Bridging (at least?) sociology and psychology?

A relational view on career boundaries at the nexus of structure and agency

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Introduction

Although boundarylessness has become a fashionable concept organizational analysis in the 1990s (Montgomery & Oliver, 2007; Gunz et al., 2000), the concept of boundaries has always been central and ubiquitous in the social sciences (Heracleous, 2004). In careers research, however, there has been little effort to explain the genesis of corresponding boundaries by now (Inkson et al., 2012). By contrast, boundaryless careers (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Tams & Arthur, 2010) represent the mainstream in careers research (Inkson et al., 2012).

Recently, Inkson et al. (2012) advised to bring boundaries back to careers research. They indicated that contemporary careers theories underemphasize what they call the interaction between career agency and social structure in the formation, perpetuation and reproduction of boundaries. Indeed, everyone engaged in empirical career research sees both the individual and structural dimensions of careers – but has no theory capable of bridging both (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997). This represents a problem which has already been recognised over 30 years ago (Law, 1981).

On the one hand, there are developmental theories (like e.g. Super, 1957; Super et al., 1996; Levinson, 1978; 1996; Vaillant, 2002), focusing the psychological aspect of career related boundary creation (Sullivan & Crocitto, 2008). Referring to developmental psychology (e.g., Erickson, 1980), age and stage in a given psychosocial context represent significant boundaries. This perspective is mirrored by the more narrow literature on career related boundary creation, which is both ontologically and epistemologically constructivist (Gunz et al., 2000; 2007).

On the other hand, theories of opportunity structures (Roberts, 1985) view boundaries as contextually formatted. "Working class kids always get working class jobs" (Hodkinson, 2008, p. 7), and empirical literature on elite reproduction indeed points towards the importance of social origin for careers (Hartmann, 2000; 2001; 2007).

Both perspectives have two things in common: First, they suggest prioritizing *either* agency *or* structure in the boundary creation process over the other. Although the psychological perspective is more common in careers research (Schein, 2007), contextual alternatives exist as well (Mayrhofer et al., 2007). Second, they conceptualize agency and structure as entities existing independent from one another. However, in essence every boundary appears always

highly psychological (and thus associated with the individual, hereinafter referred to as agent), yet *at the same time, and to the same extent* highly sociological as well (gendered, raced, classed) (Ortner, 2006).

This paper addresses this issue with a relational view (Emirbayer, 1997), taking advantage of praxis theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Schatzki et al., 2001; Ortner, 2006) and especially developments thereof for organizational (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008) and management studies (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005) in general, as well as in careers theory in particular (Iellatchitch et al., 2003). From this perspective, a career-related set of dispositions of judgement and action appears as career boundary, referring to the embodiment of a social order within a career field, and the corresponding career capital portfolio. This set of dispositions, called career habitus, opens up a corridor for career related agency in a specific context, both creatively enabling and structurally restricting career praxis. Careers research has already acknowledged the potential for this joyride (e.g. Arthur et al., 1999, p. 158; Iellatchitch et al., 2005; Inkson, 2007, p. 30; Kyriakidou & Özbilgin, 2004; Mayrhofer et al., 2002), but has not yet realized its potentials and frontiers.

The paper contributes to the SWG in a threefold way: first, on an epistemological level, it provides an alternative to the mainstream view on the genesis of career related boundaries. In contrast to the contemporarily dominating constructivist framework (Gunz et al., 2007), a relational alternative implies a structuralist constructivism, which is at the same time a constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Second, on an ontological level, this turns the attention to the space between organizations, individuals and their context (Bradbury & Bergmann Lichtenstein, 2000) in the course of the boundary creation process. The surplus lies in a reduction of the psychological bias in careers research, which is called for (Schein, 2007), without throwing the baby out with the bath water. Because thirdly, on a theoretical level, I will argue that the subjective/objective divide in the realm of a boundary-focused scholarship represents an alleged and mostly artificial dualism (Martin, 2003). Career related boundaries are quite on the contrary the result of permanent and in a specific way bounded transactions of agents within a social structure, with the latter being reproduced in the course of these transactions simultaneously. Structure and agency are seen as recursive elements. Consequently, it gets possible to focus on the career context without sacrificing agency. This raises awareness to the conditioning process of the context for career agents, as well as the horizon for action (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) – or space of possibles (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008) – left for making a career in a nevertheless creative way, by accumulating and in-

vesting capital strategically without strategic intent. With other words: Making a career is neither the isolated result of structural determination, nor of (even bounded rational) individual action (or, worse, free will). Rather, the relation of and the recursiveness between structure and agency is embodied in a set of dispositions (Jarzabkowski, 2004), thus bridging the psychological and the sociological.

