Chapter 3
The Turkish Academic Labor Market as an Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT
Career ecosystem theory have been developed to explain interactions between individuals, organizations, and other actors, which influence the flow of human capital in response to the inadequacy of traditional career models. The aim of this chapter is to examine the relevance and applicability of career ecosystem theory to the Turkish academic labor market. In line with this aim, theoretical underpinnings and basic assumptions of ecosystem theory were elaborated. Individual and institutional factors affecting career movements of academics are identified, and changes in the landscape of Turkish higher education system are discussed. Results indicated that the theory is a powerful tool of understanding the complexity of academic careers in Turkish academic labor market.

INTRODUCTION
Careers were traditionally defined for a business life in which individuals pursue vocational goals within a single organization. Acquiring stage models from psychoanalysis, early career theories conceive careers as upward linear progress in a hierarchical organization or as stable, long-term employment within a profession (Savickas, 2005; Super, 1957). However, societal, environmental, technological and economic changes have altered the career landscape, including the emergence of global labor markets. Such changes include increased competitiveness, the reduction in the share of the production sector in Western economies, automation of the previously labor intensive works, increased workforce diversity, expanding use of outsourcing, organizational de-layering and the use of flexible workforce. As a result, since the 1990s the so-called New Careers start to gain both theoretical and practical attention. Concepts like the boundaryless career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996), protean career (Hall, 1996) multidirectional careers (Baruch, 2004), and kaleidoscope careers (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2006), to name a few, start to

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emerge. They could explain phenomena such as the distinction between core vs. peripheral or contingent employees (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009).

While there is a criticism about the extent of the ‘new careers’ and how relevant they are compared to traditional careers (Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, & Roper, 2012), there is wide cover of the new ways of career management, in line with the new concepts (Baruch, Szücs, & Gunz, 2015; Lee, Felps & Baruch, 2014). The majority of the studies that explore new careers were conducted in work environments of WEIRD (Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic) countries, and focused on managers and professionals. To validate such concept, studies should be carried out in a wider context, for example, in different geographies and sectors. The representation of developing countries within the study of careers is very limited, sometime anecdotal.

One sector that benefits from continuous growth and progress globally is the Higher Education (HE) sector (Clark, 1996; Kinser et al., 2010). Governments aim to improve the economic national competitiveness and the well-being of their citizens by investing in education (Cowen, 2012). The academic career model is important, and in many ways reflect the ideas of new careers (Baruch & Hall, 2004), and there is a growing interest in studying new career concepts within the sector (Carraher, Crocitto, & Sullivan, 2014). Yet, existing studies do not cover the sector in developing countries, and traditional theories do not explain or predict the future of the HE sector in such economies. A new theoretical framework of career as ecosystem (Baruch, 2015) was offered to answer the complexity of career systems and to enable better understanding of the nature of careers and their management within the sector.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the relevance and applicability of career ecosystem theory to non-WEIRD country, using the case of the Turkish academic labor market. In line with this aim, basic properties of the career ecosystem are explained and the view of Turkish academic labor market through the lens of the career ecosystem theory is presented.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The idea of boundaryless career (Arthur, 1994) suggest a major change from rigid and hierarchy-based organizational career ladders into a dynamic, fluid system (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Others suggested that careers have not changed dramatically (Inkson et al., 2012). Similarly, Baruch (2006) argues that conceptualizing the new era careers should not be all-or-nothing issue since social institutions, governmental agencies and sector-wide dynamics can still build up relatively stable and predictable environment for organizations to apply their strategies and practices for managing employees’ careers. Also, organizational hierarchies have not disappeared yet and not entirely transformed into fully fluid and boundaryless entities. Individuals tend to have more control over their own careers and formal organizational practices for career development may not be seen as effective as self-directed developmental tasks (Hall & Moss, 1998), but moving up to hierarchy ladder, high earnings and gaining status and power are still regarded as indicators of success for people (Baruch, 2006; Ng & Feldman, 2014).

The boundaryless career means that what were traditional boundaries for career transition ceased to be so. People change more easily – organization, geo-location, in particular psychological change (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Yet, vocational changes can be more difficult to cross, in particular for professions that require substantial and long investment (medicine, for example).