verbalise and discuss in public discourse, some cultural assumptions will also be tacit, implicit, and un-verbalised.

Culture describe shared ideas about how the world is and how it functions, in addition to how it *ideally* should function. These ideas and values affect the content of career considerations, and as such cultural context and identity shape career decisions (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997; Law, 1981; Leong et al., 2010). Law (1981) argued that individuals live their lives and make their career decisions at a meso-level, between the individual and the societal, and the "notoriously difficult rag-bag-concept" of community (p. 145) affect people's career decisions. Others have attempted to pin down the characteristics of culture to understand how they affect and predict behaviour (e.g. Hofstede, 2001), offering a tool to understand career choices and behaviour. Leong et al. (2010) hold that even though culture is a complex phenomenon where clear demarcations do not exist, the individualism-collectivism dimension is particularly interesting, as choices reflect whether the individual or the group is the "smallest unit of survival" (p.466), and ultimately whether choices first and foremost benefit the individual or the group the individual belongs to. Swanson and Fouad (2015) have stated that culturally responsive guidance is good for all clients, meaning that guidance needs to be sensitive about which cultural factors are most salient and important to the client.

Educating citizens and supporting career decisions

It is often argued that as a Nordic welfare state, Norway is characterised by equality and egalitarianism – the belief that by who, where or when one is born should not affect life chances (Alestalo et al., 2009; Kvist et al., 2012). Coupled with a universal welfare system, this shapes policy in employment, education and welfare. While legislation ensures democracy and equal rights for all citizens, education and active labour market policies are designated to provide equal opportunities for all citizens to function and participate in society. This often means that different needs are supported differently and that higher needs elicit more support, but the underlying rationale is that there ultimately should not be differences between people and that no one is more valued.

Egalitarianism is coupled with shared responsibility for maintaining the system that ensures individual opportunities for all. As such, the notion of *interdependence*, and of being a part of a social

contract, is equally important. The social contract assumes that the state has a responsibility to provide (and regulate) a safety net for all citizens, but also that citizens are active, engaged and participating in society (Sultana, 2011). Hernes and Hippe (2007) have coined the term collective individualism to explain the transactional relationship that exists between the individual and the state in the Norwegian political economy. So while research on culture states that Norwegians are individualists, the political settlement enshrined in the welfare state suggests a collective orientation (Bakke, 2020).

Another central value in Norwegian culture is work-centrality (Bakke, 2020), echoing the central role of the work in Norwegian social democratic policies (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). Work is central as it allows people to fulfil their needs for income and meaningful activity, and offers them an arena for developing and realising their potential. Being able to work, also means being able to participate in society and make a valued contribution. Work is heavily incentivised and expected, and is what the individual brings to the table in the social contract (Watts, 2016). The principles of egalitarianism and equity, mean that no form of work should be regarded as better or offer more privilege.

The cultural values of collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality shape and condition how Norwegians think about their careers. If career is to be understood as a journey through life, learning and work (Law, 2009), collective individualism is the understanding that throughout their journey people are in a continuous transactional relationship with a higher-order system providing a package of possibilities and security for the individual in exchange for some limitations and obligations, equal to all. Work-centrality is a shared belief regarding the degree of importance that work plays in people's lives, that it is good in and of itself both for the individual and society. The egalitarian aspects of Norwegian culture mitigate against the idea of measuring individuals against each other, and the welfare state and relative income equality mean that the personal benefit, in terms of both financial reward and social status, from career success is less marked than in other countries. Together, these values give content to a career concept where working is foregrounded, not as the individualistic pursuit of success, but rather as a contribution to the collective and fulfilment of the responsibilities of the social contract. While these are values and ideas that inform career at a conceptual level it is of interest to see if and how these concepts appear in discussions about career choices of young people in a relatively wealthy country less dependent on the turmoils of global economy than many other European countries.

The Norwegian education system

Education, including career guidance and education in schools, is underpinned by the Norwegian concept of *danning* (Asplin & Lingås, 2016) which can be imperfectly translated as “personal formation and development” or “bildung”. The Norwegian word *utdanning* can be translated as “education” but the concept of *danning* holds that education means more than acquiring scholarly competence. *Danning* is a personal development parallel to education, a process of formation where scholarly education is important, but encompassed within the broader development of an individual into a full member of society. Acquiring competence is about the development of individual skills and knowledge, but it is also about using them responsibly and being able to manage the tensions between individual possibilities and social responsibilities (Education Act, 2007).

In the Nordic countries, Antikainen (2006) argues that there is a specifically Nordic model of education, founded on specific local values and practices found in the Nordic, social democratic welfare model. The Nordic education model is designed to educate and shape the future citizens of the Nordic states. According to Antikainen (2006), the shaping of future citizens implies conveying through educational content and methods the ideological heritage that will be important for future citizens to adhere to and believe in to sustain the societal model. Key to socialisation is, therefore, inculcating views on equality in terms of social relationships, individualism/self-dependence in the light of social responsibilities, and the importance of work as an arena for acting as a citizen.

The Norwegian education system offers a pathway into employment consisting of several turning points for the students. The first turning point prompting students to make a career choice is the

transition between lower and upper secondary school, after 10 years of compulsory school, when they are 15 or 16 years old. Upper secondary is optional. At this point, they need to choose whether to pursue academic education or a vocational education and training (VET) track that will finish at 18 or 19. Teachers with additional roles as guidance counsellors are tasked with supporting the students' transition by providing career guidance and career learning. These teachers will often, though not always, have additional competence in career guidance. Upper and specialised secondary education is often centralised due to variation in population density (Mathiesen et al., 2014).

While the academic track offers conventional theory based education, the VET track is an apprentice-based system combining training in school and with employers. The majority of Norwegian teenagers, 98%, transition to upper secondary, where they are equally distributed between academic and VET, but where dropout from VET programmes are significantly higher at approximately 40% than from academic programmes at approximately 15% (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020). The different trajectories of academic study and VET are the focus of debate in Norway with particular reference to the requirements of the labour market where there is a shortage of those qualified in the practical vocations associated with VET (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017). The policy focus on the need for VET has resulted in a range of different measures to adjust this balance, for example, campaigns launched to promote VET, where also career guidance has a role (NOU, 2016: 7).

School counsellors are increasingly focusing on supporting career learning. School counsellors are becoming more professionalised, increasing their competence to address careers issues and using career management skills as a framework for their practice (Haug, 2018). Norwegian research on teenagers' career choices have emphasised structural issues, for example, the role of the practitioner or the guidance system (Mathiesen et al., 2014), or sociological issues as socioeconomic or geographic factors affecting career choice (Holen & Hovdenak, 2014). Also, the content of career guidance and how it relates to learning needs more investigation (Lødding et al., 2008; Asplin & Lingås, 2016), in addition to research including the voice of users – counsellors and teenagers alike – in career guidance (Plant & Haug, 2018).

Norwegian geography and career decision-making

Another factor in young Norwegians career and educational decision making is geography. Norway is a country with a large territory and relatively small population. Its population density varies from 4.3 inhabitants/ km² in the North to 22.8 inhabitants/ km² in the South (Kartverket, 2019; SSB, 2019). This makes geography and infrastructure a concern for many families, as it is necessary for many students from rural and scarcely populated areas to commute or move out of their homes to attend upper secondary. The opportunity structures, both in terms of education and employment, are very different for rural and urban Norwegians (Lysgård, 2013). This means that the consideration of whether to pursue a future within or outside your home community is a key part of educational choice (Bakke, 2018). However, the differences in the choices made by urban or rural youth have not been well discussed in research on educational and vocational choices either internationally (Alexander & Hooley, 2018) or in Norway (Holen & Hovdenak, 2014). Research on the urban-rural dimension in Norwegian society often focuses on migration patterns and the conditions causing people to either move or to stay in rural areas (Eikeland & Lie, 1999; Løken et al., 2013; Villa, 2000). A similar mechanism, as discussed by Corbett (2007), is that choosing education means following given trajectories out of the community, where further education and specialisation creates more distance between the career actors and their home community where practical skills traditionally have been valued.

The career choices of young people matter, as they link participation in education to their eventual role as workers and citizens who can take part in the social contract. Thus, guiding and supporting young people to build a career is essentially a part of socialising them into being full Norwegian citizens. In this article I ask *in which ways are Norwegian cultural values important for vocational and educational (career) choices, both for teenagers and counsellors providing career guidance and*

education? From the metatheoretical perspective of phenomenology (Giorgi, 2009; Melançon, 2014), the question was formulated to capture how making career choices are lived and perceived by young people. The focus was on teenagers as the transition into upper secondary presents the first career choice in their educational trajectories, eliciting ideas about career as a concept and how it relates to life, learning and work.

Methods

To capture geographic and demographic variety, I recruited a purposive convenience sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) along the urban-rural dimension and interviewed a total of 43 teenagers in 10th grade of compulsory school. See overview of the sample in Table 1, which I planned in the design phase, except for the counsellor interviews. The locations varied from approximately 1000 inhabitants (small) to approximately 200,000 inhabitants (large), including both inland and coastal communities as the inland/coastal divide is another important division in Norwegian society. I was interested in rich descriptions of experience rather than generalisable results (Creswell, 2013). After having started data collection, I realised that the “bird’s eye-view” offered by school counsellors would provide interesting information, and also interviewed the six counsellors in the schools visited in the sample. They all had teacher and counsellor roles in combination, however their formal competencies in career guidance are not known. The total sample has a distribution of female and male of 22 and 21 respectively for the teenagers, and 5 and 1 for the counsellors.

I completed group interviews at five of these six schools, with a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine students in the groups, sometimes mixed between classes and sometimes the group was with the entire 10th grade at the school. I visited the schools both during autumn and spring term, both before and after the deadline for applying to upper secondary. I subsequently did individual interviews with two students from the groups and then the counsellors after that. I did individual interviews only at one school because my contact at the school had only prepared two students for interview, and I conducted two of the counsellor interviews by phone after having visited the schools. All interviews had a duration of 45–90 min.

The study was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), the chosen partner of the Norwegian Data Inspectorate to implement the statutory data privacy requirements in the research community. I contacted schools’ management directly by email, presenting the study and asking for permission to visit and do interviews. I was welcomed at all schools and visited 6 of 7 schools initially contacted, the last school not being able to let me visit as we had planned. As I was not collecting sensitive data, like biodata or information on race/ethnicity, health issues, sexual orientation, political or religious views, NSD regulations state that interviewees at the age of 15 can give independent consent. All participants were over the age of 15. However, to make sure that my visit was known and the purpose understood by both teenagers and parents, consent forms were collected from parents in advance, administered by school staff. As consent forms were for primarily informational purposes, and consent was discussed initially in the interviews, they were later destroyed for anonymity purposes. In addition, identifying information was removed and substituted with pseudonyms in the transcription process, completely anonymising the dataset. In this article, all names are pseudonyms and potentially identifying elements like names of individuals, organisations and places etc. are removed.

In the interviews, the aim was to cover a wide range of issues concerning career choices and to concentrate on the issues that elicited discussion in the groups. I took an organic approach to the subject of career choices. I would bring up the same topics in the individual interviews to further explore issues considered important at these locations. While this article covers only a portion of the topics discussed in the interviews, more data is discussed in Bakke (2018; Bakke & Hooley, 2020). Transcripts were analysed in NVivo using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach (Braun et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). RTA was particularly suitable for this study because it is an open, flexible approach that suggests synthesising and extracting themes from the material in

Table 1. Overview of the sample.

Location	Criteria for inclusion									
	No US	US	US + HE	Variation of industries, varied employment possibilities	Little variation of industries, less varied employment possibilities	Urban	Rural	Group interview (No. of students in group)	Individual interviews (No. of individuals interviewed)	Counselor interview
Medium, Fjord		x		x			x	x (8)	x (2)	x
Large, Fjord, 2			x	x		x		x (8)	x (2)	x
Large, Fjord, 1			x	x		x			x (2)	x
Small, North-Norway, Inland	x				x		x	x (7)	x (2)	x
Small, Mid-Norway, Coast	x			x			x	x (9)	x (3)	x
Medium, East-Norway, Inland			x		x		x	x (8)	x (2)	x

Note. US: Upper secondary, HE: Higher education.

six steps: familiarising yourself with the material, generating codes, constructing themes, revising groups/themes, defining themes, and producing the report. As the RTA framework emphasises the importance of the researcher as decision-maker and interpreter in the process (Braun et al., 2018), after familiarising (Stage 1) I decided to code the material by creating shorter statements akin to meaning units (Giorgi, 2009) (Stage 2), thus making interpretations of my subjects' accounts to make the meaning clear.

Results

For the analysis in this article, I created nodes for *collective individualism*, *egalitarianism* and *work-centrality*. Approaching the material deductively, I reviewed the meaning units looking for those that from my interpretation addressed these three concepts both explicitly and implicitly, and coded them on to these three central nodes (Stage 3). From this process I had produced three groups of meaning units and going back to the raw data (transcripts) I reviewed and synthesised the separate groups (Stages 4, 5), presented in the interpretation as follows (Stage 6).