The paper is structured as follows: First, I will outline the understanding of boundaries in the study of organizations and careers. To this end I will start with some considerations about the essence of boundaries. Subsequently, a relational, neo-Bourdieuian alternative hereto, is presented. It conceptualizes career habitus as boundary in career *praxis*. Eventually this boundary appears as objectified product of bounded transactions of career agents, illuminating the space between organizations, individuals and their context (which represents, consequently, careers in this respect). In order to enliven the theory, I will delineate the example of nursing as paradigmatic case, drawing creatively on published empirical results of other researchers (Huppatz, 2009; Boogard & Roggeband, 2010; Ross-Smith & Huppatz, 2010), for this occupational group has been assumed to bear similar meanings throughout the world (together with "blue collar workers" and "business people", Briscoe et al., 2012b). Concluding, I will discuss advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

The essence of boundaries

Omnis determinatio est negatio
(attributed to Baruch Spinoza, cf. Liessmann, 2012, p. 29)

In everyday usage, a boundary demarcates the (real or anticipated) limit, or extent of something. In contrast to a frontier, this demarcation line is at least to a certain extent permeable. Consequently, a boundary enables identifying what is in and what is out, what is placed at the margins (namely, the area immediately inside the boundary), and what is situated at the core. However, the first thing at sight after identifying a boundary is not the subject matter, it is its opposite; drawing a career-related boundary means knowing what is not a "career": this is what Spinozas famous saying cited above implies (Liessmann, 2012).

By the application of general systems theory in social sciences at the latest, such boundaries are viewed as (a) a result of a social construction, a convention concerning inclusion and exclusion. Hence, instead of surrendering to the temptation of thinking boundaries as "real" and "out there", they are perceived of as implicit or explicit agreements over the location of separations and surroundings, as acts of (sometimes common) (un)consciousness(es). Additionally

(b), this separation and surrounding is predominantly supposed as being functional, for it essentially creates the entities it eventually separates and surrounds. With other words, so-called "objects" in the social world are seen as the consequence (rather than the antecedent) of boundaries. Take a very essential example, life. The boundary between life and death is per definition the termination of the function of the cerebrum, the cerebellum and the brain stem of individuals. This represents a medical compromise, because the body remains able to sweat, and to develop hair and nail growth, for example. It is possible to remove vital organs for donation purposes, nevertheless. Since the definition of this boundary tells us who is believed to be dead (even though alternative views might be possible) it opens up the space for defining what may constitute life.

Boundaries in the study of organizations

Traditionally, there are four approaches for applying this view to organization studies (Heracleous, 2004, p. 100): First, tightly drawing on general systems theory as mentioned above, boundaries may be conceived of as entities demarcating organizations from environments. It is the boundary which makes up a special kind of social system called organization, which then is able to interact with its context in return. Second, based on transaction cost economics (Williamson, 1975; Williamson, 1993), boundaries may be seen as determined by considerations of economic efficiency and opportunism. Third, based on property rights (Coase, 1937; Alchian & Demsetz, 1972) as defined by common asset ownership. Fourth, from a manageralistic point of view, as potentially dysfunctional entities that should be loosened to enhance organizational effectiveness. All these approaches might be categorized as substantialist from an epistemologic point of view (Emirbayer, 1997), for they assume being able to identify outcomes of the boundary-making process (here, the organization; there, the context). Additionally, they all imply a model of (wo-)men which at least approximates the bounded rationality idea (Simon, 1967).

Heracleous (2004, p. 101) identifies three theories to be particularly useful in the future study of organizational boundaries, overcoming these simplifications: (a) strategic choice theory, (b) structuration theory and (c) the negotiated order perspective. The first (Child, 1997) views boundaries between organization and context as interrelated but not thoroughly distinct. They permeate one another both cognitively and relationally, and have a dynamic character. (b) deepens this understanding with the concept of the duality of structures (Giddens, 1984), acknowledging the permanent re-definition of boundaries if patterns of actions or interpretative

schemas, on which they are based on, change. The negotiated order perspective (c) in the tradition of Strauss et al. (1962; 1963) emphasizes the political character of this change. What is eventually perceived to be a stable boundary is the result of a permanent (re-)negotiation of the social order, based on historical, contextual and transactional processes. None of these three perspectives is applied to careers research by now. The relational view outlined hereinafter comes closest to the last perspective mentioned. Before I outline this argumentation, let us first take a look at how this management literature based view is customarily translated into the study of careers.

