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# Sustainable development as a fourth paradigm for twenty-first century careers and lives for a positive psychology in space and time

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Sustainable development as a fourth paradigm for twenty-first century careers advances the first three fundamental paradigms: Individual differences (Münsterburg, 1910; Parsons, 1909) typified by matching individuals with jobs; Individual development (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Super, 1957, 1990) focused on career management during lifespan; Life Design (Savickas, 2012; Savickas et al., 2009) focused on constructing meaningful life and careers (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024).

The fourth paradigm is rooted in the contributions of two prominent research and intervention areas: Sustainability Science (Komiyama & Takeuchi, 2006; Takeuchi et al., 2017), and Human Security Psychology (Carr et al., 2021; Hodgetts et al., 2023). Within Sustainability Science and its transdisciplinary approach, the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development (Di Fabio, 2017a, 2017b; Di Fabio & Cooper, 2023; Di Fabio & Peiró, 2018, 2023; Di Fabio & Rosen, 2018, 2020; Peiró et al., 2023; Rosen & Di Fabio, 2023) provides insights and contributions to sustainable development and sustainable development goals using

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psychological lens. The other pillar, the Human Security Psychology (Carr et al., 2021; Hodgetts et al., 2023), underscores the paramount importance of prioritizing research and intervention regarding human security, especially on the basis of present challenging circumstances.

The fourth paradigm (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024) encourages the early construction of positive resources, sustainability and sustainable development in terms of culture, and preventive and early interventions. In this perspective, it (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024) explicitly refers to practices of guidance and career counseling for their potential in helping regarding these aspects. In this framework, it mentions two valuable contributions by Guichard (2022), Maree (2024), and also the availability of some positive resources to pay attention to such the recent construct offered by Di Fabio & Svicher (2023, 2024a, 2024b) of eco-generativity.

Guichard (2022) brought to fruition the concept of active life, starting from Arendt (1958), in terms of labor, work, and action. Labor encompasses activities associated with the fundamental requirements for survival; work includes activities that involve the production of durable goods; action refers to the act of collaborating collectively to address societal issues. Initiating from the notion of active life as articulated by Arendt (1958), Guichard (2022) advocates for the development of innovative interventions structured to support individuals, particularly the youth, not solely in preparing for specific occupational roles, but also in addressing the broader question of how to plan their work and life: «By what forms of active life can I contribute with others (thus can we contribute) to sustainable and fair development in solidarity?». On this line, the fourth paradigm asks for new intervention.

Citing Guichard (2022) «educational workshops that focus on the skills needed to contribute to sustainable development, rather than just preparing for specific job roles... community-based initiatives that promote local production and exchange systems, reducing the ecological footprint of economic activities» (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024, p. 207). Guichard (2022) reminds us that new guidance and career counseling practices and intervention are needed for

supporting a constant focus on sustainable and equitable development.

Maree (2024) introduced a strategy for addressing the challenges posed by the Anthropocene epoch and its implications for the future. Within the Psychology of Sustainability and Sustainable Development framework, he proposed the «Career Counselocene» era, promoting the necessity of revitalizing career counseling through an approach integrating ecological awareness. The proposal highlights the significance of focusing on the detrimental effects of human exploitation on the environment, while concurrently enhancing the well-being of both individuals and ecosystems.

Furthermore, the construct of eco-generativity was recently offered (Di Fabio & Svicher, 2023, 2024a, 2024b) as a response to the current challenges of sustainability and sustainable development. Eco-generativity constitutes a positive resource to help preserve the environment «for the benefit of future generations through sustainable practices, awareness and responsibility towards the environment, communities and the common good» (Di Fabio & Svicher, 2024a, p. 2).

In the framework of the fourth paradigm (Di Fabio & Hartung, 2024), these reflections prepared the road for the redefinition of a sustainable career. Before the advent of this fourth paradigm for 21st-century careers, the concept of sustainable careers was characterized as a series of continuous career experiences over time, encompassing various social contexts. This approach emphasized individual agency, thereby infusing personal meaning into the career path (De Vos et al., 2020; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). In recent times, the concept of a sustainable career ecosystem (Donald et al., 2024) has been incorporated into this framework. This ecosystem encompasses individuals, career practitioners, local organizations, professional associations, and governmental entities on the one hand; on the other hand, it also introduces the role of artificial intelligence in terms of a current actor at both national and global levels (Donald et al., 2024).

The advancements of the fourth paradigm ask for redefining sustainable careers, because in these relevant

advancements about sustainable careers, the nature in its complexity as well as future generations are still missing. Thus, the fourth paradigm, advancing the perspective of sustainable careers, advocates for an inclusive perspective, able to respect humanity as well as the natural world in its entirety. It means to encompass animals, plants, and the planet, while also taking into account future generations and the continued existence of life on Earth (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024).

So, the new definition of a sustainable career, grounded in the fourth paradigm, incorporates the previous advancements (De Vos et al., 2020; Donald et al., 2024; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015), also consider Corporate Social Responsibility (Bal, 2024) with its focus on contributing to «greater environmental, social, human, manufactured and financial capital» (Bal, 2024, p. 193). The fourth paradigm introduces an integration in terms of the complexity and richness of the «nature as a whole (animals, plants, and the planet)» (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024, p. 207) not only in the present but also in the future as well as future generations. The fourth paradigm underlines as an advanced integrated perspective of sustainable career requires «a construct anchored to a sustainable development in an inclusive perspective, completely protected from any individualistic myopia in an approach that considers of equal value themselves as well as others, near and far in space and in time, including current and future generations (Di Fabio, 2017b; Di Fabio & Tsuda, 2018) as well as the nature» (Hartung & Di Fabio, 2024, p. 207), and the future of the planet. On these bases, Sustainable development as a fourth paradigm for twenty-first century careers and lives can contribute to enhance a positive psychology in space and time, not only in the present but also for future, promoting positive preventive perspectives (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Di Fabio & Saklofske, 2021) for current as well as future generations and the planet.

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