In the review and synthesis stage, the content of the nodes *collective individualism*, *egalitarianism* and *work-centrality* showed different patterns of meaning. The subthemes *urban/rural dimension*, *teenager/counsellor dimension*, *social significance of VET*, *social pressure*, *gender* and *status differences* appeared, as shown in Table 2. The subthemes are described as they appear in sections *Collective individualism*, *Egalitarianism* and *Work-centrality*.

Individualism and collectivism

The **teenagers** see themselves as being in the middle of a process of growing up where their career education and learning in lower secondary has centred around realising, finding, understanding and sorting personal interests and features into a set of alternatives for choosing upper secondary education. The idea that choices should be based on individuality, personal interests and abilities resonates with all groups: *"the choice is about me and my future"* (Åshild). Some of the teenagers describe their interests as something that grows and develops over time with reflection and experience, and describe the process as private and not involving counsel or advice. Though the most important determinants of career choices are individual and they believe that the choice is their own, they realise that there are external influences on their choices: *"It's up to you in the end, but there are many expectations"* (Solveig). There is something external exerting influence on their choices.

For the **rural** teenagers in the sample, the external influence is tangible and clearly understood: *"But I've understood that returning to this community is really really really important, (laugh) or else this place will become overgrown"* (Sindre). For the teenagers from rural areas where upper secondary provision is non-existent and they have to move out of the community to attend school, an important component in their process is the question of returning to the community when their education is finished. The need for young people to return to their community is a question openly discussed in the community and in career education: *"we had a career day where people working in the municipality presented their vocation, and they all finished by saying: come home, we need you"* (Veronika). In

Table 2. The appearance of subthemes in the nodes for collective individualism, egalitarianism and work-centrality.

Subthemes	Collective individualism	Egalitarianism	Work centrality
Urban/rural	X	X	X
Teenager/counsellor	X	X	X
Social significance of VET	X	X	X
Social pressure	X	X	
Gender		X	
Status differences		X	

other words, they experience that their home communities are collectively attempting to influence their mobility decisions. For the rural **counsellors**, they feel a social responsibility for making sure that the teenagers know that they are needed back in the community. By rallying local stakeholders in business and the municipality to reinforce this message, the school counsellors want to make sure that the teenagers conceive of their home communities as *“quite happy with them”* and that they are *“good places to be in for them”* (Counsellor L). In other words, they actively evoke and transmit collective values, and see themselves as agents for a community culture of caring, where *“we are a kind of silently agreeing about doing this”* (Counsellor N).

While Veronika further states that what people say *“concerns me, but doesn’t influence me”* the geography and opportunity structure exert an influence on the career thinking of the students who have an interest in returning. While Bendik wants to return home to work in the local aquaculture and fishfarming industry because he has been interested in it for as long as he can remember, Ingeborg wants to return home to take over the family farm because it is up to her keep it in the family as her *“big brother, he’s not considering running any farm, so I guess we’ll have to sell, and I don’t want that”*. Combining it with being a teacher gives the opportunity to stay attached to something she cares deeply about, while at the same time developing her academic interests. She knows that there will be a job for her there in the future, as teachers are needed in primary and lower secondary education in the community. Ingeborg and Bendik want to return to their home communities because that is where they see opportunities and possibilities. Being able to contribute to the future of the community is a positive side-effect, as settling in the community is to *“contribute to growth and stuff”* (Bendik).

The **urban** teenagers also value individualism and self-dependence and express respect and admiration for those making career choices that truly reflect their interests and abilities, because these people *“know what they want and are really dedicated in a way”* (Solveig). Teenagers choosing **VET** because they are following their interests and abilities rather than following the mainstream are highly regarded. However, choosing VET as an easy way out is not. *“Some choose VET because they’re not bothered or are bad at school”* because *“you should try your best, take it seriously and try to make a difference, [...] if it’s just that you’re not bothered, it doesn’t help, it is just lame”* (Per). The idea that choosing VET is against the mainstream is related to **social pressure**, where the teenagers perceive other people to think that vocational education is an unattractive alternative. Parents and peers might *“try to talk you out of [choosing VET] because you don’t... get that far or... that you have a lot more potential in a way, even if the education is really good”* (Hege and Mirja). For Hege and Mirja, parents’ feedback is important because *“you look up to your parents in a way, you want to do the things they do”* and to *“make them proud”*. Going for academic education is *“mainstream”*. A high proportion of the teenagers go for academic education, and they are concerned about getting into the right schools, that suits them or allow them to keep in contact with friends transitioned to the same school: *“yes, it matters where they are going, you feel safer”* (Solveig).

In sum, while both urban and rural teenagers and counsellors value individualism, the teenagers in the rural sample are *“true”* individualists that choose independently and seek out opportunity, while the urban teens are more *“other”* oriented, seeking out confirmation from valued others. Rural counsellors are advocates for the community; urban counsellors are advocates for the teenagers.

Egalitarianism

The **teenagers** in the sample recognise that there are differences between the alternatives they are offered and that these reflect a difference between people. For all groups, an important and salient factor is **gender**. This is thoroughly discussed in career learning sessions and education in general, and the students all state that gender is not something they consider important in their career choice. Rather, the focus on gender seems arbitrary, because *“everybody thinks that people think*

about it, so they think everyone thinks about it", while "nobody here has thought of this, but it's just that boys like electro and mechanics and stuff, while girls like, well health, design, that kind of thing" (Tora and Marianne). So, they see that people make gender-stereotyped choices, but they perceive these as natural rather than as a deviation from the value of egalitarianism: "boys like physical work better than these tiny girls, girls like using their hands" (Mirja).

The teenagers with **rural** backgrounds are often raised in more traditional environments where tasks have been divided in gender-typical ways, where sons raised on farms learn to build and repair equipment and "don't do any women stuff" (Sindre) while girls learn traditional crafts from their mothers and grandmothers, "there are like no sons involved" (Veronika). So while the teenagers sum up that in these communities it is "probably so that people get the jobs that are expected of their gender" (Ingeborg), this does not in the teenagers' opinion necessarily mean that there are **status** differences between them. But wanting something else than what is offered locally, like achieving academically or excelling in a trade, means moving out of the communities, as it is in the employment market outside in the bigger places, that things happen and possibilities and opportunities to achieve something and stand out are to be found. Moving out and up, whether in education or work, implies freedom and conceptually connects to individualism, because "if I do well, I am free, and can choose what I want" (Synne). But they need more alternatives to choose from, like the opportunity to "try to get into an expensive salon to get further up" and experience a diversity rather than feeling bored and "work alone every day, then you'll get lonely and that might affect your health" (Louise). In other words, for these girls, geographical mobility also means social mobility and more individual freedom. Arguably, this suggests that even though they do not perceive themselves as oppressed, there is something restricting them.

The **urban** teenagers also see gender differences and discuss gender stereotypes, and relate them to choosing upper secondary, like for instance Endre stating that there are "more men going for VET than women". In their discussion of upper secondary choices, they are also concerned about the differing **social status** of the different alternatives. Choosing academic studies gives them the opportunity to "go to university, [so] that I can like build me up and become better" (Åshild). **VET** represents a less attractive alternative based on "rumours about VET being for those that are not that smart, that academic studies are for the smart and intelligent ones and VET is for those with low grades" (Endre). In other words, choosing academic or vocational education differentiates the teenagers socially, and it is important to be in the right group: "[VET] studies are for those who don't have the same grades as me" (Mirja). In addition to what may be "objective" measures of giving higher or lower status, like different requirements to get into programmes, different voices in their surroundings exert **social pressure** and give further input as to what are the better choices. For example, making recommendations with the teenagers' best interest at heart gives clear directions about what not to choose as "I am constantly told that I have the capacity to do academic studies, but I don't know" (Siri). These messages come from parents concerned with making sure that their children have the best possibilities for the future, and for the teenagers, this often translates into that it "is really about making money, the point is doing good and making money" (Endre).

For **counsellors**, making sure that teenagers make truly authentic choices are important, and that often means being a counterforce to contextual influence, especially when it is prejudice about the status of VET and gender stereotypes. Sometimes they target the power mechanisms in peer groups, where "queens are on the fence and [say] like no I don't know what to choose and then nobody knows what to choose" (Counsellor T). Other times it means siding with teenagers in negotiations about career choices with parents who have "put their foot down" (Counsellor R). Especially for **urban** counsellors it often means advocating for vocational education as the counsellors observe that for many students vocational education can be more motivating and stimulating than academic education.

In sum, both urban and rural teenagers see that there are differences between people. Gender and social status are important denominators in their social landscapes. Counsellors target stereotypes and advocate egalitarian values.

Work-centrality

The urban **counsellors**, understand “social responsibility” as being about the need to educate their students about the general need for workers in society, especially emphasising the need for more students to do VET. These messages must be given delicately:

My daughter, the eighth-grader came home from school one day, exacerbated. We had a visit from that counsellor again, saying that we cannot become what we want in life! What?! We must become something that is good for Norway, something Norway needs! I could maybe say something like that myself (laugh). (Counsellor B).

For the **teenagers**, the future as worker is important and positive: “So I’m thinking a lot about work, yes, and how it’s going to be in the future” (Synne), and “[thinking of] work you are happy with, that you know you’ll enjoy” (Åshild). Considering future possibilities for work and employment is an important component of career choice processes. Finding a way into work they will enjoy is often of a higher priority than securing the highest possible income, although income represents opportunity and security. If prioritising high earnings compromise well-being, it is clear that “you should not spend your life doing [that job]” as “dreading going to work every day for the rest of your life” is a depressing prospect. They recognise that as future parents they will influence how their children perceive work and allowing such situations to depress them make them negative role models. They would not want future generations to learn that “you don’t have to like your job as long as you make good money”, “like just go ahead and do academic study and get rich”, because “those are not the right values” (Mirja, Solveig and Hege).

The **urban-rural** distinction in the sample defines a part of the pattern of the differences between the teenagers’ conceptions of work. In addition, their different aspirations regarding **VET** or academic education define another. However, patterns are connected because the rural teenagers have more experience with practical work. For these teenagers, the notion of work is connected to the jobs that they see the adults do in agriculture, aquaculture, crafts and local industries and the part-time jobs they have themselves. “Office jobs” and “office people” are mysterious concepts, as what the job actually entails and the outcomes they produce are hard to spot, they just seem boring and uninteresting to a 10th grader. As Synne says, reflecting on her job training at a local firm, “if I do academic study I can become what I want, but over there it would be mostly an office job”. They often see in their context that it is the practical jobs requiring skills and practical knowledge that are needed. Professional jobs requiring education are less common, the employment market being one where practical skills are wanted and opportunities are to be found for those not wanting to continue education. Not having diverse skills is more of a risk factor: “I actually think it is easier to survive with diverse skills here, if you come back with only one education and you can’t do anything else, I think you’ve got an insecure job” (Sindre). Those wanting education are less likely to find opportunities for work in the community, and as specialisation through education is seen as a “city phenomenon” (Sindre), career choices are again linked to geographical mobility. However, perhaps paradoxically the rural teenagers stress the need for education, as “everybody says that it’s important” (Sindre), as a ticket to permanent employment. The **rural counsellors** see that in their communities, teenagers can find jobs and have careers in un-skilled work, but they emphasise the need for education still: “[to be a farmer] you need to know a little bit about everything, and not least economy. I’ve told them, those who succeed in agriculture today, it’s the ones that know about economics” (Counsellor N).

Some teenagers going for **VET**, whether urban or rural, have had an interest for the vocation for a long time, sometimes since childhood. Sometimes career education has provided experiences strengthening these interests, for example, after having “wanted to [become a chef since childhood] but not believing I would do it” (Torild), or like Bendik, saying that “I’ve always enjoyed exploring the seashore” and having a grandfather telling stories about the sea, his choice of a vocational programme to work in aquaculture is firm. Their concept of work is therefore more closely connected to practice, future plans are connected to something concrete and tangible. The urban teenagers

going for academic education have more ideas about what academic jobs are, as they “live with their [parents’] lifestyle, [and see] if they work a lot, on the computer, if they talk about their job” (Per), concluding that if you hear about “academic stuff all the time” it is more familiar and easier to choose. However, he also observes that sometimes his peers choosing VET seem more relaxed, “it’s cool with those choosing VET and don’t care that much, they just start early and know that this is what they’ll do” (Per), whereas he himself still has many choices to make in the education system before he can start working professionally.

In sum, for the teenagers, their future as workers is important. Their view of a future as worker is positive, and they expect it to be personally rewarding. Key to getting a job is education. Mediating these messages is a social responsibility for the counsellors.

Discussion

In this article, it is assumed that Norwegian culture has a certain set of characteristics related to the country’s political economy, and that this and the urban-rural dimension is important in shaping how people live their lives and make career choices and that this has a particular significance for guidance.