Boundaries in the study of careers

We speak as if a wind could exist which did not blow
Elias, 1978, p. 112

Gunz et al. (2007) use the model of Abbott (1995) to explain the genesis of career boundaries. Basically they imply a constructivist model of boundary creation. Boundaries create careers in that individual beliefs become social facts (Gunz et al., 2007, p. 473). Consequently, it is possible to distinguish between subjective and objective boundaries (ibidem, p. 477). The former are held privately, assumed to limit individual career opportunities. The latter require (to some extent) consensus on the viability of subjective boundaries, a result of what Abbott calls a hooking-up process. For example, a labour market imperfection (an objective boundary) is caused by the reluctance of recruiters to allow certain kinds of people to make certain trajectories, together with the reluctance to move held by individuals as anticipation and consequence thereof (representing subjective boundaries) (Gunz et al., 2000).

Hence, the work role transition appears as unit of analysis (Gunz et al., 2007), but the unit of evidence is the individual career agent. Her or his beliefs mark the ignition of research activities in careers research, and eventually there may be social facts to study as well. Two things are remarkable. First, the subject/object divide based on Hughes (1937) and common in careers research is extended to the study of career-related boundaries. Second, the primacy in the boundary genesis-process is given on the former, expressing a psychological bias common in careers research (Schein, 2007). Perfectly fitting a constructivist' perspective, "the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals" (Elster, 1989, p. 13). The "structure" is seen then as the opposite of agency. In research practice, this is acknowledged by what Abbott calls a variable-centered approach (Abbott, 1988,

p. 170), detaching elements (the career agent and his attributes) from their spatiotemporal contexts, with consequences for careers research (Mayrhofer et al., 2007).

From this perspective, the boundaries of a prototypical nursing career are manifold. Subjectively she *has* certain career anchors (most probably: dedication to a cause, Schein, 1996), career aspirations (Mayrhofer et al., 2005), and all other psychological attitudes preceding objective boundaries (like a certain pattern in the Big5-inventory, see Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Objectively, she has to graduate health school, get hired, pass supervisor ratings, get through continuing education, and master each transition she may encounter (to head nurse, floor supervisor, a chair in health care management research etc., see Demel et al., 2012, or Briscoe et al., 2012a).

Despite the fact that objectivity is a subject's delusion, that observing can be done without him (von Foerster, cf. Glasersfeld, 1984, p. 31) or her, it is very likely that her anchors, aspirations and any other psychological attitude are not exclusively the result of heritage and individual efforts and feedbacks from the context about their viability, but are also the result of structured (predominantly in this case: gendered and classed) dynamics (Ortner, 2006). Why did she not want to become a doctor? Maybe she did not have enough money to study medicine. Or she did not want to learn that long. Even if we answered this question with "maybe she just likes caring for others", it is likely that this (by the way, stereotyped) preference has his origins in the social space, because the fact that few young women want careers as doctors contributes to the continuing gendered nature of employment in that profession (Hodkinson, 2008). But this gendered and classed dynamic is not an expression of an automatism, for there are female, working class originated physicians. Is her gender then an advantage in a female profession, responsible for her choice, as Melamed (1995) or Hakim (1996; 2000) might suggest? In that case, she had to strategically choose her field of profession based on prospect of success. But how do we then explain Abigail's (a nurse in transit to academia) answer to the question if her gender had worked to her advantage in achieving senior positions (Huppatz, 2009, p. 58)? She said: *"I think it's actually tougher than it would be if I was a man. I've seen throughout my career, fellows jump ahead in leaps and bounds, often with very minimal experience. They seem to be able to be promoted a lot faster than women are, that's for sure."* Is gender now just another boundary? And if, is it an objective or a subjective one? Why did she not anticipate correctly and react viably? Are (female) nurses both advantaged and disadvantaged at the same time? And: is it possible to identify the "victims" and the "offender" of this boundary-making process easily?

A relational view helps answering these questions and overcoming the mutual dualism (Martin, 2003) between subjective/objective, structure/agency, or nature/nurture, for focusing the space between instead. Additionally, there is no linear causality in the boundary making process to identify, because the boundary remaining is both the result of social structures and the individual efforts to reproduce (or subvert) them at the same time.

