A workshop on: **working with future I positions.**

A journey to the future and back

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The introduction text:
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Experiences with and reflection on the use of futuring I positions

In the development of the Dialogical Self, the development of promotor positions is crucial. Promotor Positions create stability and change at the same time. (Hermans, Konopka, 2010; Hermans, Gieser, 2012). When personal development is defined as creating and changing Self as fitting with the environment, creating a promotor position can help to open up new opportunities, new positions in life and at the same time keep the connection with positively valued I positions.

We explored in practice the use of future I positions. Can a future position function as a promotor position? Or can it promote some change that moves to the creation of a new promotor position? In this workshop we present descriptive material. We gathered experiences in several workshop with several groups: professional coaches (2010); Chinese women wanting to strengthen themselves as a 'woman leader' (2011); and successful Chinese entrepreneurs who reached the goals they set 20 year ago but now facing a future with repetition and with an empty feeling.

Future positioning is in the research on culture a dominant dimension. In research done on successful cultures and successful organizations, the dimension of having a perspective of future orientation comes out as an important discriminating factor. (House, 2004). In our practice with managers we explored the working of future I positioning'. We present descriptive examples and share our first analysis. We hope this will contribute to a better understanding of the processes involved in the creation of promotor positions and the implications for personal growth.

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What are we doing this afternoon?
1. Who we are: Ton and Erica
2. The leading questions:
3. Theory: the concept of the Self, Dialogical Self
4. The development of the Self by confronting and composing: the methods for development
5. Structural components in the construction and composition: the importance of the promotor position and examples.
6. Dialogical components in the composition
7. Workshop: First setting the basic and analyzing the structure. Second enriching with the future positions. Evaluating.
8. Applications.
9. Needed materials

2. Leading questions. Can working with future positions be important? Can it contribute in a specific way to the development of the self? To the development and the health of a person in his relations to other people? To society?

3. The concept of the Self, the Dialogical Self.
   - Unique individually, created from the beginning in dialogue with others, the world, myself
   - Can be seen as in space. time and space are the same, we represent in space
   - the Self is a multiplicity of I positions in dialogues

4. Naturally the development of the Self goes natural. We do. And the composition, construction of the Self can be influenced. The influences are in the confrontations with the structure in it. This can be done in sequence or can be done more dynamic in composing and reflecting, feeling the composition. Acting (composing) Feeling, and reflecting are integrated in loops.

5. Structural components. Adding knowledge, overview and feelings of the structure, the composition.
   - The complete wheel
   - other aspects: the flexibility
     expanded
     economic
     consistency
changeability
- organisatie/dissociatie
- layers: hiding; dominating
Later we ask key questions to create structure in the composition

In the theory of the Dialogical self the **promotor position** is crucial for the further development of the Self. Hermans (2010) mentioned as principles for the working of a promotor position. The innovation position

a) ....has an openness to the future. It has the potential to produce new specialised positions. Open for creating or integrating new positions, or external and internal.
b) ....has the capacity to integrate external positions. Integrate positive and negative positions (shadow positions). Include these also in the dialogue
c) ...reorganise the self: create new positions; re-order positions; involve negative emotions and positions.
Guards for the continuity of the Self. Although it is directed on creating new organisations of the positions and emotions in the self it is open for discontinuity too. If a person is able to overcome crisis depends on the strength and the quality of the promotor position

In the book Dialogical Self Theory Hermans give two more extended examples of the development of a new promotor position: in the therapy of Leo. And an example of “shape shifting” that functions as creator of complete different promotor position that is after time integrated in the self.

