Introduction: The Dialogical Self in a Global and Digital Age

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In this article, culture and self, like society and identity, are conceived as mutually inclusive. On the basis of this premise, self and identity are discussed in the context of an evolution toward a global and digital society. The core concept is the "dialogical self" that is described as a spatial and temporal process of positioning. Examples of multivoiced and dialogical selves are given in communities and cultures that lack advanced technological means. Apparently, the dialogical self is not an exclusive feature of the present era but a general human condition. Specific to the era is that dialogue is becoming increasingly *mediated* as a result of technological advances. Closely related to these advances, one can witness an increasing cultural complexity, mobility, and hybridization. It is argued that technological developments and global interconnectedness provide new opportunities for innovation of the self as multivoiced and dialogical. At the same time, such developments evoke counter forces that can close the self off from such opportunities. This article ends with a short introduction to the several contributions in this special issue.

When you ask people to localize their "self," they will point to their body and tell you that it is somewhere "inside." They may point to a specific part of their own body (e.g., head or breast), and consider the self an immaterial and nonspatial inside. "Space", on the other hand, is rather localized in the outside world or in the body, but not in the self. People who adhere to such a conception are often not aware that they are articulating a Cartesian conception in which space is considered to be an essential property of the material world (*res extensa*), whereas the self is seen as a thinking matter (*res cogitans*). In this conception, space is *outside* of the self.

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In apparent contradiction to a Cartesian view, this article starts from the assumption that the self, like the outside world, is spatialized. In this conception, the *I* is not seen as an immaterial essence hovering above the world and sometimes going down like an angel who visits the material world. In contrast, the I *itself* is "distributed" in a spatial world and can be conceived of as a dynamic multiplicity of "I positions." As localized in a variety of positions, the I moves from one position to another and, like a traveler, takes a variety of perspectives on the world; these open particular vistas and, at the same time, close off others from view. One of the far-reaching implications of the spatialization and decentralization of the self is that I positions are not only inside the person but also outside, not only here but also there in the so-called outside world.

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

My first name is Hubert. When somebody asks me who I am, I have the spontaneous tendency to describe myself as a coherent whole and as unified in myself, very well expressed by my first name. The traditional laws of Aristotelian logic support this qualification: Hubert is Hubert and cannot be, at the same time and in the same respect, Hubert and my father Mathew.

However, to describe myself by my first name only would be an oversimplification of the person I am. I have not only a first name but also a surname, Hermans, the family of my father. The Hermans's represent a particular culture: They are typically commercial people, having jobs in one of the larger cities in the Southern part of the Netherlands, very practically oriented, and with a rather optimistic view of life. For a long time I have participated in this culture, and it became an important part of me. However, this is not the only family culture in which I have been educated. I have also participated in the family of my mother, Janet Spronck, a family with a rural and agricultural background. They were involved in a series of misfortunes, and consequently, developed a rather pessimistic view of life. I remember very well the long stories about those misfortunes that were often told by my mother with a somewhat sad tone of voice. The long and somber stories told by members of the Spronck family contrasted rather strongly with the much shorter, cheerful, and humorous stories told in the Hermans's family, where every long story was interrupted by a joke.

In the course of time, I became aware that my own self, participating in the two different family cultures, incorporated the two discrepant worldviews. I developed both an optimistic and pessimistic view, being more optimistic and playful in some situations and more pessimistic and serious in other ones. Sometimes, it may happen that my Hermans's voice and my Spronck voice are simultaneously present and engage in some kind of internal dialogue. This may result in a negotiation between the two voices that tend to correct or complement each other. For example,

when I am involved in a financial case, the Spronck voices warns me that this might go wrong, but the Hermans voices may convince me that this is probably a too pessimistic way of responding to this particular situation. At the end, I, Hubert, feel most at ease when I take a moderate risk, in this way finding a workable compromise between the two admonitions.

Such an exercise could be done by anybody who is educated in two families, each with their particular histories, stories, and views of life. My intention is to draw attention to the fact that my first name (Hubert) does not suffice when describing myself. My family names have to be taken into account to understand the particular histories and collective voices in which I have participated and that have formed me during my education. My first name and my family names function together as a dynamic multiplicity of positions or a combination of individual and collective voices that respond to each other in dialogical ways. From a spatial point of view, the name example suggests that my self is not purely inside and here (first name), but also outside and there (family names). In terms of James (1890) and Rosenberg (1979), one could say that the specific combination of first names and family names illustrates that the self is *extended* to the environment; in Bruner's (1986) terms, *distributed* over different identities.

THE CASE OF EDWARD SAID

In a discussion of the phenomenon of acculturation, Bhatia (2002) argued that the emergence of non-European, "third-world" diasporic communities in North America and Europe has led to the construction of "in-between" identities such as Mexican Americans, Arab Americans, Chinese Canadians, Turkish Germans, and Franco Maghrebi. In a period of globalization, acculturation becomes complicated as a result of the rapid creation of multinational citizens, the formation of diasporic communities, and the massive flows of transmigration and border crossings. Rather than depicting immigrants as moving in a linear trajectory from culture A to culture B, Bhatia suggested that we should think of acculturation as "mixing and moving." In general, postcolonial studies have demonstrated that third-world immigrants construct their cultural identities as citizens of "first-world" countries (e.g., United States or Europe) while simultaneously retaining strong affiliations and loyalties to the culture of their home country.

An example of nonlinear acculturation is provided by Edward Said's (1999), *Out of Place: A Memoir.* The author, born as a Palestinian, educated in an English school in Egypt, and later immigrated to the United states, described how his name reflects his hyphenated (in between) identities. His name, an American first name and an Arab family name, often made him feel like a foreigner with an in-between identity.