A relational alternative

In stark contrast to a substantialist perspective, the bounded categories (such as individuals, organization or context) do not exist per se, but emerge from the relations between them (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 282). It is anything but things, beings, essences that constitute the fundamental units of all inquiry. Additionally, they do not receive an ontological quality posterior to the reconstruction process, but remain auxiliary constructs all the time. Hence, the term "relational" refers to something else than in the psychological contract literature (for the latter see e.g. Rousseau, 1995; 2004). It is neither the quality of, nor the time horizon inherent to an implicit yet reciprocal relationship between contract parties, which is covered. Consequently, the opposite of "relational" is not "transactional", but "interactional" (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 286). Indeed, the concept of transactionality is inherent to a relational theory, transcending individual intent and action. In contrast to an interactional approach, which focuses on relationships between entities, a transactional alternative is more dynamic, emphasising relations between terms or units as processes rather than as static ties among inert substances (ibidem, p. 289).

Taken seriously, this bears at first epistemological consequences for the study of careers: neither purely constructivist nor structuralist approaches suffice to study them appropriately. Instead of the decision to start research from the individual, or the context, or to emphasize one or the other in the course of the research process, a relational framework requires a structuralist constructivism, which is *at the same time* a constructivist structuralism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 11).

Field theories (Martin, 2003) offer a good point of departure for this enterprise, because they seek to explain individual action patterns by recourse to agents' position-*takings* vis-à-vis each other. Bourdieus (1977) interpretation thereof is a relatively new attempt for this (Nickl, 2005). In order to fully recognize the potential inherent to his theories, one needs five other helpful concepts (Golsorkhi et al., 2009): Praxis, capital, illusio, doxa, and habitus. I will sub-

sequently only delineate a career related development of these concepts, which has already partly been formulated.

Iellatchitch et al. (2003) conceptualize career fields as the social context within which careers take place. Embedded in the social space with several other equally semi-autonomous fields, they constitute the playground – or battlefield – for making a career. Within this context, praxis always refers to what agents within such fields actually do. Fields then open up the arena for this praxis. Agents seek to advance within these fields, but both the starting positions as well as the development possibilities are not the same for all players. The chips for entering into and advancing within this game are called capital (Bourdieu, 1986), although in a wider sense than in Marx' (1977) original theory. First, it does not only encompass economic capital, but the result of accumulated work in general (like education, acquaintances and networks, or prestige). Second, capital is not a thing, but a social relation (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).

In the course of the career game, which may be perceived as a serious game (Ortner, 2006), career related capital is accumulated, invested, converted into other guises of capital, and its yield is realized. The most obvious capital is (a) economic. Income is a particularly important facet of economic capital, but any property right (e.g., shares) might be included as objectified economic capital as well. Both may be the result of a conversion of, and may be converted into (b) cultural, or informational, capital, like titles and degrees (institutionalized cultural capital), abilities and competencies (embodied cultural capital), or a flashy website (objectified cultural capital). In this respect, constructs like the educational system, which decides which titles count (and which don't), or the social origin, which determines the socio-economic status and hence the access to educational institutions, come into career research focus. Within this category, gendered capital may be located as well (Huppatz, 2009). It encompasses capital related to sex category (female/male career capital) and to gender (feminine/masculine career capital). This distinction goes beyond the doing gender idea (West & Zimmerman, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 2009), for acknowledging the "getting" gendered aspect as well. This is shown to be necessary in research on the intersection of sex and gender within work and organizations (Benschop, 2006). Both basic guises of capital – economic and cultural – serve as basis, and as a consequence, of (c) social capital, which refers to access to networks, group membership, or the possession of titles of nobility. Knowing whom – and knowing the way how to address these significant others correctly, and to talk with them in an

appropriate way – is an important asset in the career game, relationally interdependent with economic and cultural capital.

Especially important is the relation between two capital amalgam forms of capital: symbolic capital on the one hand, and career capital on the other. The former refers to reputation, or prestige, within a specific field. The latter is important in field-crossing transitions, revealing the universality of one's capital portfolio (Latzke et al., 2013). With other words, symbolic capital points toward inside recognition of a capital portfolio within a field, whereas career capital points toward outside recognition of a capital portfolio between fields. It is important here to notice that fields are not defined by "objective" frontiers. In contrast to professions, industries, organizations, or nations, the boundary of a field is only revealed empirically, and may cut across these categorizations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Making a career, defined as pattern in condition over time within a career field (with reference to Gunz & Mayrhofer, 2011) is then at stake in the game. The fact that agents are taken in and by the game is covered by the concept of illusio. This means they take the game seriously and do not perceive it as just a game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 115).

A field is characterized by a fundamental hierarchy, for capital is unequally distributed, and agents are thus not only facing different capital portfolios, but also a variety of possibilities of playing the game. On the one hand, there are agents possessing a high volume, and a viable structure, of capital. They are referred to as the orthodoxy of the field. On the other hand, there are agents equipped with a less favourable capital portfolio, called heresy. Both forces develop a belief in this hierarchy by the commitment to engage in this game. This social belief, called doxa, is pre-reflexive and mostly unconscious to agents playing the game.