The cultural notion of work-centrality is found in the teenagers’ reflections about career choices when they are talking about their future as workers. They want to make good choices to position themselves in the employment market to be able to find security there as well as work they will enjoy, as Åshild states. The idea of work being enjoyable is a basis for an adult life where personal development and work are linked (Bakke, 2020). For some, work seems closer and for others it is more distant, and arguably this is related to the different levels of clarity that the young people have about where their career choices will take them, or at least understandings of what the different possibilities entail. Having parents working in academic/professional jobs and being used to see them work on a computer and hear their discussions over the dinner table, gives another understanding of what this implies than the mysterious concept of “office job”. This makes visible the socialisation processes of growing up (Hall, 1976), where familiarity with either practical or academic work direct into a vocation or further along an educational trajectory. Nevertheless, all the teenagers assumed they would become someone who works. It is not explained or discussed, it is a given. Kvist et al. (2012) hold that Nordic populations are passionate about work, and for the teenagers the prospect of work is motivating, echoing a cultural emphasis on work as key to participation in society (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012).

From an egalitarian perspective, the young people report that no vocation or educational trajectory is inherently better, and they believe that all individuals should be able to realise their potential in the way they choose. As such, this relates to the grand narrative about the egalitarianism of Norwegian society (Hansen et al., 2014). It is a priority for the teenagers to choose the best options for the future, opportunities that are available for all. However, these individual decisions are informed, particularly in rural communities, by the existence of traditional social structures where occupational gender segregation seems natural. While Norway as a society is high on gender egalitarianism (Kitterød & Halrynjo, 2019), issues on gender segregation are highly relevant for career guidance in schools because teenagers’ disinterest in gender issues is a lasting problem (Buland et al., 2011). However, while gender surfaced in interviews with the urban teenagers as well, it is also connected to navigating a landscape where choices affect their social standing, where making certain career choices risk their social status, contrary to cultural beliefs about all being equal. Boys, VET and underachievement are connected, and they are aware of how their choice of education positions them differently in the social context, echoing sociological research which shows that the bourdieusian structures of capital and power stratify and divide Norwegian society as well (Hansen et al., 2014). While the teenagers are educated about egalitarianism and understand the value of it, for example, stating that gender differences are not problematic, they see that the world is not really made up that way. Some personal and contextual features are connected

to differences between people and the chances they are given (Hjellbrekke & Korsnes, 2014), and a worrying aspect is the link to ability as VET is connected to lower academic ability as seen in lower grades. Endre states that rumour says that “*academic studies are for the smart and intelligent ones*”. Career choices are made in light of beliefs about society and observations as to how it actually functions, between explicit cultural values, and assumed and tacit knowledge. Seeing this as natural and unproblematic resolves the resulting (perhaps) cognitive dissonance.

Throughout the sample, the teenagers agree that individualism, independence and self-determination are values that work as a compass for career choices. In this respect, they respond to cultural values about autonomy and individuality, and echo Norwegian writers on career choice representing individualism and self-dependence (Birkemo, 2007; Holen & Hovdenak, 2014). The rural teenagers can define individuality against outspoken coaxing towards collective values. In this context the contrast is clear between pursuing your own career and responding to the needs of the community, as Corbett (2007) also has argued. However, the demands from the context they live in give different opportunities for enacting it, showing the complex interplay between the forces of cultural values interacting in different ways, creating different fields of possibilities and horizons for action (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). For example, Sindre states that the connection between education and job security is different in his home community from that in the city, where focusing on education for employability is a “*city phenomenon*”.

For the urban teenagers, defining individuality involves negotiating personal interests and abilities privately valued, and abilities and aspirations publicly discussed. Ideas about certain competencies and abilities being connected to certain choices, advantage and social status, makes it safer to define individuality in line with valued others. Personal ties to community affect career choices (Law, 1981), and research on social reproduction in Norway confirms that peers and family are important to individuals’ choices (Hansen et al., 2014). Perhaps one effect of social pressure is that the urban teenagers in this sample more easily adopt the opinions of the people they value and are drawn towards the community of others, arguably making their career decisions look more collective than individualist. This is an interesting paradox, as urbanity is often associated with individualist mindsets and actions, and rurality is often associated with collective thinking (Farstad, 2016). In other words, the relationship between individual aspirations and contextual factors such as rurality is complex, and touches on more issues than opportunity structures as in local or nearby opportunities for education and work. Such complexity is recognisable in contexts profoundly different from that of Norway, for example in India, where issues of rurality, socioeconomic factors, gender and migration intersects in young peoples’ career choices and warrants more nuanced career guidance and counselling that recognise the uniqueness of the context it operates in (Joshi & Bakshi, 2019).

Relating to the concept of collective individualism (Hernes & Hippe, 2007), the teenagers in this study do not explicitly understand themselves to be in a transactional relationship with the collective or part of a social contract. The idea of individuals and community being connected is rather an adult understanding of the world which the counsellors advance as something that they should take into account. This is strongly related to the idea of danning (Asplin & Lingås, 2016) which fosters the idea that individuals should develop within the context of society and their responsibility to it.

Limitations and methodological considerations

There are a number of limitations and methodological considerations affecting the findings of this study in various ways. Purposive sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling, and is associated with qualitative research as it is often employed to enhance understandings of selected groups through cases rich in information (Devers & Frankel, 2000), and the inclusion of the counsellors was done to enhance the richness of the data. However, this was not planned for and it is a limitation

in as much as planned interviews with counsellors at the outset would have made it possible to take better advantage of their perspective in data collection.

Purposive sampling is also known as judgmental, selective and subjective sampling. As such it is prone to bias from the researcher, and generalisation is also limited to the sample (Sharma, 2017). In addition, the deductive approach to the analysis made it possible to focus the investigation as the material is rich, but this approach also limits the scope and may leave out interesting aspects and findings. However, the data have been explored using an inductive approach in other works (Bakke, 2018; Bakke & Hooley, 2020) and as such in this article I describe aspects of a larger picture. Finally, the data was processed by one single researcher, and the opportunity to validate the results via inter-rater reliability was missed (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In other words, these results need to be read with caution as they represent one researcher's understanding.

Conclusion

One important point to be made is that there is a difference between the lived experience of young people and the ideology of cultural values, especially in terms of egalitarianism. While the political economy and social institutions such as the education system are set up to minimise the effect of socioeconomic difference on the chances in life, the teenagers' reflections about career show that they are in fact navigating such differences. Education in general, and career guidance and education in particular, could benefit from considering how practice reinforces certain ideologies like egalitarianism and whether this is a legitimate aspect of career learning. How career guidance and learning can approach this issue, needs to be a continued focus for research.

A central finding in this study is that there are systematic variations in career choices related to different urban and rural contexts. Particularly, career choices intersect with gender issues, class issues and consideration of VET, all of which are considered especially important in career learning. For both urban and rural youth, VET and gender are related, but for the rural teenagers in the sample, initiatives to promote VET seem less relevant, as practical vocations and skills are already highly valued in rural contexts and for them, the question is rather *where* they can use their skills. An emphasis on practical skills and gender segregation limits the space of opportunity for young people, and for rural counsellors, it is important to continue to emphasise the need for competence in rural areas and as such create a social space with room for more variety. For urban youth, issues about VET intersect with social status illustrating that to promote VET, counsellors must target context and prejudice more explicitly and raise awareness and endorsement of VET. More research focusing on the tacit assumptions about the lower status of VET among parents and peers and how this affect teenagers' career choices is needed, as counsellors need tools and new perspectives to address these challenges.

Ultimately, these teenagers have integrated the notion that work is a positive future project where experiencing personal growth and development is key. Progression is not linked to excellence, but to realising individual potential, as in settling into a future where being allowed to pursue interests and feeling secure are important. As such, they exemplify the process of danning and show that this can be a positive connection for career guidance and learning. Seeing work as something genuinely positive in life irrespective of success and achievement but instrumental in putting them in a position to do the things they like, is a positive outlook on their future, and gives an idea of what work-life balance can look like.

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Paper 4

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I Don't Think Anyone Here has Thought About Career Really: What the Concept of "Career" Means to Norwegian Teenagers and School Counsellors

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ABSTRACT

Norway is reforming its career guidance system. This article explores how these reforms are experienced in schools around Norway, and attends to the way in which the concept of "career" is understood. There is a difference between an "everyday" and a scholarly understanding of the concept, between seeing it as hierarchical, or viewing career more democratically. This study explores how these tensions are worked through by Norwegian young people and guidance counsellors. The article argues that this tension is pronounced because the concept of "career" has entered Norway as part of a top down policy discourse. Consequently, there is a need to re-contextualise the ideas of career and career guidance to connect them with Norwegian culture.

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Introduction

A crucial point in education is the choice of upper secondary when students are 15 or 16 years old. After ten years of general education in compulsory school, students in Norway choose between academic or vocational pathways. Schools are obligated to provide guidance to support the students in this process. The three-year programme Educational Choice (Utdanningsvalg) is recommended as a part of the weekly syllabus in years eight to ten and is designed to provide opportunities for students to learn about themselves, education and work. In theory, this programme provides young Norwegian's with what is often described internationally as "career education" which concerns itself with individuals' relationships with work, learning and leisure as well as in some cases with their civic or community role (Hooley, 2015; Law, 1996; Super, 1976). In practice, how this programme is run is up to the school, and in many cases, the programme focuses on immediate educational choices rather than on the transition to the labour market and longer-term career development (Røise, 2020). In addition to the Educational Choice subject, Norwegian schools also have school counsellors, who are teachers with an additional role to counsel and guide students about their educational and career choices.

This article examines how the concept of career is understood by both young people making career choices and the adults who seek to help them to make these choices. It asks *what are the barriers and opportunities to introducing the concept of career into Norwegian schools?* It is part of a larger study exploring how Norwegian culture frames the career concept. Norway offers an interesting case study for exploring the relationship between culture, politics, the concept of career and

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the educational practice of career education and guidance, because it has been going through a period of reform in which the value of career and career guidance has been clearly articulated in a range of policy documents. The concept of “career” as a part of the educational system is relatively new to Norway and the study was designed to explore the barriers and opportunities associated with bringing the idea of “career” into Norwegian schools and wider Norwegian culture. In this article we will view the concept of career through the lens offered by young Norwegians in the tenth grade who are participating in the education system and making career decisions and the school counsellors who seek to help them.

The article builds on and responds to two key strands of research. Firstly, discussion about the position of career and career guidance within international policy discourses, particularly in relation to the cultural alignment of such concepts when they are introduced into new areas (Ribeiro & Fonçatti, 2018; Sultana, 2017a; 2017b). Secondly, it engages with a long-standing tradition of research in Norway and beyond into youth transitions and educational decision making (e.g., Hegna, 2014; Vogt, 2018). Such discussions are also part of an expansion of research into career and career guidance in the Nordic countries (Haug et al., 2020). While this article has implications beyond Norway, particularly for other Nordic states, its focus is on Norway rather than on the broader Nordic context.

As career is often associated with hierarchical and individualistic advancement it sits uneasily with Norwegian ideals about equality and the place of the individual in the community (Bakke, 2018a). The concept of “career”, as Watts (2015, p. 31) argues, is “richly ambiguous” referring both to hierarchical conceptions of the individual’s progression through organisations and occupations and to more democratic conceptions that recognises lateral and downwards moves in work. Career theories have been heavily reliant on rigid ideas about organisations, agentic conceptions of the individual and have often diminished cultural and demographic factors (Young & Collin, 2000). The narrowness of theoretical conceptions of “career” has been extensively challenged in work which has highlighted the ways in which gender, ethnicity, sexuality, national culture and other factors intersect with career (Arthur, 2018; Hancock & Taylor, 2019; McMahon & Patton, 2019). There has also been a move to resituate career as lifelong and life-wide process which is not confined to paid work, but also takes into account aspects of life such as caring, leisure and citizenship (Sultana, 2017b; Super, 1990; Watts, 2015). However, as Haug et al. (2020, p. 1) note, “such a theoretical definition of career might not be immediately recognisable to the average citizen of Oslo, Odense or Oulu.”

In the following sections, we will describe the methods which have been used to explore and analyse how the concept of career is understood by the young Norwegians who are participating in the education system and the school counsellors who seek to help them. The findings from this study show that key themes that emerged from discussions with young people and school counsellors were the unfamiliarity of the career concept, the location of its relevance in the future, and the centrality of agentic ideas about intentionality and the management of risk. We also report the way in which extended discussion about career through the interviews led participants to a realisation of the potential value of the idea of career. In the discussion we address how the career concept can be made more relevant for the students by connecting it to the philosophy of *danning*, where *danning* is important in education but understood as encompassing scholarly education and is a personal development towards citizenship (Asplin & Lingås, 2016). But first we will finish the introduction by considering more deeply the context within which the study is taking place and the extent to which career guidance is a global phenomenon that can exist unproblematically in different places across the world.

Context

In recent years Norway has been reforming its education and skills system. These reforms have been driven in part by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reviews

of the country (OECD, 2002; 2014). Historically Norway has had a weak career guidance system with the OECD's (2002) review concluding that there was a lack of national strategy and coordination, significant gaps in provision between regions, weak professionalisation and a tendency to focus on the provision of information over the broader and more developmental aims of career guidance. Following that review the country engaged in a process of reform aided by both the OECD and by the European Union, notably through Norway's participation in the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network. Kompetanse Norge (Skills Norway) is now the national coordinator for guidance and has provided a structure for the development of guidance in Norway including the foundation of regional centres and the development of professionalisation in the country. However, the OECD (2014) identified several areas for further development, sparking a new period of reform through the publication of the report of a national expert committee (NOU, 2016) and the subsequent adoption of its recommendations into policy. The reforms are ongoing with Kompetanse Norge recently publishing a new framework for career management skills, professional ethics, quality and professional competence Haug et al. (2019).