"What are you?"; "But Said is an Arab name"; "You are an American?" "You are American without an American name": … "You don't look American!; "How come you were born in Jerusalem and you live *here*?; "You"re an Arab after all, but what kind are you? A protestant?" (Bhatia, 2002, pp. 5–6)

As Bakhtin (1986) argued, an individual speaker's utterance is not just coming from an isolated, decontextualized voice; rather, individual voices are influenced by the culture of institutions, groups, and communities in which they participate. The collective voices that are prominent in the individual's personal history (professional jargon, authorities of various circles, sociopolitical ideologies, dialects, national languages) influence what the speaker's individual voice is saying. The power struggles and differences between the several voices in a particular community are reflected as power differences between positions in the self. The colonial school in Egypt where Said received his training was run entirely by British staff members who viewed the Arab boys as delinquents who needed to be punished and disciplined regularly. Moreover, the teachers had a handbook with rules that were intended to make Arab students become like the British. Said explained about the boys resisting the colonial rules of the handbook by invoking their Arab position:

> Rule 1 stated categorically: "English is the language of the school. Anyone caught speaking other languages will be severely punished." So Arabic became our haven, a criminalized discourse where we took refuge from the world of masters and complicit prefects and anglicized older boys who lorded it over us as enforcers of the hierarchy and its rules. Because of Rule 1 we spoke more, rather than less, Arabic, as an act of defiance against what seemed then, and seems even more so now, an arbitrary, ludicrously gratuitous symbol of their power. (Bhatia, 2002, p. 184)

As this excerpt suggests, power struggles on the level of the community have their impact on the dialogues between the members of a minority group and also between opposing positions in the self. As a result of the oppression on the level of the institution, the Arab position in the self of the boys was not simply repressed but rather emphasized as a counter position that has to be defended and maintained for its own value. In this way, a name can be involved as part of a power struggle on the level of the institution. The Arab part of the identity (Said) had to be defended against the institutionalized emphasis of the English American part of the identity (Edward). As this example suggests, a name may reflect a hyphenated identity that is involved in the relation between collective voices and their historically based power struggles.

THE WORD *I* IN SRANON TONGO

The use of the first name is closely related to the use of the word I. The use of separate words, like I or me, may suggest that they represent entities that have an exis-

tence on their own. Part of the problem is that in our language we are using the word I indiscriminately for a great variety of states of mind that, despite their varieties, contrasts, and contradictions, are appropriated as if the I is somewhere "above" the multiplicity of voices of the self. We tend to attribute all these states to the I, similar to the way we put a variety of contents in a container separated from other containers. This implies that the relationship with other individuals and groups of individuals is left implicit or even disregarded. Certainly, cultural factors are involved that are closely related to linguistic practices. In some languages, the word I is not systematically used in a separating manner but as a combination of words with other people included. An example is *Sranon Tongo,* the language of Afro-Surinam people in which different words express different modalities of the I (Wekker, 1994):

Mi	I
Mi kra (Mi yeye)	my soul, I
A misi (f'mi)	My feminine part
A masra (f'mi)	My masculine part
Mi mi Mi misi nanga mi masra	My feminine and masculine part
Mi dyodyo	My divine parents
Mi skin	My body, I
Mi geest	My spirit, I

As these examples show, the word I (Mi) is directly associated with markers of a variety of persons or voices, including not only singular but plural ones. For example, Mi dyodyo suggests that I am not speaking *to* my parents but rather *like* my parents; even better, *we* (i.e., I–my parents or my parents–I). In this phrase, the word I in particular situations is extended to the word we, and a common voice is speaking.

In Sranon Tongo, particular word combinations give a more direct access to deeper layers of the self than any singular word, like I or me, could permit. For example, "Mi kra" or "Mi yeye" refer to a deeper level of expressiveness than the use of the singular Mi. When somebody says, "Mi no wani nyan a nyan disi" (I do not want to eat this), the speaker wants to say that he or she simply does not prefer this food at this moment. However, when the person says, "A yeye no wani a nyan disi" (My soul does not want to eat this), a stronger refusal is expressed, which may occur when a particular food carries a ritual prohibition (I am not allowed to eat this). In the latter case, the speaker may be punished for taking this food (G. Wekker, personal communication, XXmonth day, yearXX).

As the earlier examples suggest, the different modalities of the term I in Sranon Tongo are more spatially extended than the separate terms I and Me. In Sranon Tongo, the word I is not only here (I) but also there (e.g., I–my parents) and not only superficial (I) but also deeper (e.g., my soul, I).

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOGICAL AND
DIALOGICAL RELATIONS

The notions of space and dialogue are closely related. In its broadest sense, a dialogue can be conceived of as an act of interchange between two or more positions that are located in an imagined or real space. The existence of positions or, in more dynamic terms, of a process of positioning and repositioning, touches the difference between logical and dialogical relations. An example given by Bakhtin (1929/1973; see also Vasil'eva, 1988) may illustrate this difference.

Take two phrases that are completely identical, "life is good" and again, "life is good." In terms of Aristotelian logic, these two phrases are connected by a relation of *identity* because they are, in fact, one and the same statement. From a dialogical perspective, however, the two phrases are different because they are coming from different spatial positions occupied by two people in communication, who in this case entertain a relation of *agreement.* The two phrases are identical from a logical point of view, but they are different as utterances: the first is a statement, the second a confirmation. As a confirmation, the second utterance adds something that was not included in the first one. The first utterance is not finalized in itself. Instead, it is dialogically expanded by the second. This expansion can be strengthened when the second utterance receives an intonation that expresses the ironic attitude of the interlocutor. When the first speaker says, "Life if good," and the second answers with a little smile and in a mocking way, "Life is good!," then again we have two statements that are logically and perfectly identical; but, the meaning of the second utterance is, in fact, the opposite of the first one.

In a similar way, the statements "life is good" and "life is not good" can be analyzed. In a logical sense, one is a negation of the other. However, when the two phrases are taken as utterances from two different speakers, a dialogical relation of disagreement can be seen to exist. In Bakhtin's (XXXX) view, the relation of agreement and disagreement are, like question and answer, basic dialogical forms.