Getting back to the nursing example mentioned above, Huppatz (2009) shows that the orthodoxy in the field of paid caring work is represented by female, and in a certain way feminine, nurses, equipped with a lot female and feminine capital. The heresy is associated with maleness and masculinity, for both patients and other agents (nurses, practitioners) perceives that either with suspicion in terms of abilities, or motivations. But this doxa does not represent a boundary, however. It is only both anterior and posterior to a boundary, on which I will turn to at the end of this section.

In the same vein, one might misperceive the conversion rates of guises of capital into one another (like for income: cultural capital into economic capital, Bourdieu, 1983, p. 190) as

boundary. This is only the other side of the same coin: While representing the result of permanently ongoing games between orthodoxy and heresy, conversion rates are simultaneously the antecedent of these games. The "fact" that agents may dispose symbolic or career capital within a field is only the condition, and the consequence, of a career-related boundary.

Orthodoxy and heresy in the field of paid caring work play for what constitutes a "good" nurse, and hence who is entitled to make a career within the field of paid caring work. The former has the power to enforce their definition of symbolic capital through the conversion rates of the basic guises of capital (economic, cultural, and social). By blending sex category (being a woman) with the gender role stereotypes of femininity (community-based behaviour), the orthodoxy asserts a favourable conversion rate of feminine and female capital into symbolic capital. Discursively, this is achieved by emphasizing that women's alleged "nature" would predispose them for good nursing ("we are good nurses because we are female, chosen by nature to take good care of children, which made us developing feminine skills like caring for others"). Agents with less feminine and female capital by contrast are not perceived of as "good" nurses, and maybe they are said to be led by bad intentions anyway (imagine a "male nurse" in gynaecology – and note that the very term "nurse" has no masculine equivalent in many languages).

But gendered currency operates within limits: advancing vertically, or to another field (e.g., transit to academia) is eventually aggravated (Huppatz, 2009), which turns our attention to career capital. It is associated with the most prototypical elements of career success, like promotion or leadership scope. In a world of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001), where the upper echolons of the economic system are masculine and male (Eagly & Carley, 2007), symbolic capital in the field of paid caring work does not necessarily correspond to career capital. This is the reason why "good" nurses hardly become CEOs of a hospital.

To conceptualize one of both, doxa or the conversion rate as a boundary means applying either a structuralist perspective ("career is structural faith") or a constructivist perspective ("career is the result bounded-rational action"). The former leaves no room for individual agency. The latter overemphasizes it. What is the boundary from a relational point of view, then?

The resolution of this riddle is an often forgotten (Lahire, 2003) connection between field and capital: habitus. Originated in the Aristotle concept of hexis, sophisticated by Thomas Aquinus and reinvented by Bourdieu (Nickl, 2005), habitus refers to the connection of patterns of thought (and act) and social conditions (Mutch, 2003). Career habitus represents the career-

related horizon for action (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) that enables and restricts career decision-making and progression. As such, (career) habitus appears janus-faced (Lizardo, 2004): on one side, as a system of dispositions, which enables to (more or less passively) classify what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what left out, and what makes a possibility (and what an insurmountable obstacle). On the other side, habitus (more or less actively) structures which things are done and how they are performed, the opinions one has and how they are expressed, or the chances that are realized (and the way in which they are realized – or left out). Consequently, at the very core it is neither a sociological, nor a psychological concept. Rather, it is something in between, which offers a reflexive theory for an embodiment of social structures, unfolding the point where structure meets agency. With other words, the career related boundary becomes salient here.

It is the body of the career agent, but beyond substantialist' categorizations. It appears as the somatization of cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), including the whole history of which it is the product and bridging the physical, the symbolic and the sociological (McNay, 1999, p. 98). Habitus operates as mediator (Wacquant, 2004) between "individual" and "society" (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 43), "structure" and "agency" (Bourdieu, 1967), "objectivism" á la Lévi-Strauss and "subjectivism" á la Sartre (Bourdieu, 1987), "theory" and "empiricism" (Bourdieu, 1997), "present" and "past" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), "freedom" and "determinism" (Schwingel, 1995), "exteriority" and "interiority" (Bourdieu, 1976), "consciousness" and "unconsciousness" (Bourdieu, 1976), "reason" and "emotion" (Nickl, 2005, p. 215). Career habitus is habitus that "fits" a career field (Iellatchitch et al., 2003).