An outcome of these reforms has been the introduction of the concepts of "career", "career guidance", "career education", "career competencies and skills" and "career management" as central to the development of the country's skills system. These concepts are new and challenging for the Norwegian education system, but, at least potentially, have an interesting relationship to the idea of danning as they are about encouraging students to think about themselves and their place in the world.

Globalisms and Localisms

While key concepts associated with career do not have entirely stable meanings, there is a broad array of policy literature, including definitions that have been formally adopted by governments and international organisations. Czarniawska and Sevón (2005) propose the term "globally travelling ideas" to describe such supranational exchange of ideas and concepts, and argue that rather than being transferred between contexts, ideas that travel need to be translated and adapted to new contexts to function.

Ribeiro and Fonçatti (2018) have described the way in which the integration of international conceptions of career and career guidance into local cultures can be viewed as the interplay between globally and locally produced ways of thinking. Ribeiro and Fonçatti describe both top-down "globalised localisms" which take a local phenomenon from one context, such as career guidance, and impose it in contexts across the globe and bottom-up "localised globalisms" which rethink and remake phenomenon in ways that fit with the local context. Both of these processes are evident in Norway, with the country making use of international organisations like the OECD and the European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN) in its reform of career guidance, but also seeking to contextualise these globally travelling ideas through extensive consultation and co-production between policymakers, the profession and other stakeholders (Haug et al., 2019).

This process of policy borrowing and lending, particularly where it is facilitated by supranational political actors like the OECD and the ELGPN, has received considerable critical scrutiny. Halpin and Troyna (1995) describe the political nature of the way such policy borrowing and lending legitimates the actors involved and the policies that they advocate for. Such processes also raise concerns about the efficacy of borrowed policy and call to mind Sadler's dictum (1900, p. 49) that:

we cannot wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower from one bush and some leaves from another, and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant.

Writing specifically about the process of policy borrowing and lending with respect to career guidance, Sultana (2011) echoes the points that borrowing and lending are bound up with politics and power and cautions that without careful attention to local practices and epistemologies such

globally travelling policies can be either ineffective or at worst oppressive as they impose globalised localisms onto local realities.

The debates about the nature of career and the place of career guidance in Norway are clearly articulated in the policy sphere. E.g. a recent green paper advising on policy developments in career guidance in Norway in the years to come, recommended that activities within the field of vocational and educational guidance should be denoted by the word career in the future (NOU 2016: 7, 2016). The country has moved into a process of implementation alongside ongoing policy, research and conceptual work. This means that as policymakers continue to struggle with epistemic questions about the nature, definition and intellectual heritage of career guidance, there are also practitioners in schools seeking to implement these ideas and young people seeking to make use of these services as they develop their own careers.

Methods

This article presents research which examines how tenth-grader students engage with the concept of career as they make their transition into upper secondary and looks at how these young people view career as a concept and its relationship to life, learning and work. Taking a qualitative approach underpinned by phenomenological metatheory (Jérôme, 2014), the study sought to capture rich descriptions of experience rather than results which were representative or widely generalisable (Creswell, 2013). The study took place during a period of reforms (described in the introduction) which sought to shift thinking about career and institute career guidance into Norwegian schools. This shifting context raised further questions about the relationship between the career transitions of the young people, the career guidance provided in schools and the policies that are seeking to shape these. All of the empirical research was carried out by the lead author of the research with the second author contributing to analysis and writing. Both authors are employees at a Norwegian university involved in the initial education and continuing professional training of career counsellors, making possible an ongoing relationship with career counsellors in schools across Norway, akin to the participants in this study.

The study was approved by the *Norwegian Centre for Research Data* (NSD) on the grounds that no sensitive personal information would be collected. Consent forms were collected from parents in advance by the help of the schools. The students were also asked before the interview started to give oral consent and it was explained to them that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the interview situation at any time if they would like to. Counsellors were also asked to give oral consent.

A total of 43 tenth-graders (aged 15-16) and six counsellors (one from each of the participating schools) were interviewed. A purposive convenience sample (Johnson & Christensen, 2014) was utilised to capture geographical and demographic variety, and subjects were engaged by making direct contact with the head of six compulsory/lower secondary schools at five locations and asking permission to visit the school and interview their tenth-graders. When schools confirmed, they were asked to identify a diverse, in terms of gender, social background and career aspiration, group of eight students for the interviewer. The municipalities where the schools were located varied from small communities of approximately 1000 inhabitants to cities of 200,000 inhabitants. They also included both inland and coastal communities as this is an important cultural and economic distinction within Norway. The sample has a distribution of female/male of 22/21 for the teenagers and 5/1 for the counsellors.

Group interviews at five of these six schools were completed, with a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine students in the groups. Individual interviews were subsequently conducted with two students from the focus groups. These students were engaged by asking for two volunteers for individual interviews at the end of the group interview. If there were more than two volunteers, participation was decided by drawing lots. There were only individual interviews and no group interview at one of the schools because the contact at the school had not been able to identify a group, only two individual students.

All interviews were recorded, and recordings were deleted after being transcribed. All subjects were given pseudonyms in the transcription process, and identifying markers, e.g., name of school, municipality etc. were not included in the transcripts. Data from both teenagers and counsellors were coded together in one dataset. Focus group interviews were chosen as this strategy is commonly used when exploring attitudes and the meaning of concepts. Focus groups allowed us to observe group dynamics and gain greater insights into the way that career was discussed between participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Morgan & Krueger, 1998). Group interviews were combined with individual interviews to enable in-depth exploration of individual perspectives on issues that came up in the group interviews (Kvale et al., 2009). This strategy was beneficial as it allowed for further detailed follow up exploration of the key issues that were raised in group interviews. It also allowed us to triangulate the findings to see if they were influenced by the research approach used or by social pressure within the focus group. The findings from the different research approaches were broadly similar and have been analysed together in this article.

The group interviews covered a wide range of issues concerning career choices and used a semi-structured interview guide developed by the interviewer and piloted in individual interviews with a separate group of tenth-graders three months prior to the first interview. The interview guide centred around issues of experiences with choosing upper secondary, experiences with contextual influences and questions about their conceptualisation of career and was refined and then used in the research interviews. These topics were brought up consistently, but were not consistently *phrased*, throughout the interviews as the interviews were semi-structured and responsive to the participants. The interviewer concentrated on the issues that elicited discussion in the groups and asked follow up questions to clarify participants responses on the subjects. In all of the sessions with groups, individual students and counsellors, the participants were asked about the concept of career, what they thought of it, what they thought it meant and if it could be related to the situation of choosing upper secondary.

The counsellors responded easily to questions about the career concept, but in the interviews with the teenagers, there was often a need to extend or rephrase the question, perhaps by offering an example. On occasions, this would require further probing, for example by offering a statement for the interviewees to respond to. This challenged the balance between the interviewer's role as moderator of, and participant in, the group discussion (Krueger & Krueger, 1998; Morgan & Krueger, 1998). The discussion and the changed balance may raise the question whether this study was in fact an action-research inquiry (Stringer, 2013), however an important aspect of action research is the continued involvement of the subjects as co-researchers in the "Look-Think-Act"-process of action research (p. 8), and the design and framing of the study did not allow for this. Action research offers interesting possibilities for future research building on this study as a way to develop career counselling practice.

For this article, a dataset was created from all of the transcripts by extracting excerpts from the interviews which focused on the career concept. The excerpts all began with the interviewer introducing the career concept and starting a discussion about the meaning of it. Transcripts were analysed in NVivo using the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach (Braun et al., 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006). RTA is an open, flexible approach that suggests synthesising and extracting themes from the material in six steps: (1) familiarising yourself with the material; (2) generating codes; (3) constructing themes; (4) revising themes; (5) defining themes; and (6) producing the report.

After having explored the new dataset through several readings and mind-maps, the decision to not generate codes from the material was made, but to code to predetermined nodes. The RTA framework emphasises the importance of the researcher as decision-maker and interpreter in the process (Braun et al., 2018). The material was then coded on to six nodes covering different aspects of the career concept: *what is it, how does it happen, when is it, who has got it, why do we do it, where is it*. All data was coded together, but the counsellor role was identifiable by their pseudonyms. During the coding process, the nodes *emotional response* and *change* were added, as the initial nodes missed important content about subjects' experiences when discussing career in the interviews. Reviewing

the content of these nodes, looking for latent material and focusing on a more implicit or conceptual level, five themes were identified in the material: *unfamiliarity, future as worker/citizen, intentionality, risk, and realisation*. After rearranging the material into these categories, further analysing and synthesising the content the results are presented in this report.

Findings

The Reflexive Thematic Analysis identified five main themes which are summarised in table 1. Comments from the focus groups and the individual interviews are discussed together.

The table below illustrates the key differences between the way in which the teenagers and the school counsellors engaged with each of these themes. Following Morrow (2005, p. 252 and appendix) recommendations about “thick descriptions”, we will now move on to discuss each of the themes in turn.

Unfamiliarity

When the interviewer raised the issue of “career” in the interviews, the initial reaction was often silence and looks shot across the room to see if any of the other participants had a response. Trying to find ways into the topic, the interviewer would follow up with questions like “*who has got a career?*”, which typically elicited responses like “*career ... Well, I picture a singer’s career and stuff like that, like superstar career, I don’t know why I’m picturing that really*” (Sindre).

Sindre viewed “career” as relevant to celebrities but found it difficult to see the relevance of the term to the people around him. Sindre and his fellow 10th graders live in a rural community of approximately 1000 inhabitants, where the word career has not been used to describe what goes on in most peoples’ lives:

... here, there’s no culture or tradition for it. As I say, well we do have some graduates, but we don’t have that many graduates in this community (...). So, there’s no tradition or culture for it being a good thing. (Counsellor N)

Table 1. Summary of themes identified in the analysis by teenagers and school counsellors.

Themes	Teenagers	School counsellors
Unfamiliarity	Career is not about me. Career happens in the future. Career is not relevant in rural communities.	Career has negative associations. Career is not a natural part of the students’ vocabulary. Career is about adults.
Future as worker	Career is about work. One can have a career in any job. Career is about what you do for a living for the rest of your life.	Career represents a new dimension that needs to be defined. Career is more than work. Career is about becoming someone and developing your identity and citizenship.
Intentionality	Career happens through goal-oriented activities. Achievement is doing what you enjoy. Choices are the core of career. Choices cannot always be planned.	Youth design their identity and career choice is a part of this.
Risk	Choices both close and open up opportunity. Choosing something runs the risk of closing other options. Using big words makes it feel more risky and difficult.	Career is a big picture, and getting the students to transcend their immediate worries is important. Helping students to differentiate and nuance between what is important and what is not relieves tension.
Realisation	I recognise career in my life. I feel like my career is already underway. Choice of upper secondary feels more important.	Using the word “career” in education and counselling opens up the discussion. I intend to use the word “career” in my practice.

In other words, having a career in this community is for the minority who follow the academic track into higher education and now hold positions in public administration and professional work. Having a career in this community is “*dependent on what you would like to become*” (Halvor). Work within this community takes place within an opportunity structure (Roberts, 1968) which constrains not just the jobs that are immediately available but also the horizon of possibility. So, young people can mostly see work that is practical and unskilled, and report that the kind of “office jobs” and “office people” who have careers are unusual and mysterious.

Unfamiliarity with the concept of a career was more marked for the rural teenagers in this sample, but even those in larger towns and cities found it difficult to connect the concept to their lives. They struggled to see the relevance of career, which they associated with work and professional work in particular, to the decision that they were currently making about upper secondary education.

Students discussed “Educational Choice” noting that “*we have talked about education and upper secondary and stuff*” (Vibeke). However, “career” remained as something that belonged in the future after upper secondary was complete. As Torild said, it is “*what you like do when you get older*”. Others were able to fill in more detail about what a career might be, “*it’s the future, I see career as just the same as having a future*”, with a “*job, house and car, kids and a woman and all that*” (Bendik). In general, the participants viewed career as something that belonged in the adult world rather than something that they were enacting now through their educational choices.

The school counsellors in the sample reported that they avoided the use of the career term, even in career education or counselling. Some viewed career as a “*technical term*” to be used in education but which was not part of Norwegian’s everyday vocabulary: “*I don’t know if I’ve ever sat at either a tea party or at work and there’s been talk about career!*” (Counsellor L). Other counsellors explain that the word career is little used because it is associated with negative prejudice about who has got a career and what kind of person that shows them to be. For example, “*some believe career to be like – yeah that’s like a career woman, someone who sacrificed having kids. Don’t want kids because she wants to be a career woman*” (Counsellor B). Counsellors were also concerned that the career word is loaded with expectations about achievement and that this would perhaps put pressure on the students. Therefore, while some parents/adults feel at home in the career concept, counsellors realise that “*others will think it is, will experience it as extreme and perhaps threatening and strange, it becomes alienating*” (Counsellor S) when the career word is used.