Even when dialogue takes place between the individual and himself or herself, this dialogue can only take place when we imagine a space in which different speaking participants are positioned toward each other. This may be expressed in phrases like, "I say this to myself," "I try to convince myself," or "I am negotiating with myself." Words like *to* or *with* suggest that different or opposed positions are implied with a dialogical process that is taking place between them. Plato, who analyzed the process of thinking in dialogical terms, emphasized the existence of different positions or voices in the process of internal communication:

> I have a notice that, when the mind is thinking, it is simply talking to itself, asking questions and answering them, and saying yes or no. When it reaches a decision—which may come slowly or in a sudden rush—when doubt is over and the two voices affirm the same thing, then we call that "its judgment." (Theaetetus, 189e–190a, cited in Blachowicz, 1999, p. 184)

As this quotation suggests, the mind needs itself to arrive at a judgment. It requires a contact with another part of the mind to accomplish the act of thinking. This insight instigated philosopher Gadamer (1989) to speak of the "imperfection of the human mind," referring to the impossibility of the mind to be completely present to itself:

> Because our understanding does not comprehend what it knows in one single inclusive glance, it must always draw what it thinks out of itself, and present it to itself as if in an inner dialogue with itself. In this sense, all thought is speaking to oneself. (p. 422)

The conception of thinking in terms of dialogue between two qualitatively different positions or voices is in apparent opposition to a Cartesian conception of the self, one that is based on the assumption that the self is functioning as an undivided whole that is directly accessible to itself and functioning in logical ways. As Johnson (1985) thought, the Cartesian self is a "fixed entity, essentially isolated and disembodied, an ego-logical thing, encapsulated in a machine of corruptible matter" (p. 15).

In summary and in contrast to logical relations, dialogical relations assume the existence of different spatial positions that are not to be understood as replicas of itself. Instead, dialogical relations can only be understood in terms of qualitatively different, spatially located voices involved in actual, remembered, or imagined relations.

THE DIALOGICAL SELF: BETWEEN INTERCHANGE AND POWER

On the basis of the preceding considerations, the dialogical self can be conceived of as a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I positions in the landscape of the mind, intertwined as this mind is with the minds of other people (Hermans, 2002; Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992). In this conception, the I functions as a process of positioning and repositioning (i.e., the I has the possibility of moving from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time). The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions as part of dialogical relations with internal dialogues as intimately intertwined with external dialogues. The I has, moreover, the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story involved in processes of question and answer, agreement and disagreement, and negotiation and cooperation. Each of them has a story to tell about its own experience from its own stance. As different voices, these characters exchange information about their respective me's, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self. As participating in the collective voices of the society and culture at large, some voices have more social power than others, with the result that some voices are neglected, suppressed, or

just not heard (for a more elaborate discussion of this conception of the dialogical self, see Barresi, 2002; Bertau, 2004; Hermans, 1996a, 1996b; Josephs, 2002; Lewis, 2002; Valsiner, 2002).

As the previous description of the dialogical self suggests, it is based on an intimate connection between a narrative approach and dialogical approach (Hermans, 2003). Advocates of a narrative approach, like Sarbin (1986), Bruner (1986), Gergen and Gergen (1988), and McAdams (1993), have extensively discussed the temporal dimension of narratives. Unquestionably, the temporal dimension is a constitutive feature of stories or narratives. Without time, there is no story. However, stories are always *told* stories; this implies that there is always a teller and a listener of a story. The spatial positions of teller and listener may be distributed among two or more different people, but they can also be located in the self of one and the same person. Even when telling a story to somebody else, the teller is at the same time listening to himself or herself, noticing, recording, and evaluating what is being told at a particular moment in time.

Time and space are seen as equally important for the narrative structure of the dialogical self. The spatial nature of the self is expressed in the words *position, positioning,* and *repositioning*; terms that suggest, moreover, more dynamic and flexible referents than the traditional term *role* (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991).

CULTURAL COMPLEXITY AND MEDIATED DIALOGUE

As long as humanity has existed, it is arguable that people have tried to extend their communication beyond the immediately given oral contact. In early times, people invented means to communicate with each other beyond face-to-face contact (e.g., via drum beats and smoke signals). In our present era, technological innovations have provided the means for advancing our dialogical possibilities in unprecedented ways. Due to increased mass transportation, television, newspapers, tourism, the Internet, and e-mail, we increasingly live in a situation of cultural complexity (Castells, 1989; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; Luke, 1995). As a result of these innovations, people have, more than ever, the opportunity to broaden their horizon beyond the groups and cultures to which they originally belong. However, what do we mean by cultural complexity and how is it related to dialogue?

In an analysis that is relevant here, Hannerz (1992) proposed the concept of cultural flow in opposition to the view that cultures have a single essence. In the context of global dynamics, he distinguished among three dimensions of culture: (a) *modes of thought,* involving the entire array of values, concepts, propositions, and mental operations that people of some social unit carry together; (b) forms of *externalization,* the different ways in which modes of thought are made public and accessible to the senses (e.g., science, art, computers, roads); and (c) social *distribution,* the ways in which modes of thought and external forms (i.e., a and b together) are spread over a population.

Traditionally, anthropologists and psychologists have devoted most of their attention to the first of the three dimensions. They have tried to understand the shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and meanings of a particular group or society. To some extent, they have investigated the relation between the first and second dimensions: the ways in which modes of thought are expressed in a somewhat limited range of manifest forms (speech, music, graphic arts, or other communicative forms). The least attention has been devoted to the third dimension, the distribution of modes of thought and external forms over a population.

As Hannerz (1992) argued, technology plays a major part in the second and third dimensions. Media, in particular, allows people to communicate without being in one another's immediate presence. Media functions as "machineries of meaning" that are able to distribute new ideas and modes of thought in a speedy way across large portions of a population. Cultures of complex societies make use of writing, print, radio, telephones, telegraph, photography, film, disk and tape recording, television, video, and computers. The expansion of such modes of externalization facilitates not only the construction of new meaning systems (impact of the second dimension on the first) but also the distribution of such meaning systems in a globalizing world (impact of the third dimension on the first and second). Given the interrelatedness of the three dimensions, there is an increase in complexity in each of them.