The closer habitus fits the field, the more the strategies and investments appear strategically for observers, without necessarily being strategically intended by the career agent. Consequently, a viable career habitus enables to move within a career field like a duck takes to water, and a sustainable career move appears as a matter of course. This is not to say that intentional effort (or reflexion) does not pay off at all. But in their investment and acquisition strategies, agents are bounded to their career habitus, which both limits and enables a space of action.

To finish Abigail's example mentioned above, we'll have to unfold her story from two different starting points. First, as far as the conversion rate is concerned, we have to start phylogenetically by acknowledging that at the dawn of the profession in the middle of the 19th century, nursing was accomplished by men and women more or less equally (Steppe, 1998). They

were both alleged to be unlettered and of lowest social origin. Due to predominantly economic considerations (women were simply cheaper), male nurses have been relocated to psychiatric units (where physical power was an indispensable asset). Simultaneously, this action was justified with women's supposed nature, emphasizing their "patience, frugalness and sense for neatness" (Stasný, 1891, p. 45 cf. Dorffner, 2000). These stereotypes – more concrete, the blending of gender role stereotypes with professional stereotypes – is now incorporated by the emerging field's orthodoxy to fix the entry fee to the field, as well as the stakes for centripetal progress. Female and feminine capital represents thus symbolic capital in the field of paid caring work. However, that turns out not to operate as career capital in the same extent. At transit to another field, what has been a head start – being embodied with a high volume of female and feminine capital – turns into a club foot. The managerial career field, for example, values masculine and male capital more highly (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Carley, 2007; Ross-Smith & Huppatz, 2010; Schneidhofer et al., 2010). Hence, the conversion rates are subject to power struggles within and across fields in order to maintain the power of the field's orthodoxy.

Second, as far as the capital portfolio is concerned, acquired and accumulated capital is neither the sole result of individual effort, nor mere luck. As a capacity to produce profits and reproduce itself in identical or expanded form (Bourdieu, 1986) it is only a useful concept in relation to a specific field, and that this relation was only enabled by previous (and ongoing) games in other fields, leaving their footprint on the horizon of action. This is the reason why the career game is different to simple games of chance (like Roulette), where the "winning of the previous spin of the wheel can be staked and lost at every new spin" (ibidem, p. 46). Abigail's choices of acquiring specific capital, or choosing specific fields for acquisition, were themselves subject to gendered, classed and otherwise structured (and, at the same time, structuring) dispositions, both enabling and restricting her career. These dispositions may sometimes lead to paradoxical career moves as well (as paradigmatically shown by Boogard and Roggeband, 2010, in their study of the Dutch police force), both subverting and reproducing structures at the same time.

Put differently, career habitus constitutes a dynamic, yet inert, permeable, but to a certain extent fixed, boundary. It bridges the two different levels of analysis (field and capital) (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005).

Careers as space between

Career habitus as career-related history sedimented in the body (cf. Wacquant, 2004) and serving as career boundary tells us first what career is not: neither the exclusive result of individual efforts, nor of structural determinations. Rather, the inventive capacity of agents within a social structure, and the resulting strategies and investments within the horizon for action (Hodkinson & Sparkes, 1997) – or space of possibles (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008: 27) – set the stage for the "intersection of societal history and individual biography" Grandjean, 1981) which we call careers. I have referred to the definition of Mayrhofer & Gunz (2011) above to view careers as pattern in condition over time within a career field. Now it is possible to explain how this pattern emerges, and which role the career related boundary plays in this process: careers are the objectified product of bounded transactions of career agents, illuminating the space between organizations, individuals and their context. This may need some further clarifications.

First, transactions are the basis and the result of career related strategies and investments with career related capital, bounded by career habitus. But in order to fully understand these transactions, we have to transcend individual agency and hence to include the whole spectrum of both, collective and individual history and its context to explain them. This leads to the warning about the dangers of leaving important aspects of career out of an investigation. The inclusion of individual history implies considering the whole personal trajectory in a specific context. It represents a significant difference if someone is born in the European Union or in the United States, let alone in less developed areas (Mayrhofer & Schneidhofer, 2009). Within this context, genetic disposition as well as social origin influence socialization (including gendered/gendering and classed/classing processes). Socialization and genetic disposition influence career aspirations, career anchors, or attitudes, but cultural capital like these differ from other guises of capital in being transmissible only by means of an investment of time, which itself requires distance from necessity (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008: 25). Hence in contrast to human capital approaches, psychological states are a subjectification of structures within the mind and body of the singular agent. The result of each and every career related decision then feeds back to the structure in return. Equally important, other players are engaging the same game as well. The inclusion of the collective history of a profession, branch, or industry helps understanding the emergence of career boundaries. Career habitus as mediator between field and capital operates much like a prism refracting light in translating history into career related action. In the career field, however, it is similarly important to "take into account the fact that individuals belong to multiple [fields], both sequentially and simultaneous-

ly: labor unions, families, gangs, business organizations, churches, sports teams, political groups, and so forth" (Vaughan, 2002: 34).