In other words, most teenagers do not associate the idea of *career choice* with the situation of choosing upper secondary pathways. They view career rather as something that will happen in the future. The counsellors are consciously not applying the term in career education or conversations about their forthcoming educational choice because they also have concerns about the relevance of the concept to Norwegian culture.

Future as Worker and/or Citizen

There are important tensions in the way that students and counsellors understanding the career concept. For students, the concept of career is linked to the idea of paid work, while the counsellors have a broader definition that addresses work as part of citizenship.

For the teenagers in the sample, career starts when post-secondary learning is complete, and relates primarily to paid work. Career is “*what you will be doing for the rest of your life, until pension*” (Kåre). For most, career is seen as particularly relevant for high status jobs. A minority of the teenagers either spontaneously or after some reflection were willing to broaden their ideas about career and conclude that it is about life in all its varieties, particularly paid work. So Einar noted that “*career can be all jobs*” and Torild said that career is “*what you do, what you like live by*” (Torild).

The counsellors report that they try to show their students that the future holds more than just work. For them this is what the career concept is about: “*yes, [calling it career] will add a new*

dimension to this” (Counsellor N) because career “*is about developing*”, about “*lifelong learning*”, it is “*more holistic*”, it “*holds more*” (Counsellors B, L, R and S, respectively). What they try to achieve in career education and counselling, echoes the Norwegian understanding of *danning*, where helping young people to become a “*useful person*” (Counsellor L) is the general aim of education. Career competences implies understanding and assuming “*responsibility for your own career, or your own future as both student and citizen*” (Counsellor S). This highlights the role that the counsellors see career guidance as having in fostering “*social responsibility*” (Counsellor N) and helping young people find a place, not just in the labour market, but in wider society.

Intentionality

A common belief among the teenagers is that a good career is something one needs to work on, it does not happen all by itself. The idea of career as a series of intentional, agentic decisions and acts, is important to the thinking of many of the young people. “*You need to build all the stones to get a good career*”, says Marianne, paraphrasing the metaphor of building something stone by stone. But plans may not be possible to clearly express, as Hege explains “*even though you don’t think about what you will become when you choose [an] academic [program] (...) there are some thoughts there, without you completely knowing (...). Don’t think about it but it’s there.*” A starting point is to “*do something you think is fun, something you at least like. That is important. I don’t quite know what I think is fun, what I like doing yet, so we’ll see, take things as they come*” (Daniel).

For the teenagers in the sample, having *chosen* a job or vocation is an essential pre-condition of having a career. The teenagers see career as connected to work and so without choosing a job it is not possible to have a career. Some students also feel that a career is particularly linked to higher status jobs or at least to jobs that require formal training. Katrine explains that career starts “*after having gotten a vocation, or a job in a vocation*” by which she implies that it is only a job that comes with an education that can be considered as part of a career.

This vision of a career begins with a *choice* and proceeds by acting on that choice to achieve the original aim. Having a choice is important because it allows individuals to direct their careers and access work that is enjoyable and fun. While Janne had “*career- yuck!*” as an initial reaction to the career word, denoting the negative associations about career and success previously mentioned, for the teenagers reaching a state of equilibrium between livelihood and well-being *is* to be successful: “*the thing is not to ace all tests and getting the best education but trying your best. (...) you got to do what you want (...) [that is to] achieve a career, your dream if you can say that*” (Mirja and Siri). The students are attracted to the idea of fit as a key part of developing their career and report that attending to your personal features, motivations and aspirations will help to direct you into an enjoyable and sustainable livelihood.

While the teenagers have many ideas and thoughts about the role of intentionality in career, the counsellors see how the students work at intentionality as they enact their individuality and independence. From an adult perspective, they can see that things do not always go as planned. The counsellors see the teenagers struggling with these big issues by “*designing their life and their image*” and by working on their “*identity, and this choice is tied to who do I want to be, not as much what will I do, but who, will this fit with my idea about who I want to be*” (Counsellor S). For the counsellors, helping the teenagers to see that they cannot plan and control everything is important.

Risk

Students also recognised that they were dealing with risk when they were making educational and career decisions. The risk management that students were doing positioned career decisions as turning points in life when some possibilities would be abandoned in favour of others. So, Synne, who was in the process of choosing an academic programme for upper secondary, recognised that this

would lead her onto university and to professional careers. An important motivator for this was what Rodger (1961) calls “planned procrastination”. As she puts it “*we’re only 15 and 16 years old, we don’t know what we want in life, so I’m thinking having an open choice is good*” (Synne). She does not want to go into a specific direction now, as “*those having chosen vocational education will most likely keep going and have already decided the direction of their career at 15–16 years of age, and that is a bit scary*”. Being stuck in something that does not feel right is a worrying prospect, and for Synne living in a small community where the opportunity structure is limited, she observes that people do not move between jobs very often and so the risk of becoming stuck feels real.

Using the term “career” brings with it new connotations and increases the perceived risk. As Ludvig says, *‘you are a bit shaky when having to decide what to choose and using big words like that [career] will maybe make it harder.’* If career is understood as choice making about specific work trajectories and kinds of life, it places a lot of responsibility onto the young people. If they feel that their self-knowledge is not adequate and that there is no turning back, then making a career choice is risky business.

The counsellors reported that a key part of their role was helping young people to put things into perspective and make more realistic estimates about risk. Counsellor T described how for young people “*everything becomes equally important quite easily, everything needs to be like in CAPS LOCK, so getting them to nuance a bit*” is important. The counsellors balance the need to get the students “*turned ON*” to these questions, while at the same time reassuring them that career is not only “*to be successful, but simply about living a life*” (Counsellor T).

In summary, the teenagers reported that when they designated their forthcoming choice as a career choice it gave it more weight. Some of them experienced this negatively, because it magnified the risk of making the “wrong” choice. In response to this the counsellors try to put the young people’s fears into perspective, although in practice this can be difficult.

Realisation

After discussing the career word the teenagers often expressed a new realisation that they could see their forthcoming educational choice as a *career choice*. “*Actually, it does, it is really about getting a job where you want to work, I don’t know, that career word, it was a little, I had to think for a bit*” (Sindre).

Discussing the career word in the interviews helped students to connect their aspirations and motivations to their present situation. After having discussed the word career for a while, Endre states “*actually, I feel like [career] has already started. I am in the last year [of lower secondary] and the grades achieved here count.*” For many students, this new understanding of their forthcoming educational choice as a *career choice* changes the way that they experience choosing upper secondary pathways. The concept of career imbues these choices with greater importance. Torild says “*it sounds big, it sounds like a really important choice. And it is too, but I have not really thought of it*”, and Daniel agrees: “*it sounds a bit bigger [...] when you said like career choice, then [I thought] wow, things are happening*”.

The notion that the career word could be used about the teenagers’ educational choice, also resonated with the counsellors. Some counsellors reflected that the word could be used more: “*I think they [the students] will say that no, we have not talked about it (...) [and] now I started thinking about what to do differently next year!*” (Counsellor B). Some felt that there would be value in incorporating this term in career education activities where “*it will make a difference in a wide sense where it’s more than just the choice of upper secondary [we talk about], that it’s about different competencies that enable [people] to take responsibility for their own career*” (Counsellor S). Or simply, “*I know I should have talked more about this and made them conscious that no matter what they choose they are making career choices*” (Counsellor B).

In summary, the discussions in the interviews elicited realisations for both the teenagers and counsellors. The teenagers reported that they now understood that the career word could be

relevant to their current choices. Counsellors noted that the career concept had the potential to open up new perspectives for students and felt motivated to apply the career word more in education and counselling.

Discussion

The findings raise three important issues which we will address in this section. The first issue follows on from our discussion of the “globally travelling” nature of ideas like career and career guidance and the way in which such policy borrowing and lending creates challenges for their implementation in different contexts (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Ribeiro & Fonçatti, 2018; Sultana, 2011). The concept of career does not immediately align with Norwegian culture and this creates issues for the teenagers and the counsellors. Secondly, we will consider what the impacts of the problematic localisation of the career concept are for the implementation of Norway’s career reforms which have provided the main context for this study (Haug et al., 2019; NOU, 2016). Finally, we will explore how the *realisation* that we reported in the findings section suggests more critical ways that the career concept can be interpreted and transformed into a localised globalism that is meaningful in Norway.

There was a high degree of consistency in the perspectives discussed by the teenagers in this study. While the teenagers were recruited for diversity (urban/rural, male/female, academically focused/vocationally focused) their understanding of the concept of career was similar. In other articles one of the authors has explored these geographical, gender and pathway differences further (Bakke, 2018b, n.d.). However, in this article the primary dichotomy that we have explored is between the young people and their counsellors.

Career as Globalised Localisms

The findings show that while the teenagers and the counsellors in this study have different associations with the word career, for both career denotes something *unfamiliar*. They both experience the idea of career as a globalised localism (Ribeiro & Fonçatti, 2018) that is coming to them from outside of their culture and which they either need to resist or to do some work to integrate into a meaningful concept.

The teenagers view career as something that is coming from the adult world, which relates to their *future as a worker* and which is separate from their current lives. They recognise that career is something that they will need to address eventually, but not now. Consequently, their first perspective on career is to set the concept aside and focus on the immediate issues around them.

Despite their sense that career is relevant to their *future as a worker*, rather than to their present lives, the young people articulate a vision that is closer to more traditional conceptions of career. For them, career is something that is *intended*, it is something that happens as a result of agentic decisions, and results in a fit with the labour market. This kind of conception of career as a predictable project of hierarchical advancement also underlies young people’s sense of *risk*. They have choices to make which will affect their whole life and many worry that they might make the wrong ones. In this sense, they recognise career and career guidance as a responsabilising technology that asks them to absorb sole responsibility for their careers and take the blame if things do not go well.

The counsellors have a more critical perspective on the career concept. They view it as associated with problematic ideas about individualistic achievement, as is often associated with ideas about protean careers (Hall, 1996). This kind of agentic conception of career has clear links with neoliberal and technocratic discourses which view career guidance as a way in which individuals can be encouraged to take sole responsibility for the development of their human capital (Hooley et al., 2018). Such individualistic thinking about career fits poorly with Norwegian values (Bakke, 2018a) and the counsellors feel the need to resist it and arguably they remake it as a localised

globalism (Ribeiro & Fonçatti, 2018) in alignment with the local concept of *danning*. So they variously seek definitions of career that are “*more holistic*” (Counsellor N), that help young people to become a “*useful person*” (Counsellor L) and that foster “*social responsibility*” (Counsellor N). The counsellors’ moral unease with the career concept, at least without adapting it, is compounded by the teenagers’ unfamiliarity with the concept, and the combination of this ethical concern and the difficulty of engaging young people with the concept allows them to avoid using the concept overtly.

While the counsellors choose not to use the term “career” with their students, they recognise that it has a “technical” meaning. When discussing this technical term, the counsellors’ reject the idea that career should be linear and protean. They seek to counter-balance the young people’s concern about the risks of career decision making with a more hermeneutic rationality (Sultana, 2014) that views career as something that just *happens*, as life is lived and navigated. One way to interpret this would be to view the counsellors as attempting to resist the globalised localisation of the concept of career by connecting the requirement to engage with career back into the more humanistic principles of *danning* that underpin Norwegian education.

Counsellors as Street-level Bureaucrats

The challenges of language and the concepts that exist around the ideas of career and career guidance raise some important issues for the implementation of the OECD-inspired career reforms of the Norwegian government. The introduction of the concepts of career and career guidance have taken more than ten years to move from idea to policy, but such international policy borrowing (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Sultana, 2011) is not the end of the story in the creation and implementation of policies. Just as policies morph as they move from country to country, they are also shaped through the policy making and implementation process in country with local actors having an important role to play in determining how the policy is ultimately manifested.

So far, we have discussed the cultural unease that exists in relation to the globalised localisms that are being advanced. Both young people and counsellors are working with cultural understandings of career that are different in important ways from those that are being disseminated by national policy and which have been borrowed from global discourses perpetuated by actors like the OECD. However, this goes beyond an implicit cultural disjuncture. The career counsellors’ response to these conceptions of career is more purposeful and active. They do not just find them challenging but are involved in a form of resistance. They are acting as what Goodin et al. (2011) describe as “street-level bureaucrats”. As frontline actors they are not merely enacting what national-level policy-makers are asking them to do. Rather, they are interpreting and remaking the policies for their local context, potentially transforming it out of all recognition. Counsellor S’s sense that people will experience career “*as extreme and perhaps threatening and strange ... [and] alienating*” and the consequent decision to downplay the term in educative discourse provides a good example of a street-level bureaucrat adapting a national policy to local conditions. A similar allegory of counsellors acting as “street-level bureaucrats” can be found in Norwegian research which argues that counsellors operationalise the targets for counselling dependent on expectations and pressure they experience, from their institution or from the community. The counsellors in this research perceived themselves as acting on behalf of a shared understanding of the priorities in their schools, which determined the focus for the counselling that they delivered (Mathiesen et al., 2014).