The spread of technology and its associated cultural complexity have an important implication for the process of dialogue. Increasingly, we find ourselves in a situation of "mediated dialogue" (i.e., dialogues with the outside world and with ourselves are not only taking place face-to-face but they are also, and increasingly, mediated by technologies that have the potential to expand our dialogical "reach"). As members of larger communicative networks, we are exposed to a broadening range of meanings, values, ideas, and mental operations. As participators in such networks, we have the opportunity to become increasingly multivoiced (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). Increasingly, the voices of other people, groups, communities, and cultures become part of our private worlds and create new interfaces for dialogical relations to emerge. Because the dialogical self functions on the interface between internal and external dialogues, technological advances also mediate between us and ourselves, in this way transforming the content and scope of our self-dialogues (Hevern, 2000).

TRAVEL AND TRANSLOCALITY

The notion of cultural complexity is closely related to another issue, which is focused on the question of whether culture is geographically localized or not. Traditionally, many cross-cultural psychologists take geographically localized cultures as the basic unit of their research. Investigators study the values, practices, ideas, and mental operations of people of a particular culture and compare them with the

same aspects of one or more other cultures. Typically, investigators study cultures that are geographically different and conceptualize them as centralized in themselves. Since the pioneering work of Malinowski and Margaret Mead, ethnographers have based their insights on intensive dwelling in delimited "fields." Such a field was depicted as a centered and circumscribed place, like a garden, from which the word *culture* derives its original meaning.

However, the conception of cultures as geographically located and centralized in itself is increasingly challenged by recent developments in social anthropology that are more sensitive to the dynamic relations between cultures. Clifford (1997), for example, takes "travel" as a metaphor for capturing the relation between cultures. Researchers are beginning to see ethnographic work not so much as localized dwelling but more as a series of travel encounters. Like many other people, researchers are increasingly moving from one culture to another resulting in insights and theories that are focused not so much on the essences of cultures but more on their encounters. Cultural actions and the construction of identities take place not in the "middle" of the dwelling but in the contact zones between nations, peoples, and locales. The metaphor of travel decentralizes the notion of culture and stimulates an interest in diasporas, borderlands, immigration, migration, tourism, international cooperation, pilgrimage, and exile (Clifford, 1997). Encountering cultures creates, in a Bakhtinian term, new "chronotopes": places such as musea, exhibitions, international conferences, and Web sites, where people of different cultures meet to present their ideas and products to each other.

HYBRIDIZATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

The phenomenon of hybridization, closely related to cultural complexity and the metaphor of travel, further undermines the idea of cultures as internally homogeneous and externally distinctive. As Rowe and Schelling (1991) argued, intercultural processes lead to the recombination of existing forms and practices into new hybrid forms and practices. Hybrid phenomena result from the transformation of existing cultural practices into new ones and play an important part in the innovation of culture and self.

Hybridization may create multiple identities that represent new combinations of cultural elements originating from different places and times: Mexican schoolgirls dressed in Greek togas dancing in the style of Isadora Duncan; a London boy of Asian origin playing for a local Bengali cricket team and at the same time supporting the Arsenal football club; Native Americans celebrating Mardi Gras in the United States; or Thai boxing by Moroccan girls in Amsterdam (Pieterse, 1995). As these examples suggest, the process of hybridization has important implications for the construction and reconstruction of the self. Given the intimate connection between self and culture (Hermans, 2002; Josephs, 2002; Valsiner, 2002), hy-

bridization not only brings together heterogeneous elements at cultural contact zones, but also has the potential to enlarge the heterogeneity of the position repertoire of the self.

Because the self participates in the increasing cultural complexity, travel, and hybridity of our contemporary world, three features can characterize it. First, the self is, more than ever, composed of a high *density* of positions: An increasing number of positions populate the self, often leading to a cacophony of voices. Second, the positions of the self are relatively heterogeneous: groups and societies that were relatively homogeneous and closed in the past become more heterogeneous as partners in a broader interconnected social system. The self as part of this social system has the possibility of becoming more heterogeneous too. Third, the self is subjected to larger "position leaps" than ever in history. The notion of position leaps may be illustrated by an example drawn from recent studies of leadership.

In a discussion of recent trends in the literature, Van Loon (2003) proposed the concept of a "dialogical leader," who is able to make flexible movements between at least three different positions: the entrepreneur, the manager, and the coach. Depending on the needs of the shifting organizational environment, the dialogical leader takes one of the aforementioned positions; is able to move from one position to another in a heterogeneous repertoire; and has the dialogical capacity to negotiate between the different positions with attention to their specific purposes, memories, and experiences. The complexity of such leadership is further increased when such a leader, working in a multinational corporation, is sent out to another country with a different cultural history. The leader is then faced with a position leap: As a coach in the second culture, he or she is faced with new problems, questions, and challenges that may be very different from the coaching behavior that was found to be effective in the culture of origin.

In view of these developments (complexity, travel, hybridity), much has been changed since Triandis (1980) conceived of culture as defined by three criteria: place (a local community), time (a particular historical period), and language (intelligibility). In our present era, we are becoming aware that intercultural processes increasingly bring together elements from different places and times and has created the "heteroglossia" that is so typical of contemporary intercultural communication. Certainly, these developments challenge our dialogical capacities (Watkins, 1999) and our propensity to innovate ourselves (Hermans, 2002).

INNOVATION OF THE SELF:
THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW POSITION

The innovation of the self can take at least three forms. First, a new position can be introduced into the repertoire and included in the organization of the self. Potentially, any new situation in a person's life course may lead to a new position in the repertoire. When a child goes to school for the first time, he or she meets a teacher

and finds himself or herself in the position of a pupil. In this position, the child is exposed to new information and subjected to a broad array of new experiences, which may further broaden the child's position repertoire.

However, the expansion of the repertoire may be seriously limited as soon as some positions have acquired a prominent place in the self-system. For example, as a result of his or her upbringing, a particular individual may feel the need to have every situation under control, in this way closing himself or herself off from experiences that require a more receptive attitude. When a controlling position is developed at the cost of a receptive position, not only will many new situations be approached from a controlling attitude, but at the same time, this dominant position prevents other positions that are experienced as a threat to the dominant position from entering the self-system. As a consequence, the child is not able to shift from a controlling to a receptive position with the result that the flexibility needed to cope with a variety of situations may be seriously reduced. Therefore, the openness of the self-system to new positions strongly depends on the existing organization of the repertoire. Consequently, the potential of new situations to evoke new positions in the repertoire is limited as soon as the self is organized in a particular way in the course of a person's development.