Second, these transactions are objectified (and, thus, neither purely objective nor subjective) products of agents playing the career game. They neither have to be conscious to the agent playing, nor intentionally realized. Conversely, strategies and investments are not determined by the history or the structure of the field. But they unfold within a corridor which is the result of previous (individual and collective) and on-going games. This corridor is embodied, and it represents a boundary, which agents can literally only trespass with difficulties. With other words, it is not only the curtailing of available information and the limitations of the mind (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 126) that make career action appear less than rational. Additionally, transactions are socially bound to the strategies and investments of the other agents within the field, and the history of their games. But within this corridor, agents may creatively develop strategies (be they intentional or not) and pursue investments to win their games.

Third, these games arise on two different levels. (a) With respect to the orthodoxy-heresy divide (doxa), agents are struggling over the hierarchy of the field. To that end, both orthodox and heretics apply different strategies. The former seeks to make the rules in order to keep making the rules. The latter may play the career game in accordance to that rules, and hence toward the preservation of the capital distribution, or alternatively, may have the propensity toward the subversion of the capital distribution (Friedland, 2009). With other words, despite making a career in a narrow sense of the word, agents are always engaged in struggles over (re-)structuring the context within which this career takes place as well. (b) With respect to the capital conversion rate, struggles are mostly performed on a symbolic level. Through linguistic symbols, the opening of rhetorical spaces and the closing of others, as well as other "soft" actions that bear marginalizing meaning or implications, the orthodoxy seeks to prevail (Hall, 2004). Since an adjustment of agents' dispositions to the structures of the field is the most probable case of field logic's adoption (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), this bears another consequence for the individual derivation of constructs like career anchors, career aspirations, and career expectations, or other individual-based attitudes. They cannot be regarded as stable over time (Shrivastava et al., 2003). Rather, they emerge simultaneously to the position-takings of agents within a context, and are likely to change if the context changes as well.

Of course, "hard" actions are possible as well. For example, agreements on legal restrictions, or professional preconditions, are deemed to follow the interest of the orthodoxy. Yet this

dynamic does not meet the criteria of a conspiracy, or that of an apparatus (in the sense of Husserl), for the agents also depend on the history of the game, and the contemporary context within which it unfolds. Hence it is not possible to identify "victims" and "offenders" in an unfair career game, because the marginalized will contribute to their marginalization by the very participation into the game, a phenomenon that Bourdieu referred to as the paradox of doxa (Bourdieu, 2001).

As a result, a net of bounded transactions reveals career fields, which then relationally and recursively serve as contexts for ongoing struggles over forthcoming transactions. Career habitus is the boundary of advancing within these fields, and hence, restricting careers.

Consequences for the study of careers

If careers were a pattern in condition over time within a career field bounded by career habitus, it is neither enough to subjectively (de-)construct careers, nor to map trajectories objectively. Instead, a relational view on careers needs relational methodology for studying them. Özbilgin (2006, p. 250) suggests three different possibilities. First, emphasizing 'relational' in 'relational method', it is possible to apply methods which are not genuinely relational, but to explain the results in a non-substantialist' manner. Schneidhofer et al. (2010; 2012) for example use multivariate analysis with longitudinal data to examine the careers of business school graduates. However, since these methods are not relational in nature, the interpretation of the results remains unsatisfactorily to a certain extent, for they reveal a gap between results and explanation.

Second, emphasizing the 'interaction' between agents and context rather than their 'relation', studies focusing the position (in contrast to the position-taking) of the individual may be helpful.

Third, using the concept in its broader sense to capture the interrelatedness, transsubjectivity, and interdependence of individual and contextual phenomena, studies emphasizing 'method' in 'relational method' are possible. By now, no study in the field of careers has adopted this approach.