Such complex negotiations between the national and the local highlights the challenges of policy implementation. National policymakers are often unaware of the ways in which local policies are being transformed out of sight in ways that can encompass both legitimate (to the originator of the policy) local variation and forms of covert resistance. This raises two important questions for national policymakers. Firstly, should policymakers celebrate local wisdom and encourage the adaption of career guidance policies into locally situated practices by those charged with implementing the policy. Alternatively, should they insist on fidelity to national policy goals and approaches? Secondly, how should policymakers engage with these “street-level bureaucrats”?

How important is it to transform school counsellors into local advocates through the use of soft policy instruments like education and engagement and how far should they be compelled to tow the line, even where they have doubts, through regulations and sanctions? These questions are relevant to all national implementations of internationally inspired policies, but they are particularly pertinent to career guidance, which, as in Norway, is often implemented in highly voluntaristic ways with very limited compulsion (Hooley, 2019).

Finding the Localised Globalism

The *realisation* that took place in some of the interviews about the more expansive and lifelong meanings of the career concept points to one way forward. As the participants talked about career within the interviews they were able to release it from its globalised neoliberal baggage and start the process of localising it to their needs. As Watts (2015) argues the ambiguity of the term “career” is one of its strengths as it can be defined and redefined to meet the needs of different epochs, policy regimes and localities.

As participants engaged more deeply with the concept of career, both the counsellors and the students recognised that the term could be used to describe a range of life choices including educational choices, choices about family, citizenship and self as well as about work. Such broad conceptions of career roles connect to the developmental career theories of Super (1990) who broadened thinking about career beyond paid work. In this remade conception, career becomes life-long and life-wide and Endre has the realisation that it “*has already started*”.

Building a career can be about navigating the world, achieving life satisfaction and developing a personal story and identity. Career theorists including Krumboltz (2009) and Savickas (2012) have made similar arguments that could be used further to enrich these discussions. Other theorists have sought to make the link between career as an individual endeavour and career as a part of the social contract by which individuals contribute to society (Watts, 2015) and even as a site for transformative political struggles (Hooley et al., 2018). These theoretical resources connect to the rethinking that participants were doing as they realised that career had the potential to be a more flexible concept than they first thought and sought to localise it and link it to more Nordic and Norwegian concepts including that of *danning* (Asplin & Lingås, 2016).

Recent initiatives in Norway have attempted to respond to some of the concerns highlighted in this article and others that have argued that Norway is importing responsibilising versions of career guidance (Kjærgård, 2020). The government’s main agency *Kompetence Norge* (Skills Norway) has steadily increased the intensity of its consultation processes and has increasingly moved away from translating international policies into a more consultative process of policy development that involves professionals and, to some extent, users of services. This has resulted in the development of a national framework for career guidance across all sectors which includes a quality framework, ethical standards, professional competence standards and a framework of career learning (Haug et al., 2019). Such a framework seeks to localise the globalisms of career and career guidance, routing them in concepts that align better with Norwegian values. But they also seek to create a more legitimate way to curtail the actions of street-level bureaucrats and create a consistent and recognisable national career guidance system. It will be interesting to see whether the young people and the career counsellors who follow on from those depicted in this article view these new conceptions of career as more authentically local or whether they continue to remake and resist them.

Conclusion

The process of re-contextualising and re-territorialising a policy runs the risk of taking something that works in one context and replanting it somewhere else where it is unlikely to take root (Sadler, 1900). Where global ideas travel, we see tensions between normative global values and local identities, contexts and rationalities (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Ribeiro & Fonçatti, 2018; Sultana,

2011). No matter how far they travel, concepts and ideas are underpinned by ideologies and underlying assumptions from the context they originated in, which can be different in the context they travel to (Hofstede, 2001). Uncritical use of such globally travelling concepts can result in poor policymaking that either struggles to gain a foothold in the new context or even more concerningly which imports oppressive concepts in an attempt to remake the borrowing context in the image of those who are lending.

The concepts of career and career guidance are good examples of concepts that have travelled the world. However, their ambiguity and malleability mean that they have the potential to be reformed into different shapes and meanings becoming localised globalisms that enrich without displacing local ways of thinking and doing.

The research presented in this article offers a ground-level view of the tensions that emerge in such cases of policy borrowing and lending. It shows how counsellors' act as "street-level bureaucrats" variously resisting, remaking and incorporating the new ideas that are flowing from international organisations through Norwegian policymakers. It also shows that citizens themselves, in this case the young people participating in guidance, have a huge capacity to resist and sideline policy initiatives. The counsellors' conversations about career, are where policies and theories about career guidance and education are put into practice in the Norwegian education system. If the counsellors' resist the career concept and keep it out of their conversations, they keep educational and vocational choices in lower secondary separate. Ultimately this disconnect between educational and vocational choices creates problems because in reality choices about educational pathway are strongly linked to vocational possibilities. As many of the counsellors realised through participating in this project, the career concept offers a way to bring these ideas together and to open up a wider perspective and encourage critical thinking about it.

Despite some reservations amongst our participants, after a period of discussion of the concepts of career and career guidance, many saw these ideas as useful, particularly if they could be successfully embedded into the wider Norwegian worldview. The possibility of connecting career guidance practices with the philosophy of *danning* is a good example of the localisation of globalisms. The long term success of the current Norwegian reforms of career guidance is likely to depend on the ability of policymakers, practitioners and citizens to build a meaningful bridge between these international concepts and the local context.

The research presented in this study offers localised insights into an important issue which has much wider resonance. We have explored whether it is helpful to borrow the concept of career and the educational practice of career guidance and insert them into contexts where they have limited or problematic histories. Our answer, is inevitably, "yes, but ...". In Norway we can see the potential value of these concepts and interventions, but also the need to ensure that they are recontextualised and regrounded in local epistemologies, language and practices. This speaks to wider concerns about the value of international policy borrowing, particularly when mediated by international bodies like the OECD (Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Sultana, 2011). There would clearly be value in further research that builds on this and explores similar issues in other countries and in other areas of policy. We hope that the present study provides some inspiration for such work and highlights the importance of listening closely to the voices of young people and professionals when implementing any educational policy.

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Appendix

All the items are in Norwegian.

E-mail to school leaders

Emne: Forespørsel om utlån av elever til forskningsprosjekt

Hei!

Jeg sender deg som skoleleder følgende forespørsel:

Jeg ønsker å komme i kontakt med leder og/eller rådgivere på ungdomsskoler, ettersom jeg er doktorgradsstipendiat ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer og jobber med et prosjekt som handler om tenåringers opplevelse av å gjøre karrierevalg. Jeg tar kontakt for å undersøke om jeg kunne få tillatelse til å foreta datainnsamling på din skole, altså intervju 2 10.klassinger i forbindelse med prosjektet. Jeg ser for meg at det hadde vært aktuelt å besøke **** mandag 3. oktober, hvis det kunne passe. Grunnen til at forespørselen havner hos dere på ****, er ****.

Prosjektet – og jeg for så vidt – er knyttet til Master i karriereveiledning som tilbys lærere som ønsker utvidet rådgiverkompetanse innen karriereveiledning. I faggruppen er vi opptatt av å få med brukerstemmene i forskningen, med andre ord ønsker vi å få en forståelse av hvordan tenåringene opplever det å skulle bli en karriereaktør. Jeg legger ved link til siden om meg og prosjektet på Høgskolen:

http://hil.no/forskning/forskerutdanning_ph_d/ph_d_kandidatene_ved_hil_phd_candidates_at_luc/ingrid_bardsdatter_bakke

Link til masterstudiet, hvis dette er av interesse: <http://hil.no/studiekatalog/karriereveiledning2>

Jeg planlegger et prosjekt i to faser, hvor den første fasen består av en kvalitativ undersøkelse med fokus på tenåringenes opplevelse av sin valgsituasjon og en etterfølgende fase hvor gyldigheten av funnene testes ut på en større gruppe gjennom en kvantitativ undersøkelse som for eksempel survey.

Hvis du synes dette høres interessant ut og kunne tenke deg å høre mer om dette, ringer jeg deg gjerne for å fortelle litt mer om prosjektet og forklare hvordan jeg ser for meg å gjennomføre intervjuene. Hvis jeg kan returnere tjenesten, for eksempel ved å presentere yrket mitt for klassen, gjør jeg gjerne det.

Jeg håper dette høres interessant ut, og håper å høre fra deg!

Med vennlig hilsen

Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke
Ph.D.-stipendiat/research fellow

Forskningssenter for barns og unges kompetanseutvikling/
Research Centre for Child and Youth Competence Development
(view research [profile](#))

ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@hil.no

Mobil: 466 96 308

<https://no.linkedin.com/in/ingridbb>





Høgskolen i Lillehammer

Lillehammer University College • hil.no

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

”Hvordan opplever norske tenåringer det å skulle ta yrkes- og utdanningsvalg i 10. klasse?”

Ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer utdanner vi rådgivere som skal bistå de som trenger hjelp til å velge yrke eller utdanning. For å vite mer om hvordan de skal kunne hjelpe tenåringer med å ta et yrkes- eller utdanningsvalg i 10. klasse, må vi vite mer om hva tenåringer tenker om dette temaet.

Så spørsmålet er derfor: er det OK at din 10.klassing deltar i et forskningsintervju?

Bakgrunn og formål

Disse intervjuene er en del av et doktorgradsprosjekt som utføres i samarbeid med et masterstudium i veiledning ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer, og gjøres fordi vi trenger å få mer kjennskap til hvordan veiledning og rådgivning blir mottatt blant unge.

Det skal utføres 10-15 intervjuer med 10.klassinger, og innholdet skal skrives ut til tekst og samles i en stor database. Vi har valgt å bruke intervju fordi da er det lettere å fortelle fritt om hva man tenker. Vi håper å finne noen felles temaer som beskriver hvordan tenåringer opplever å ta dette valget, og dette vil hjelpe oss når vi senere skal jobbe med hva fagplaner skal inneholde, og hva lærere og veiledere kan gjøre i faget «Utdanningsvalg».

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

For å delta i intervju, må eleven levere signert samtykkeskjema. for et intervju og kartlegging med spørreskjema. Et intervju tar ca 1 til 1 ½ time, inkludert en kartlegging med et spørreskjema. Spørsmålene vil handle om det man synes er viktig med tanke på å velge hva man skal gjøre etter 10. klasse. Praten tas opp med lydopptaker.

Det skal ikke spørres etter sensitive personopplysninger, som religiøse, filosofiske, og politiske oppfatninger, etnisk tilhørighet, seksuelle forhold, eller helseopplysninger.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Alle personopplysninger som kan knyttes til individer som navn, skole og kommune fjernes i teksten. Det skal heller ikke lagres en oversikt over hvem som har deltatt i studien. Lydopptakene skal slettes når de er transkribert. Når studien er ferdig og resultatene skal publiseres, skal det ikke være mulig å kjenne igjen noen av de som ble intervjuet.

Det anonymiserte datamaterialet vil imidlertid kunne brukes i senere forskning ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer. Kontakt vårt personvernombud Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS (NSD) hvis du har spørsmål om dette.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn.

Dersom du har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med doktorgradsstipendiat Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke, tlf 466 96 308, eller ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@hil.no. Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

Svarslipp:

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og godkjenner at mitt barn deltar i forskningsintervju. Jeg godkjenner også at datamaterialet i anonymisert form kan brukes til senere forskning ved Høgskolen i Lillehammer.

(Signert av foresatt, dato)

Interview guide

Gruppeintervjuer

- Presentasjonsrundre
- Introdusere meg selv og prosjektet. (HiL utdanner rådgivere, ønsker å få brukerstemmen inn)
- Kan dere fortelle om hvordan dere er i gang med å forberede valg av videregående?
 - Faget utdanningsvalg, hva skjer der? Praksis, info
 - Prater med rådgiver?
 - Eller andre?
 - Hvem vil dere helst snakke med om dette? og hvordan: enkeltsamtaler, gruppesamtaler, rådgiver, lærer
 - Hva er det viktig å tenke på nå når dere skal velge?
 - Jobb, lønn, foreldrebedrift, flytte, ikke flytte, arbeidsmuligheter
- Synes dere man kan bestemme over valget selv?
 - Hva påvirker?
 - Er det vanskelig å velge?
- Hva trengs av info/undervisning for å gjøre et valg?
 - Hva fungerer bra/dårlig av det dere har fått til nå?
- Hva tenker dere om at gutter og jenter ofte velger typiske yrker?
 - Hvorfor tror dere det er slik
 - Er det vanlig her? Hvorfor?
- Når aktuell problemstilling: Om å velge videregående og å flytte ut for å ta utdanning – hva synes dere om dette?
- Det dere velger nå – hvor viktig er det for det dere skal gjøre som voksne? Tenker man på «voksenlivet»?
- Karriere – hvordan henger dette sammen med alt det vi har snakket om nå? Hva tenker dere dette betyr, er det noe dere kjenner igjen?