In a study of embodied dialogue in the first year of life, Fogel, de Koeyer, Bellagamba, and Bell (2002) introduced a distinction that is directly relevant to the innovation of the self: the difference between rigid and creative frames in mother–child interactions. Whereas rigid frames are relatively unchanging over repeated instances, creative frames emerge as a result of improvisational coactivity with a broad array of possibilities for the innovation of the self. The authors give examples of both rigid and creative frames in the interaction between Susan, an infant of 15 months, and her mother. A rigid frame is observed when Susan wants to climb up the slope of a slide but her mother wants her to climb from the steps. This circular episode is repeated without many variations, and both parties involved in a battle of wills seem stuck in this situation. In a creative frame, on the other hand, the mother invites her daughter to play the "lion" game with a hand puppet. In the past, mother has always played the role of the lion (roaring and scaring), whereas Susan has always played the role of the recipient (being scared). A reversal of roles is observed when the child puts, for the first time, the lion on her own hand with the help of the mother and acts as if to scare the mother. In this particular situation, Susan is playing with a new I position and experiencing the corresponding emotions. A new position is introduced into her repertoire and she learns to flexibly shift from the position of the scared child to that of the dominant lion–adult and vice versa; experimenting with the new position and its associated sounds, behaviors, and emotions. For the development of the child, and for the innovation of the self in particular, it seems important to provide the child with a variety of creative frames to broaden the position repertoire and to contribute to the flexibility of moving from one position to another (see also Lewis, 2002, and Schore, 1994, who arrive

at similar conclusions when discussing the dialogical self in relation to recent developments in brain research).

From a cultural–anthropological point of view, the issue of innovation in the dialogical self was discussed by Gieser (2004) in his study of a phenomenon known as "shape shifting." Practiced by the Kuranko people of Sierra-Leone, shape shifting can be described as the culturally supported ability of a man to transform into an animal so that it can give him a sense of power, control, meaning, healing, and identity. Shape shifting is closely connected to a particular feature of the Kuranko people: the tendency to spatialize internal events where memory is seen as happening somewhere else, personhood resides in social relationships rather than in individuals, and the unconscious is represented by going into the bush. In a similar vein, shape shifting is described as an inward travel from the conscious into the unconscious, expressed as an exterior movement from town to bush. As part of this ritual, a man who wants to transform himself goes into the bush and identifies with the totem animal of the clan (e.g., an elephant), which empowers him to extend his possibilities beyond the ordinary. After returning to the village, he is respected by the other members of the clan and may even receive the status of a hero as a model of the ability of the Kuranko to tap the powers of the wild. He has, moreover, confirmed the moral bond between his clan's people and their totem animal.

Gieser (2004) analyzed the process of shape shifting as a dynamic relation between two domains of the self: the internal domain and the external (or extended) domain (Hermans, 2002). An external position (the animal as object of shape shifting) is transformed into an internal position (I as animal). As soon as the external position is internalized, it becomes so dominant that it suppresses all the other positions in the internal domain. In this phase of the transformation, the power asymmetries between the positions are pushed to the extreme, resulting in a monological self. There is only one voice, the voice of the person as animal. The shape shifter believes that he has transformed himself into the reality of another being. After the period of shape shifting, however, the new position loses its dominance and becomes a normal dialoguing partner in a multivoiced self. The new position stabilizes itself in the repertoire, together with all the characteristics the shape shifter attributes to it (power, control, and healing). Although the new position has lost its absolute dominance in the self, it has the power to subordinate earlier positions that were characterized by marginality and powerlessness (Gieser, 2004).

The phenomenon of shape shifting exemplifies how the self can be innovated by the introduction of a new position. The process of shape shifting can be summarized by referring to two subsequent movements: (a) from an external to an internal position (an animal in the world becomes internalized) and (b) from an internal to an external position (the animal recedes and takes its place in the external world again). The result is a reorganization of the position repertoire of the shape shifter, a reorganization that is supported by the collective voices of the community.

From a dialogical point of view, the example of shape shifting is not very different from the possibilities that cyberspace offers for the construction and reconstruction of identity. As Talamo and Ligorio (2001) observed, cyberspace has become populated by so-called collaborative virtual environments (CVEs). Rather than enabling user–computer interaction, these environments foster communication and interaction among social actors. CVEs allow users to construct identities by (a) choosing nicknames that can be very different from their real names; (b) embodying their identities, for example, in the form of two-dimensional or three-dimensional objects or figures; and (c) talking, discussing, and negotiating about the various identities. An example of embodiment is the use of so-called *avatars* (Talamo & Ligorio, 2001), referring to objects that represent the participants in the form of pictures, designs, or animations. Being personified by one or more avatars, the user can express particular identities and hide others, in ways similar to a mask worn at a Greek drama or a religious ritual. Presenting oneself in the form of avatars allows the users to explore, often in highly imaginative ways, new identities that may expand their existing position repertoire. The choice of nicknames may represent identities that extend the self beyond those indicated by their first names and family names (see the beginning of this article) and deviate from existing positions. Basically, the processes described in the case of shape shifting also apply to the avatar game. The user identifies with the avatar as a new position in the external domain of the self and internalizes its attitudes, values, and interaction styles that may then lead to the transformation of the internal domain of the self, in this way expanding and innovating the existing position repertoire.

From a dialogical perspective, a particular feature of CVEs, their democratic potential, is noteworthy. Some researchers (e.g., Sproull & Kiesler, 1991) pointed to the fact that some social cues (e.g., gender, age, or race) are not visible in cyberspace, which permits the construction of a space that is less restricted by traditional role expectations. As a result of such expectations, the openness of the self to alternative constructions may be seriously reduced. In this respect, CVEs provide users with a welcome place to experiment with the innovation of the self by introducing new positions in a space that is less restricted by traditional power structures.