No matter which methodological approach chosen, it is plausible that instead of interdisciplinary (Khapova & Arthur, 2011) or multidisciplinary (Collin, 2009) research teams, transdisciplinary collaborations are more promising. This call has already been raised by the end of the 1980s (Arthur et al., 1989). Transdisciplinarity means not only a joint project by research-

ers of different theoretical or otherwise diversified origins. Also, it means creating something new on the basis of the different views of the research team members. Similar to the fusion model on cultural intelligence in intercultural teams (Janssens & Brett, 2006), researchers will have to bridge ideological and theoretical ditches to this end. Research on diversity in teams (Jehn et al., 1999) shows, that the transdisciplinarity should not be based on value diversity, for this type of diversity decreases sastisfaction, intent to remain, and commitment to the group (in contrast to informational diversity, which positively influenced group performance, mediated by task conflict), however. Value diversity occurs when members of a workgroup differ in terms of what they think the group's real task, goal, target, or mission should be (Jehn et al., 1999, p. 745), whereas informational diversity refers to differences in knowledge bases and perspectives that members bring to the group (Jehn et al., 1999, p. 743). Using Bourdieu in a non-dogmatic way in a joint project with sociologists and psychologists (as in e.g. Hofbauer et al., 2010) is a first step to this.

If these teams investigated careers as fixed time snap shot rather than as a longitudinal process, they will not include time and history into their analyses sufficiently, and thus address the context incorrectly. Moreover, longitudinal studies including both ends of the methodological spectrum – qualitatively and quantitatively – seem highly promising. In more detail, longitudinal case studies or studies which examine significant others in relation to an individual whose career is researched and in relation to the field(s) within which both play their career games will offer valuable insights. But this takes time and effort, and together with the both complicated and complex theory it is very unlikely the whole potential inherent to this approach may ever be revealed. At least the publications by now seem all together highlighting certain aspects of the problem at hand – but remain limited in their realizations.

Despite methodological considerations, all these approaches will have to acknowledge the political nature of social boundaries, and hence the political nature of careers (as argued by Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009 to understand managers' role in organizational change). Agents (re-)negotiate a social order, and are restricted in future negotiations by the result of it, which serves as blue-line print for praxis, such as making a career. Therefore, career fields are connected to the social space within which they emerge, although there will be no general law between both, nor between several different career fields.

Discussion

The theories of Bourdieu have not been extensively drawn upon in the management and organization studies literature (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2005), and less so in careers research. Ross-Smith and Huppatz (2010, p. 549) cite Everett (2002, p. 77) in explaining the reason for that: *"(…) Bourdieu's oeuvre is simply just difficult to comprehend. This problem is a function of at least three things: the sheer size of his work (he has penned over two dozen books and two hundred articles), the fact that it is written in French and his difficult writing style"*.

It is certainly an advantage, that Bourdieu's theory of praxis is not a conventional grand theory based upon a priori assumptions, definitions, and logic, but a result of practical action itself: theorising is grounded in empirical data. Consequently, it is open for developments, which have been numerous in several fields in the last years, and this one expands his ideas to careers research. As a result, it was possible to link micro and macro aspects of careers, which have often been regarded as indissoluble (Mayrhofer & Schneidhofer, 2009).

However, critics often have it that Bourdieu was better at claiming to bridge the individual and the context than he actually did. For example, the determinism accusation is pretty sustainable in the literature (Baumgart, 2004; Alexander, 1994; Garnham & Wiliams, 1980; in contrast to König, 2003). This goes so far as to question Bourdieu being able to explain his own career with his theory. A son of a postman becoming an influential sociologist allegedly does not fit habitus theory very well (Mutch, 2003). From the above mentioned, however, it should be clear that the contrary is more probable. For example, his dense and complicated writing style, as well as his political agitation, might serve as consequence of his social origin, overcompensated in relation to the field within which he intended to advance.

Apart from that we should ask whether Bourdieus' framework represents a theory at all (Whetten, 1989). In particular, it is difficult to identify the boundaries of habitus theory. Although some authors advise to use his framework in careers research rather as sensitizing device (e.g., Duberley et al., 2006), I argue to use it as a middle-range theory. Metaphorically speaking, however, we have to critically examine whether we do have a map equally as big as the city it tries to display. If that was the case, the map would not be helpful. In any case, it remains difficult to answer the "who/where/when"-constraints of a relational career theory despite in the realm of empirical evidence. Nevertheless, as an application of a grand social theory it literally attempts to transcend such difficulties, at the expense of difficulties in operationalization. So we will have to postpone the evaluation concerning the theory status until we have empirical evidence about career habitus. For habitus in general, Bourdieu empha-

sized that it "offers a matrix of hypotheses which have received numerous empirical verifications and not in my work alone" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 131).

Concluding, individuals are relationally bounded through career habitus in making their careers. This boundary exists both in minds and in the social world (and not in one *or* the other). This bears the potential for bridging a mostly alleged gap between the psychological and the sociological, which in reality does not exist. In the final analysis, however, the power of any conceptual framework in our field lies in its ability to enable new empirical investigations with fresh theoretical insights. I hope the article will inspire such generative results.

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