Some more examples for the creation of new I positions that develops to promotor positions out of the daily practices in organisational development.

a. DSM asked for their Chinese management top talent gathered in an annual meeting an activity so they can be “**more inspiring**” in their work. The goal of the workshop was to create, or to strengthen, in each participant the position: “ I as inspiring”. We gave the participants the following line of thinking:
   i. What is the working of inspiring: concept on inspiring as designed in “organisatie als verhaal” van Rens van Loon and
The position $Z+A+$ is inspiring: it creates power, unity and inspiration. It strengthened the feeling of autonomy, self esteem and at the same moment: being connected, openness to others. As Hermans in his book Self Narrative says: “heroism and love”

ii. What more to say about a tool that can help to inspire? Criteria for the Tool? The tool must be logical and emotional? Strong synthetic working. Howard Gardner: the synthetic mind is the most important mind for the future.

iii. The tool can be storytelling. Gardner: ‘story telling is the tool of the manager to connect, to integrate; to synthesise. Hermans in “Self narratives” deepens the conceptualisation of story telling. Basics are: the story combine facts by adding fiction = meaning. Self story telling is possible because the “I” can tell about the me. the “I” can out himself and the me act in different time moments: past-present-future. And the character of a story is: it is always a dialogue

iv. Criteria for a good story: it must be in the “I”. It must have a specific format. It must connect the listeners in the story, they must be present.

v. A content connected to the important issues in DSM for today and the future. A competition was set to come up with the best story. The winning story (4 minutes) was a combination of heroism of the leader and the love for his people.

vi. Recognisable. More stories worked at the same way. The position “I as inspiring” was integrated al least in several participants.

b. Science teachers at a university want to improve their lecturing and have more fun in doing it. A training strengthens and enriches the position “I as a teacher” with the tool of storytelling.

c. Preparing students on a possible future by inviting them to create the position “Me as an entrepreneur in ten years?” Especially oriented on developing I positions that has counter voices tot the fearful voices. Or reposition the value of the position “I as an entrepreneur”. On a conference in 2012
There is a lot to connect to recent research. May be we can go into that later and have first practice now and experience.

(research by the university of lublin: they proved that developing a strong future position as a promoter position strengthened the development in a very positive sense the health of a person, especially by moving from the now again and again to the future position. So that future position i really integrated in the now )

From research on temporal dialogues (Oles, Brygola, Sibinska)
"temporal dialogues tended to increase curiosity and reduce negative affects like depression or anxiety (except the cases in which an initial level of the meaning of life was lowered)."
"In general, we found that the confrontation of inner voices representing the future and present has positive influence on well-being and the meaning of life (with a few exceptions). "We basically confronted different I-positions situated in three time dimensions: future, past and present. The present self is often under pressure of immediate needs, everyday concerns, and urgent tasks, the future self is closer to possible self, according to Markus and Nurius (1986), so it is more flexible, more colored by hopes or fears, and more prone to creative power of imagination, while the past self implies memory of important life events and reevaluation of their influence on the present and future."
"Confronting the past or future causes the present to be viewed from a broader perspective (e.g., teenage values or the sum of life events). Thus present actions, which seem important and urgent (e.g. completing studies, academic-related tasks at the expense of one’s social life), when perceived from a broader temporal perspective, may not only lose its importance, but also gain an entirely different value (e.g., it may seem undesirable, as opposed to urgent and important)." (Oles, Brygola, Sibinska, in preparation, to be publishes in the Handbook on the Dialogical Self, ed. Hermans & Giesser)

6. Dialogical component in the compositions. To make it real dialogues. In Athens Agnieszka Konopka, Hubert Hermans and Ton Voogt presented the Positioning theatre where participants got in dialogue with each other. In psycho drama it can be expressed between people. In the Positioning theatre the I positions are in dialogue.

7. I invite you now to participate in the workshop. The goal is to investigate for your self, with your life as an example, the possibilities of the use of a future position. The intention is to
find and create a future position that can function as a promotor position. Not all future positions will have the promotor characteristics from the beginning. Sometime some “working on it” is needed to create a future position that functions as a promotor position. The procedure I invite you to work on is: I invite you as an instructor to answer a question on your own. So we all work individually in the beginning, Later we make the step to share.
Practically.
- a. big piece of paper
- b. many post its
- c. pen
- d. notebook

A. We create a background structure:
Together with the fifteen first questions about the past present and future create a ‘background’ value structure in which what is important now and in the future can be in it:
- persons out of the past, event, saying,
- now: persons, event, doing
- your profession, talents
- your responsibilities: specify
- values: (religious, human values,......)
- dreams

B. You have the list of internal and the list of the external positions. Choose two internal and two external positions that you feel are connected to you at this moment and that are important for you on the long run. Write them down and give them a voice.

a. order the positions in the space, the distance, the composition visualises your “feeling of the relations between the I positions”.

b. you add voices in the dialogue: write the dialogues. “I” also makes statements to each of the voices of the different I positions.
Optional differentiations to leadership, coaching)....