INNOVATION IN THE SELF: FOREGROUNDING A BACKGROUND POSITION

A second form of innovation can be found when positions move from the background of the system to the foreground, or to use another metaphor, when more deeply layered positions are brought to the surface. In that case, positions that are already part of the system become accessible as the result of a reorganization of the self. An empirical example is provided by Lysaker and Lysaker (2001), who stud-

ied schizophrenia as a "collapse of the dialogical self." They followed a client through three phases—before, during, and after a schizophrenic period. They found that particular positions that were active in the first phase (e.g., "I as a lover of music") seemed to disappear entirely in the second schizophrenic phase, but could be activated again in the third phase. Such a finding suggests that particular positions may be backgrounded for a shorter or longer period in a person's history as if they disappear entirely, but can be made reaccessible at some later point in time. This form of innovation does not introduce a new position but is concerned with the reorganization of the self as a system.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* James (1982) was not only interested in religious conversions and counter conversions of historical figures, but also in sudden changes and reorganizations in the selves of ordinary people. An example is the phenomenon of "falling out of love" (p. 179), illustrated by the case of a man who suddenly stopped his relationship with a girl he had fallen in love with 2 years earlier. When the man looked back, he told how he had fallen violently in love with a girl who had "a spirit of coquetry." Although he secretly knew that she was not the right person for him, he fell into a regular fever and could not stop thinking of her. After a long period of being plagued by jealousy and contempt for his uncontrollable weakness, there was a sudden change:

> The queer thing was the *sudden and unexpected* [italics added] way in which it all stopped. I was going to my work after breakfast one morning, thinking as usual of her and of my misery, when, just as if some outside power laid hold of me, I found myself turning round and almost running to my room, where I immediately got out all the relics of her which I possessed, including some hair, all her notes and letters, and ambrotypes on glass. The former I made a fire of, the latter I actually crushed beneath my heel, in a sort of fierce joy of revenge and punishment. I now loathed and despised her altogether, and as for myself I felt as if a load of disease had suddenly been removed from me. That was the end. (p. 180)

In his analysis of this case, James (1982) considered it "an unusually clear example of two different levels of personality, inconsistent in their dictates, yet so well balanced against each other as for a long time to fill the life with discord and dissatisfaction" (p. 180). James (1982) used the phrase "unstable equilibrium" to characterize the specific organization of the self: "At last, not gradually, but in a sudden crisis, the unstable equilibrium is resolved" (p. 180).

In our own research (Hermans, 1996a; Hermans & Kempen, 1993) on the reorganization of the self we have found, quite similar to James"s (1982) findings, instances of background positions suddenly coming to the foreground with the simultaneous suppression of existing foreground positions. One of our research participants was Alice, a 28-year-old woman without any psychiatric history. She described her personality as consisting of two "sides": an "open side" that was very

familiar and clear to her and a "closed side" that was less familiar and played a role somewhere in the darker background of her mind. As part of the research procedure, I invited her to tell about her life from the perspectives of her open and closed positions successively. From her open position ("I as a open person") she told stories that centered mainly around the unproblematic relationship with her mother and other people, whereas from her closed side ("I as a closed person") she related events that referred mainly to the problematic relationship with her father who had left the family when she was 12 years old.

After the investigation, Alice was requested to rate her stories on two variables: relative dominance ("How dominant was this aspect of your life during the past week?") and meaningfulness ("How meaningful was this aspect of your life during the past week?"). It was found that, over a 3-week period, the stories of her closed position became more dominant than the stories of her open position; the stories of the latter position receded to the background. This change represents a clear example of a "dominance reversal," a radical change taking place in a period of an unstable equilibrium of the self (Hermans, 1996a; Hermans & Kempen, 1993). One of the similarities between James"s (1982) example of falling out of love and the example of dominance reversal of positions is that a radical change of the self takes place with a limited degree of external causation. Apparently, the self can come to a "revolutionary" period in which minimal causal factors can instigate maximal changes in the self. Such changes can be understood as resulting from inner feedback loops that lead to the mutual strengthening of positions or structures of positions that together result in radical changes of the system as a whole. (For a discussion of the notion of equilibrium in the self in the context of self-organization and chaos theory, see Schwalbe, 1991.)

Similarly, the meaningfulness of the stories from Alice's closed position increased strongly during the 3-week period, with a simultaneous decrease of the meaningfulness of the stories from her open position. Apparently, the increasing dominance of her closed position was experienced as highly meaningful, although this position was associated with a great deal of negative emotion. On the basis of Alice's diary notes and discussions of the results of the investigation, it could be concluded that the increase of meaning of her closed position could be understood as bringing hitherto neglected or suppressed experiences to the surface. Moreover, Alice explained after the investigation that her participation in the project had helped her to improve the relationship with her father. Altogether, this study suggests that dominance reversal implies a foregrounding of hitherto neglected or suppressed positions that can result in a expanded and enriched position repertoire.

Explorations in cyberspace, and in CVEs and multiuser dimensions (MUDs) in particular, may "touch" and actualize positions in the self that are, neglected or suppressed, hidden in the background of the repertoire. Traveling in cyberspace not only offers an opportunity to extend the self-space beyond the ordinary and usual, but also has the potential to undermine existing power structures in the self. Moving through cyberspace and traveling through a wide variety of heterogeneous

positions may lead to sudden dominance reversals in the self so that forces are brought to the surface that were hitherto neglected or suppressed. People who were working for many years in a particular occupation may feel a call to change their job; women may discover masculine sides in themselves and feel the urge to change the nature of their social and sexual relationships; people living for a long time in a particular country may feel the strong urge to move to another part of the world in the conviction that they will find themselves.

Contemporary globalizing society and cyberspace are similar in some significant respects. They are both spaces that are characterized by an increasing complexity, by an increasing opportunity to travel from one site to another, and by an increasing hybridization in the sense that they provide immense opportunities for combining and recombining existing positions. Certainly, traveling through cultures in a globalized space and traveling through the flow of societies in cyberspace may be an adventure of short visits and passing encounters. However, it also may enable visitors to actualize forces that are hidden, as precious possibilities, in the background of their minds.