Enkeltintervjuer

- Hvordan synes du det er/var å velge hva du skal gjøre etter 10. klasse?
- Hvis jeg ber deg om å fortelle om din opplevelse av å skulle gjøre dette valget, hva tenker du på da?
 - Positivt/negativt, enkelt/lett
- Hva synes du det er viktig å tenke på i forbindelse med valg av videregående?
 - Deg, familien din, lokalsamfunnet, storsamfunnet, hva som helst
- Er det noe bestemt som gjør at du velger som du gjør/har gjort?
 - Person, hendelse, noe annet
- (Hvordan ser du for deg livet ditt om 10-20 år)
- Hva tenker du om valget ditt med tanke på det livet du ser for deg?
- Hva betyr karriere for deg?

MELDESKJEMA

Meldeskjema (versjon 1.4) for forsknings- og studentprosjekt som medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt (jf. personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter).

1. Intro		
Samles det inn direkte personidentifiserende opplysninger?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	En person vil være direkte identifiserbar via navn, personnummer, eller andre personentydige kjennetegn. Les mer om hva personopplysninger .
Hvis ja, hvilke?	<input type="checkbox"/> Navn <input type="checkbox"/> 11-sifret fødselsnummer <input type="checkbox"/> Adresse <input type="checkbox"/> E-post <input type="checkbox"/> Telefonnummer <input type="checkbox"/> Annet	NB! Selv om opplysningene skal anonymiseres i oppgave/rapport, må det krysses av dersom det skal innhentes/registreres personidentifiserende opplysninger i forbindelse med prosjektet.
Annet, spesifiser hvilke		
Samles det inn bakgrunnsopplysninger som kan identifisere enkeltpersoner (indirekte personidentifiserende opplysninger)?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	En person vil være indirekte identifiserbar dersom det er mulig å identifisere vedkommende gjennom bakgrunnsopplysninger som for eksempel bostedskommune eller arbeidsplass/skole kombinert med opplysninger som alder, kjønn, yrke, diagnose, etc.
Hvis ja, hvilke		NB! For at stemme skal regnes som personidentifiserende, må denne bli registrert i kombinasjon med andre opplysninger, slik at personer kan gjenkjennes.
Skal det registreres personopplysninger (direkte/indirekte/via IP-/e-post adresse, etc) ved hjelp av nettbaserte spørreskjema?	Ja <input checked="" type="radio"/> Nei <input type="radio"/>	Les mer om nettbaserte spørreskjema .
Blir det registrert personopplysninger på digitale bilder eller videoopptak?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Bilde/videoopptak av ansikter vil regnes som personidentifiserende.
Søkes det vurdering fra REK om hvorvidt prosjektet er omfattet av helseforskningsloven?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	NB! Dersom REK (Regional Komité for medisinsk og helsefaglig forskningsetikk) har vurdert prosjektet som helseforskning, er det ikke nødvendig å sende inn meldeskjema til personvernombudet (NB! Gjelder ikke prosjekter som skal benytte data fra pseudonyme helseregistre). Dersom tilbakemelding fra REK ikke foreligger, anbefaler vi at du avventer videre uttylling til svar fra REK foreligger.
2. Prosjektittel		
Prosjektittel	Arbeidstitel: Hvordan opplever norske tenåringer det å ta et karrierevalg i 10. klasse?	Oppgi prosjektets tittel. NB! Dette kan ikke være «Måstepoppgave» eller liknende, navnet må beskrive prosjektets innhold.
3. Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon		
Institusjon	Høgskolen i Lillehammer	Velg den institusjonen du er tilknyttet. Alle nivå må oppgis. Ved studentprosjekt er det studentens tilknytning som er avgjørende. Dersom institusjonen ikke finnes på listen, tar den ikke avtale med NSD som personvernombud. Vennligst ta kontakt med institusjonen.
Avdeling/Fakultet	Avdeling for pedagogikk og sosialfag	
Institutt	BUK - forskningssenter for Barn og Unges Kompetanseutvikling	
4. Daglig ansvarlig (forsker, veileder, stipendiat)		
Fornavn	Ingrid Bårdsdatter	Før opp navnet på den som har det daglige ansvaret for prosjektet. Veileder er vanligvis daglig ansvarlig ved studentprosjekt.
Efternavn	Bakke	
Stilling	Stipendiat	Veileder og student må være tilknyttet samme institusjon. Dersom studenten har eksterne veileder, kanbiveileder eller fagansvarlig ved studiestedet stå som daglig ansvarlig.
Telefon	46696308	Arbeidssted må være tilknyttet behandlingsansvarlig institusjon, f.eks. underavdeling, institutt etc.
Mobil		
E-post	ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@hil.no	NB! Det er viktig at du oppgir en e-postadresse som brukes aktivt. Vennligst gi oss beskjed dersom den endres.
Alternativ e-post	ingrid.bardsdatter.bakke@gmail.com	
Arbeidssted	Høgskolen i Lillehammer	

Adresse (arb.)	Postboks 052	
Postnr./sted (arb.sted)	2604 Lillehammer	
Sted (arb.sted)	Lillehammer	
5. Student (master, bachelor)		
Studentprosjekt	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Dersom det er flere studenter som samarbeider om et prosjekt, skal det velges en kontaktperson som føres opp her. Øvrige studenter kan føres opp under pkt 10.
6. Formålet med prosjektet		
Formål	Formål/problemstilling: "hva er norske tenåringers opplevelse av å gjøre karrierevalg" på bakgrunn av en forventning om at bedre kjennskap til dette vil danne et bakteppe for å gjøre teori innen karriere og veiledning mer relevant og tilgjengelig for elevene i grunnskolen. Per i dag gjøres det mye arbeid for å legge til rette for anvendelse av karriereteori i grunnskolen gjennom faget "utdanningsvalg", og dette prosjektet vil bidra til å berede grunnen for at karriereveiledere og lærere forbedrer sine forutsetninger for å oppleve å lykkes med formidlingen, i tillegg til at det er sentralt at forskere og teoretikere innen feltet kjenner til det som kjennetegner en av karrierefeltets viktigste brukergrupper, mtp videre forskning og teoribygging.	Redegjør kort for prosjektets formål, problemstilling, forskningsspørsmål e.l.
7. Hvilke personer skal det innhentes personopplysninger om (utvalg)?		
Kryss av for utvalg	<input type="checkbox"/> Barnehagebarn <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Skoleelever <input type="checkbox"/> Pasienter <input type="checkbox"/> Brukere/klienter/kunder <input type="checkbox"/> Ansatte <input type="checkbox"/> Barnevernsbarn <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lærere <input type="checkbox"/> Helsepersonell <input type="checkbox"/> Asylsøkere <input type="checkbox"/> Andre	
Beskriv utvalg/deltakere	Kvalitativ del: 10-15 skoleelever i 10. klasse på ungdomsskolen, både fra by og bygd. Jeg vil finne frem til 6 ungdomsskoler med 10.klasser med minimum 10 elever, på 6 forskjellige lokasjoner, fra Sør-, Øst-, Vest-, Midt- og Nord-Norge, 3 skoler fra urbane miljø dvs bymiljø i kommune med mer enn 15000 innbyggere, og 3 fra bygdemiljø dvs kommune med innbyggertall under 15000. Å sette 15000 innbyggere som skille, sammenfaller i stor grad med om det er tilbud om videregående utdanning på disse lokasjonene. Kvantitativ del: på bakgrunn av forrige undersøkelse skal det lages et nettbasert spørreskjema som skal sendes til flere 10.klasser over hele landet.	Med utvalg menes dem som deltar i undersøkelsen eller dem det innhentes opplysninger om.
Rekruttering/trekking	Det legges opp til å rekruttere et bredt utvalg. Det legges derfor opp til at utvalgets størrelse, geografiske spredning, og fordeling mellom bygd og by vil gi bred variasjon i utvalget. Kvalitativ del: Etter å ha innhentet samtykkeskjema fra 6 10.klasser vil det ved loddtrekning trekkes ut 1-2 elever fra hver klasse til intervju, om mulig med en deltaker av hvert kjønn slik at kjønnsfordelingen er 50/50 når datainnsamlingen er ferdigstilt. Mao er det planlagt et delvis randomisert utvalg. Kvantitativ del: jeg vil sende forespørsel til minimum 10 ungdomsskoler i hvert fylke med forespørsel om å delta, med link til nettbasert spørreskjema. Det legges vekt på jevn fordeling mellom by/bygd.	Beskriv hvordan utvalget trekkes eller rekrutteres og oppgi hvem som foresir dem. Et utvalg kan trekkes fra registre som f.eks. Folkeregistret, SSB-registre, pasientregistre, eller det kan rekrutteres gjennom f.eks. en bedrift, skole, idrettsmiljø eller eget nettverk.

Førstegangskontakt	Førstegangskontakt vil gjennomføres ved å kontakte ledelsen ved skolene og introdusere prosjektet, og be om å settes i kontakt med kontaktlærer for 10. klasse. Kvalitativ del: I samarbeid med skolens ledelse og kontaktlærer vil jeg introdusere prosjektet for klassen med muntlig presentasjon og informere om loddtrekning av deltakere på bakgrunn av samtykkeskjema. Jeg vurderer å gi bidrag til felles klassekasse som insentiv hvis halvparten eller flere av elevene leverer inn samtykkeskjema, dette er ikke bestemt. Kvantitativ del: Hvis kontaktlærer/rådgiver samtykker til å introdusere prosjektet for sin 10.klasse, vil jeg sende link til nettbasert spørreskjema med introduksjonsmail til elevene.	Beskriv hvordan kontakt med utvalget blir opprettet og av hvem. Les mer om dette på temasidene .
Alder på utvalget	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Barn (0-15 år) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ungdom (16-17 år) <input type="checkbox"/> Voksne (over 18 år)	Les om forskning som involverer barn på våre nettsider.
Omtrentlig antall personer som inngår i utvalget	Kvalitativ: 10-15, kvantitativ: 1500-2000	
Samles det inn sensitive personopplysninger?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Les mer om sensitive opplysninger .
Hvis ja, hvilke?	<input type="checkbox"/> Rasemessig eller etnisk bakgrunn, eller politisk, filosofisk eller religiøs oppfatning <input type="checkbox"/> At en person har vært mistenkt, siktet, tiltalt eller dømt for en straffbar handling <input type="checkbox"/> Helseforhold <input type="checkbox"/> Seksuelle forhold <input type="checkbox"/> Medlemskap i fagforeninger	
Inkluderes det myndige personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Les mer om pasienter, brukere og personer med redusert eller manglende samtykkekompetanse .
Samles det inn personopplysninger om personer som selv ikke deltar (tredjepersoner)?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	Med opplysninger om tredjeperson menes opplysninger som kan spores tilbake til personer som ikke inngår i utvalget. Eksempler på tredjeperson er kollega, elev, klient, familiemedlem.
8. Metode for innsamling av personopplysninger		
Kryss av for hvilke datainnsamlingsmetoder og datakilder som vil benyttes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Papirbasert spørreskjema <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elektronisk spørreskjema <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personlig intervju <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gruppeintervju <input type="checkbox"/> Observasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Deltakende observasjon <input type="checkbox"/> Blogg/sosiale medier/internett <input type="checkbox"/> Psykologiske/pedagogiske tester <input type="checkbox"/> Medisinske undersøkelser/tester <input type="checkbox"/> Journaldata	<p>Personopplysninger kan innhentes direkte fra den registrerte (f.eks. gjennom spørreskjema, intervju, tester, og/eller ulike journaler (f.eks. elevmapper, NAV, PPT, sykehus) og/eller registre (f.eks. Statistisk sentralbyrå, sentrale helseregistre).</p> <p>NB! Dersom personopplysninger innhentes fra forskjellige personer (utvalg) og med forskjellige metoder, må dette spesifiseres i kommentar-boksen. Husk også å legge ved relevante vedlegg til alle utvalgs-gruppene og metodene som skal benyttes.</p> <p>Les mer om registerstudier her.</p> <p>Dersom du skal anvende registerdata, må variabeliste lastes opp under pkt. 15</p>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Registerdata	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Annen innsamlingsmetode	
Tilleggsopplysninger	De som er trukket ut til intervju skal kartlegges med Levenson's Wellness form (som skal oversettes til norsk). Der innhentes ingen personopplysninger. Etter at den kvalitative undersøkelsen er gjort, skal resultatene herfra gi grunnlag for et nettbasert spørreskjema som skal ut til et større utvalg, og dette skjemaet er naturlig nok ikke mulig å presentere enda - men temaet er det samme som den kvalitative delen.	
9. Informasjon og samtykke		