INNOVATION IN THE SELF: THE EMERGENCE OF COALITIONS OF POSITIONS

A third form of innovation exists when two or more positions are supporting each other or develop some form of cooperation so that they form a new subsystem in the self. Positions that have similar purposes or orientations can easily go together (e.g., I as enjoyer of life and I as playful), and particular societal positions (e.g., I as a university teacher) are expected to be associated with particular personal positions (e.g., I as dedicated to my job).

However, less intuitive coalitions or changes in coalitions may also be observed, as can be seen in the emergence of a coalition of positions that were previously strongly opposed to each other. As a psychotherapist, I assisted a client (Fred) who suffered from extreme doubts about his own capacities. In the beginning of the psychotherapy it became clear that there were three positions that played a main role in his present life: the doubter; the perfectionist; and, somewhat at the background but very important to him, the enjoyer of life. Although the latter position seemed to be an enduring feature in his personal history, it was strongly suppressed by the cooperation between the doubter and the perfectionist, the second one compensating for the anxiety aroused by the first one. In the course of therapy, Fred and I discovered that the perfectionist position could be tackled by learning to delegate tasks to other people at the right moment and to cooperate with other people more easily. Fred then learned to practice this new style of working for more than 1 year. When we examined his repertoire again, we discovered that the perfectionist and the enjoyer had formed a coalition, which was strong enough to push the doubter to the background of the self-system. Fred was increasingly

able to enjoy a good job without completing it in every small detail, and he worked more easily with other people. The new coalition represented an innovation of his repertoire and showed how coalitions can be established between positions that were initially opposed and excluding each other (for more detail of the case and the methodology, see Hermans, 2001a).

This phenomenon of a "coalition between opposites" can also be observed in selves that are located at the interfaces between cultures. Bhatia and Rham (2001) analyzed an account from a Pakistani American woman who was shifting between oppositional voices from different cultural milieus: "Such a catch-22! Your class mates do not think you are American enough, and your parents think you are too Westernized" (Mani, 1994, cited in Bhatia & Ram, 2001, p. 305). In their comment on this quotation, Bhatia and Ram emphasized that the battles of this woman with her family, with the Muslim community, and with the American society represents a dialogical negotiation that is more than a push–pull phenomenon. However discordant, the different voices may create a "symbiotic relation of ambivalence." They may live off each other in a dynamic loop, and the ambivalence becomes a basis for the negotiation of the different parts of the self, although the coalition may be associated with the feeling of pain and loss.

The notion of coalition also plays a central role concerning the Internet. As Granic and Lamey (2000) argued, the complexity of the Internet emerges spontaneously from the interactions of the simpler components of the system. There is no central control system and it is not the result of some brilliant inventor's design. Rather, the net functions as a decentralized order that emerges from the mass of millions of users who electronically interact daily, setting the conditions for the spontaneous creation of a higher order complexity. The complexity of the net is realized through the system-wide coordination of many different coalitions or spaces. These coalitions are nongeographically defined aggregates of people and their electronic connection that share a particular function. Typical of the Internet is that the same user may participate, successively or simultaneously, in a variety of coalitions (e.g., scientists from different cultures, patients with different experiences of a particular illness). Because internal and external dialogues are intensely intertwined, the different coalitions in which the user participates can confirm, supplement, enrich, or undermine existing coalitions in the self.

LIMITATIONS ON THE PROCESS OF INNOVATION

Although the self has the capacity to innovate itself in close correspondence with the situation, there are powerful forces at work that make the self function in rather conservative ways. Inspired by earlier theories on cognitive dissonance, Josephs and Valsiner (1998) described how "circumvention strategies" are used as buffers against the sharp edges of disagreements, conflicts, and contradictions. For exam-

ple, a woman may see herself as "the future wife of X," but she may be warned by her family members that X is not the right man for her. Somewhere she agrees with her family members that a future marriage will be a great risk. However, she may circumvent the contradictory position by saying to herself, "My love is so strong that I will change him." In this way, the original position is not only protected but its powerful place in the organized system is further strengthened. The use of circumvention strategies suggests that self-positions, like people in a society, form power structures with a relative dominance of some positions over others. Such an organizational structure, however, reduces the multivoiced character of the self and represents a force in a monological direction.

Conservative forces that function as an avoidance of complexity, ambivalence, and conflict are also at work in societal structures. An example is Kaufman's (1991) study of newly orthodox Jewish women. Women who grew up in secular Jewish homes in the United States felt that the secular values of their education provided an inadequate foundation for their living. In their teens or twenties they converted to orthodox Judaism, despite the limitations placed on women. They did so because they believed that the orthodox religious system offered them a definite place in the world and the feeling of being rooted in a long, durable tradition. Arnett (2002) placed Kaufman's study in the broader context of globalization, referring to the emergence of various kinds of fundamentalist movements in both Western and non-Western societies. In agreement with other theorists (e.g., Giddens, 2000), he argued that many of these movements arose in the late 20th century as a direct reaction to the changes caused by globalization. Apparently, such a world view provides the self with a stable religious position that is based on a belief in a sacred past, a hierarchy of authority with men over women, adults over children, and God over all (Arnett, 2002; Marty & Appleby, 1993). From a dialogical point of view, religious orthodoxy and the emergence of fundamental movements can be considered as manifestations of collective voices that encourage a strongly hierarchical organization of the position repertoire with a simultaneous avoidance of internal disagreement, conflict, and ambivalence.

The Internet may be an attractive environment for fundamentalist communities or for any other group with ideological, commercial, religious, artistic, scientific, or entertaining purposes, to express their views and expand their influence in the world. This means that the Internet as such is not automatically contributing to the complexity and heterogeneity of the self. Rather, it has the *potential* to do so. The question of whether the Internet, cyberspace, e-mail, short message service (SMS), and other electronic devices are enriching the self and its dialogical capacities depends on the historical background, needs, and aims of the user. At the same time, these medias are so powerfully present in our contemporary society that they, in their turn, influence and change our history, needs, and aims. Therefore, the effect of electronic media on the mind of the person is an issue that concerns the evolution of mankind.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS ISSUE:
EXPLORATIONS OF MEDIATED DIALOGUE

The several contributions in this issue have in common that they illustrate, in one way or another, the process of mediated dialogue in a digital age. In the following, I briefly sketch, for each contribution, a connection with this theoretical framework.