Oppg hvordan utvalget/deltakerne informeres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Skriftlig ■ Muntlig □ Informeres ikke 	<p>Dersom utvalget ikke skal informeres om behandlingen av personopplysninger må det begrunnes.</p> <p>Les mer her.</p> <p>Vennligst send inn mail for skriftlig eller muntlig informasjon til deltakerne sammen med meldeskjema.</p> <p>Last ned en veiledende mail her.</p> <p>NB! Vedlegg lastes opp til sist i meldeskjemaet, se punkt 15 Vedlegg.</p>
Samtykker utvalget til deltakelse?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ja ○ Nei ○ Flere utvalg, ikke samtykke fra alle 	<p>For at et samtykke til deltakelse i forskning skal være gyldig, må det være frivillig, uttrykkelig og informert.</p> <p>Samtykke kan gis skriftlig, muntlig eller gjennom en aktiv handling. For eksempel vil et besvart spørreskjema være å regne som et aktivt samtykke.</p> <p>Dersom det ikke skal innhentes samtykke, må det begrunnes.</p>
Innhentes det samtykke fra foreldre for barn under 15 år?	Ja ○ Nei ●	<p>Les mer om forskning som involverer barn og samtykke fra unge.</p>
Hvis nei, grunn	De som skal spores om å delta er 10.klassinger som er 15 eller 16 år gamle, og det skal heller ikke innhentes sensitive opplysninger eller personopplysninger om dem. De vil derfor kunne samtykke selv. Eventuelle 10.klassinger som er under 15 år vil ikke bli spurt om å delta i undersøkelsen.	
Innhentes det samtykke fra foreldre for ungdom mellom 16 og 17 år?	Ja ○ Nei ●	<p>Les mer om forskning som involverer barn og samtykke fra unge.</p>
Hvis nei, grunn	De som skal spores om å delta er 10.klassinger som er 15 eller 16 år gamle, og det skal heller ikke innhentes sensitive opplysninger eller personopplysninger om dem. De vil derfor kunne samtykke selv. Eventuelle 10.klassinger som er under 15 år vil ikke bli spurt om å delta i undersøkelsen.	
10. Informasjonssikkerhet		
Hvordan registreres og oppbevares personopplysningene?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ På server i virksomhetens nettverk □ Fysisk isolert PC tilhørende virksomheten (dvs. ingen tilknytning til andre datamaskiner eller nettverk, interne eller eksterne) ■ Datamaskin i nettverkssystem tilknyttet Internett tilhørende virksomheten □ Privat datamaskin □ Videoopptak/fotografi ■ Lydopptak ■ Notater/papir ■ Mobile lagringsenheter (bærbar datamaskin, minnepenn, minnekort, cd, eksterne harddisk, mobiltelefon) □ Annen registreringsmetode 	<p>Merk av for hvilke hjelpemidler som benyttes for registrering og analyse av opplysninger.</p> <p>Sett flere kryss dersom opplysningene registreres på flere måter.</p> <p>Med «virksomhet» menes her behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.</p> <p>NB! Som hovedregel bør data som inneholder personopplysninger lagres på behandlingsansvarlig sin forskningsserver.</p> <p>Lagring på andre medier - som privat pc, mobiltelefon, minnepenne, server på annet arbeidssted - er mindre sikkert, og må derfor begrunnes. Slik lagring må avklares med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon, og personopplysningene bør krypteres.</p>
Annen registreringsmetode beskriv		
Hvordan er datamaterialet beskyttet mot at uvedkommende får innsyn?	<p>Lydopptak skal gjøres med pc, og de transkriberte intervjuene skal også lagres på pc, evt. på minnepenn ved behov for å benytte annen pc. Poen som skal brukes er tilknyttet HiLs servere gjennom Cisco VPN-klient, og filer oppdateres automatisk mellom pc og hjemmeområde. Både VPN-klient og pc er passordbeskyttet. Pc står på låsbar rom når i bruk, og er ellers fast følge og under oppsikt når den ikke er på kontoret.</p>	<p>Er f.eks. datamaskintilgangen beskyttet med brukernavn og passord, står datamaskinen i et låsbar rom, og hvordan sikres bærbare enheter, utskifter og opptak?</p>
Samles opplysningene inn/behandles av en databehandler?	Ja ● Nei ○	<p>Dersom det benyttes eksterne til helt eller delvis å behandle personopplysninger, f.eks. Questback, transkriberingsassistenter eller folk, er dette å betrakte som en databehandler. Slike oppdrag må kontraktreguleres.</p>
Hvis ja, hvilken	<p>Jeg vil undersøke muligheten for å benytte leverandør av spørreskjema når det gjelder prosjektets kvantitative del. Det kan også bli aktuelt å leie noen til å transkribere. Det skal i så fall skrives kontrakt.</p>	

Overføres personopplysninger ved hjelp av e-post/internet?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	F.eks. ved overføring av data til samarbeidspartner, databehandler mm.
Hvis ja, beskriv?		Dersom personopplysninger skal sendes via internet, bør de krypteres tilstrekkelig. Vi anbefaler for ikke lagring av personopplysninger på nettskytjenester. Dersom nettskytjeneste benyttes, skal det inngås skriftlig databehandleravtale med leverandøren av tjenesten.
Skal andre personer enn daglig ansvarlig student ha tilgang til datamaterialet med personopplysninger?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	
Hvis ja, hvem (oppgi navn og arbeidssted)?		
Utleveres/deles personopplysninger med andre institusjoner eller land?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Nei <input type="radio"/> Andre institusjoner <input type="radio"/> Institusjoner i andre land	F.eks. ved nasjonale samarbeidsprosjekter der personopplysninger utveksles eller ved internasjonale samarbeidsprosjekter der personopplysninger utveksles.
11. Vurdering/godkjenning fra andre instanser		
Søkes det om dispensasjon fra taushetsplikten for å få tilgang til data?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	For å få tilgang til taushetsbelagte opplysninger fra f.eks. NAV, PPT, sykehus, må det søkes om dispensasjon fra taushetsplikten. Dispensasjon søkes vanligvis fra aktuelt departement.
Hvis ja, hvilke		
Søkes det godkjenning fra andre instanser?	Ja <input type="radio"/> Nei <input checked="" type="radio"/>	F.eks. søke registerer om tilgang til data, en ledelse om tilgang til forskning i virksomhet, skole.
Hvis ja, hvilken		
12. Periode for behandling av personopplysninger		
Prosjektstart	01.05.2016	Prosjektstart Vennligst oppgi tidspunktet for når kontakt med utvalget skal gjøres/datainnsamlingen starter.
Planlagt dato for avslutt	30.06.2019	Prosjektslutt: Vennligst oppgi tidspunktet for når datamaterialet enten skal anonymiseres/slettes, eller arkiveres i påvente av oppfølgingsstudier eller annet.
Skal personopplysninger publiseres (direkte eller indirekte)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Ja, direkte (navn e.l.) <input type="checkbox"/> Ja, indirekte (bakgrunnsopplysninger) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nei, publiseres anonymt	NE! Dersom personopplysninger skal publiseres, må det vanligvis imidlertid eksplisitt samtykke til dette fra den enkelte, og deltakere bør gis anledning til å lese gjennom og godkjenne sitåter.
Hva skal skje med datamaterialet ved avslutt?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Datamaterialet anonymiseres <input type="checkbox"/> Datamaterialet oppbevares med personidentifikasjon	NE! Her menes datamaterialet, ikke publikasjon. Selv om data publiseres med personidentifikasjon skal som regel øvrig data anonymiseres. Med anonymisering menes at datamaterialet bearbejdes slik at det ikke lenger er mulig å føre opplysningene tilbake til enkeltpersoner. Les mer om anonymisering .
13. Finansiering		
Hvordan finansieres prosjektet?	Doktorgradsstipendiat med egne driftsmidler	
14. Tilleggsopplysninger		
Tilleggsopplysninger		



Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke
Avdeling for pedagogikk og sosialfag Høgskolen i Lillehammer
Postboks 952
2604 LILLEHAMMER

Vår dato: 09.05.2016

Vår ref: 48310 / 3 / STM

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 11.04.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>48310</i>	<i>Hvordan opplever norske tenåringer det å ta et karrierevalg i 10. klasse?</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Høgskolen i Lillehammer, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Ingrid Bårdsdatter Bakke</i>

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstiller kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 30.06.2019, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Siri Tenden Myklebust

Kontaktperson: Siri Tenden Myklebust tlf: 55 58 22 68

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.



REKRUTTERING OG FØRSTEGANGSKONTAKT

Forsker tar kontakt med skoleledelsen som formidler kontakt med lærer for de aktuelle klassene. Dersom skoleledelsen ønsker det vil forsker møte opp for å presentere prosjektet for elevene. I prosjektets første del vil forsker gjennomføre intervjuer og gruppeintervjuer med et mindre antall elever fra de ulike skolene. På bakgrunn av resultatene fra intervjuene vil forsker distribuere et nettbasert spørreskjema til samtlige elever i 10. klasse ved skolene som inngår i utvalget. Vi ber om at forsker ettersender spørreskjemaet så snart dette foreligger.

Av hensyn til taushetsplikten legger vi til grunn at ledelsen ved skolen videreformidler epost med link til spørreskjema.

INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

I meldeskjemaet er det krysset av for at utvalget består av elever og lærere. Vi oppfatter imidlertid at lærerne kun skal bistå med rekruttering, og har derfor endret dette i meldeskjemaet. Videre minner vi om at dersom elever under 15 år inkluderes i studien må det innhentes samtykke til deltakelse fra foresatte. Utvalget informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er i all hovedsak godt utformet, men vi har imidlertid følgende kommentarer:

- Følgende setning kan tas bort ettersom det ikke er nødvendig å innhente samtykke til bruk av anonyme data: "Det anonymiserte datamaterialet kan brukes av andre forskere, men det er bare forskere i faggruppen knyttet til dette masterstudiet på Høgskolen i Lillehammer som vil få denne muligheten så lenge prosjektet pågår."
- Følgende setning slettes: "Kontakt vårt personvernombud Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS (NSD) hvis du har spørsmål om dette."

Revidert informasjonsskriv skal sendes til personvernombudet@nsd.no for utvalget kontaktes.

FRIVILLIGHET

Mens skole er en obligatorisk arena for elever og ansatte, skal deltagelse i forskning være frivillig. Forespørselen må derfor alltid rettes på en slik måte at de forespurte ikke opplever press om å delta, gjerne ved å understreke at det ikke vil påvirke forholdet til skolen hvorvidt de ønsker å være med i studien eller ikke. Videre bør det planlegges et alternativt opplegg for de som ikke deltar. Dette er særlig relevant ved utfylling av spørreskjema i skoletiden.

INFORMASJONSSIKKERHET

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Høgskolen i Lillehammer sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

DATABEHANDLER

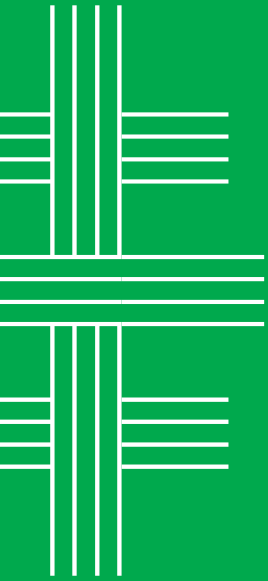
Forsker opplyser i meldeskjemaet at det kan bli aktuelt å benytte leverandør av nettbasert spørreskjema og en transkriberingsassistent. Leverandør av spørreskjema og transkriberingsassistent vil være databehandlere for prosjektet. Høgskolen i Lillehammer skal inngå skriftlig avtale med databehandler om hvordan personopplysninger skal behandles, jf. personopplysningsloven § 15. For råd om hva databehandleravtalen bør inneholde, se Datatilsynets veileder: <http://www.datatilsynet.no/Sikkerhet-internkontroll/Databehandleravtale/>.

PROSJEKTSLUTT

Forventet prosjektslutt er 30.06.2019. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/skole, alder og kjønn)
- slette digitale lydopptak

Vi gjør oppmerksom på at også databehandler (leverandør av spørreskjema og transkriberingsassistent) må slette personopplysninger tilknyttet prosjektet i sine systemer. Dette inkluderer eventuelle logger og koblinger mellom IP-/epostadresser og besvarelser.



Inland Norway
University of
Applied Sciences

This thesis asks how does culture work as a context for conceptualisations of career, and how does this relate to the implementation of the concept of career in Norwegian schools in the experience of tenth graders and career counsellors? The thesis investigate Norwegian culture, examine how cultural values surface in discussions about career choices; and explore how tenth graders and school counsellors understand the career concept. Career guidance and learning are situated in the Norwegian education system, but the focus of the thesis is split between a macro and a micro level, and it addresses the philosophical and ideational underpinnings of Norwegian culture while it also addresses tenth graders about to transition into upper secondary and their counsellors.

The study explores the uneasy position of career in Norwegian culture. It also explores the way that theories of career and career learning have travelled the world and shows that when theories transfer between contexts, the results may be unexpected. The study argues that while the development of Norwegian career guidance has focused on structure, discussions on the content of career theories have emerged more recently and that the question of 'what is career' in Norway now is of importance.

Discussing the research questions, the thesis argues that a big and defining narrative of the Norwegian culture is the relationship between the 'I' and the 'we', or the idea that individuals are autonomous within a framework of responsibility. Further, a democratic career concept is discussed, encompassing danning as a central idea as it has agency for educators to help students develop citizenship. However, as lived experience and career concepts are in a reciprocal relationship of meaning making, an understanding of democratic career concept as informed by lived career is proposed.