In his article on Internet-based personal Weblogs ("blogs"), Hevern showed how technology is able to create a new form of dialogue that is very personal and very public at the same time. When a user publishes a Weblog, he or she becomes actively engaged in an array of self-presentation strategies within the public environment of cyberspace. Unlike private diaries, Weblogs are inherently public; the posting of items on a blog is a social act of positioning that invites readers to encounter some aspect of the blogger's self, comment on it, and add to it. Unlike personal homepages, the publishing of a Weblog is an activity profoundly expressive of an author's experience of time, a fundamental condition for moving positions in the dialogical self. The blogger crafts and preserves in and across time multiple positions, both in the internal and external domain of the self. These positions demonstrably evolve, shift focus, and interact with other positions as the rhythm of the author's life is chronicled each day. Weblogs are stimulating examples of the convergence of space and time and they foster dialogical processes on the contact zones between cultures.

In their article on MUDs, Ligorio and Pugliese are interested in the field of education in which they observe a dichotomy between individualistic and contextual concepts of learning. Whereas an individualistic concept is concerned with the development of the talents of the individual learner, a contextual concept of learning enables learners to co-construct a stimulating learning environment in which social interaction is central. The authors devised a learning environment in which communicators no longer rely on visual indicators, typical of face-to-face interaction. Instead, they work with new means and instruments such as nicknames, avatars, various forms of embodiment, and virtual identities. In this way, new positions can be introduced into the repertoire where issues of realism and fantasy are combined in novel and strategic ways. The results gathered from the authors" study show how a specific repertoire of positions (collaborator, ironic, detective, leader) functions in a highly contextual way. Different positions become prominent as the cooperation between the players and their problem solving progresses. This contribution shows how MUDs provide participants with an imaginative learning environment that challenges the range and flexibility of the position repertoire of the learners.

SMS, discussed in Cortini, Mininni, and Manuti's contribution, is a rapidly growing medium of communication; particularly popular in circles of young people in Europe and, increasingly, in North America and elsewhere. It fulfils the de-

sire of the users to position themselves within the interlocutor's attention and to enter his or her personal space. A specific feature of SMS is the peculiar mixture of orality and literacy. SMS messages are necessarily short, as the number of characters is limited. Such a constraint imposes on the interlocutors an economy of words and meaning, resulting in a curious slang made up of cut words. The texts produced in SMS communication are similar to oral dialogue, both in expressive aims and linguistic features; the messages are usually informal. The result is a very peculiar writing style that is the textual equivalent of a "second orality" that, in turn, gives birth to a sort of "secondary literacy." In this way, a new genre or combination of genres emerges with specific textual features (e.g., abbreviations, emotion words, slang) that modify both external and internal dialogues. The mobile phone can be considered an extension of one's own body, and it accompanies the communicator wherever he or she goes. As such, SMS emphasizes the nomadic character of modern identity (see the metaphor of travel discussed earlier in this article). This new medium fits very well with the globalized context of the third millennium.

Annese's contribution is focused on television, which she sees as a "social space" that offers a variety of possible self-images through audience discussion programs, its participants, and the disclosure of private stories. Although TV watching does not permit any direct dialogue with the characters exposed on the screen, this medium offers a great variety of role models and dialogical genres from a variety of cultures. It allows viewers to compare themselves with a complex and heterogeneous set of TV characters and to identify or disidentify with them, in this way extending or restricting their own position repertoire (see the notion of cultural complexity discussed earlier in this article). From a dialogical perspective, the talk show is of particular importance because it represents a space of parasocial interaction. Ordinary people represented on the screen as a simulacrum of the audience on the other side of the screen are presenting images of subjectivity to the viewers. In this way, TV offers the possibility of a true multivoicedness, with a diversity of characters: the participants of the talk show, the audience at the background of the show, and the audience at the other side of the screen. Their similarities, differences, contrasts, and contradictions represent dynamic forces that require a continuous interpretation by a self that is faced with a complex variety of possible positions. This contribution shows how the self is located in a highly dynamic space that is stretched between actual selves and screen others.

Historical changes in the notion of space are the focus of van Halen and Janssen's contribution. The authors compare Dante's conception of space in the divine comedy and a late-modern conception of space as expressed by *Boombap,* a leading Web site of the Dutch hip-hop scene. Whereas Dante's space can be regarded as exemplary of the traditional, authority-bound self-construction in premodern times, Boombap reflects the virtual movements of late modern identity management. In both examples, the spatial nature of self-construction plays a decisive role. However, in Dante's moral universe, space is closed, hierarchically con-

structed (hell, purgatory, paradise) and predefined; whereas the cyberspace of Boombap is openly negotiated and co-constructed by people involved in processes of positioning and repositioning. The two kinds of space correspond to different types of narrative. Dante's space is subordinated to a temporal organization. People follow their destiny, and the story in which they are located has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Cyberspace, in contrast, subordinates time to space. There is a constant change and flux of narrative themes, and there is no closure. Whereas Dante's space is constructed from the viewpoint of the omniscient narrator, cyberspace is rather a bottom-up construction that is made and remade by dialogical processes as question and answer and agreement and disagreement. This contribution shows how important the dimension of "open–closed" is for the historical understanding of the notion of space.

As the several contributions in this issue demonstrate, dialogue becomes increasingly mediated in a global and digital age. This mediation represents a deep and irreversible change of the relationships among the inhabitants of our planet, not only in respect to the form but also in the content of their dialogical relationships; and in both their external and internal dialogues. In a sense, we are all "parts" continuously involved in dialogue with other parts. Sturgeon (1953) said:

> Multiplicity is our first characteristic; unity our second. As your parts know they are parts of you, so must you know that we are parts of humanity. (p. 232)

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