1. What questions to ask to deepen leadership?
   Leadership is about:
   b. the personality of the leader. Strong? Inspiring?
   Outstanding in competencies?........
   c. connecting to others, with others. Honouring differences? Accepting others? Bridging distances?
   Connecting values?

C. Reflecting on the structure
   c.1. Adding connecting positions. I connected to.....? formula: I->G (or...the first syllable of the name of the other) and reverse G->I.......Important: to add to this connection the message in this.
   So the I positions are not only important: most important are the message, the sentences of these positions in the space of the self. (It is all in the dialogue)
   So when positioning connection like (I-> G) a wording of the message in that connection add the value to the connection.

   So in the space of the self puzzle are:
   **I postions:** "I as my drive to realize myself, I as wanting to be the best ion two years....’ or...
   **Values positions:** the experience that my father......The experience that my uncle......the experience that I heard the song...........my being honest.......my being mother for my children........
   **Connection positions:** i->G or/and G-> I with words

   c.2. Mark the core areas. the areas, values that are most important in your self: give these a C (Core) Not more then 5.

   c.3. The feelings of: self esteem, powerful, self confidence, proud with what areas do you feel these most? Mark that area with SR (Self Realization) (two or three)
c.4 The feelings of: caring, friendship/connection/love. attention giving/tenderness,intimate with what areas do you feel these most? Mark that urea with U (unity)

c.5 Areas can give you energy, or can take away all energy. What eras do you give energy? Mark these with E. (energy) what take away all energy? Mark with B. (Bleeder)

c.6 What in your space is strongly connected to another? It can be strong. I can be loose. I can be attracting it can be opposing: making distance. Mark the positions that have strong positive connecting, attracting connection wit the line >——<
Mark the positions that make distance from each other with <——>

c.7 In the space, puzzle of your self some positions are more closely related then others. Some form a network, some are lonelier. Draw a circle around the positions that make a group, a network.. May be even more groups. Mark the groups with N...... and give the group a name (network.......)

Reflect and write down your reflections. What do you think, what do you feel?

D. Now I invite you to far ahead in time. You choose a moment that might be a moment of transitions as you feel it now for you. When you want to choose a moment that feels in reach for you now, go further, go out of reach. May be select a position that is in the standard list of internal positions or external positions. A position you like to be. Some suggestions: “ I as an old man (woman)” , “ I as being on the top of my career” , I as completely happy”. Go to that I position. You are now far ahead in time. What words, language, let us choose language for this exercise, express most this position. What are the words? What do you say to your self now? (write down)

We can work in steps and have overview at the same time, that is not always for clients, we have to help them, but for us here, complexity is a quality we can handle, you can handle. So now I invite you to stay in the future but create another position in the future “the position you do not want to be at/in)”. The position
you fear, you avoid, you disgust (all negative). What will you say from that position to yourself in the now?

**Now move to Me now**, with all your positions in the now. Choose a position, or create a new one. You heard the future positions speak. What do you say to yourself after having heard your voices of the future. New position? New dialogue with what other position?


Make an end for now. **Freeze**. Stand up and look at the whole of your positions, voices. Especially to the new position(s) . Some more to add? Some more to re-organise? Freeze for now.

What are the changes in the structure?
- energy giving, bleeding
- core
- attracting, opposing
- SR and U
- grouping

Reflect again? Change. Feel, think. Write

**Getting to the dynamics in the puzzle of the Self**

The structure of in the space of the self is a static picture, but the reality is that there are tensions and there are changes and developments all the time. So bring the dynamics to live.

**What are the dynamic creating positions?**

These positions are called **promotor positions**.

They have two functions: they create *continuity* and they create *new* opening positions

**So important to find or create promotor positions**

How?

1. Strengthening positions that are high E, high SR or U, or that can become high E, SR of U and
are in the core of a positive loaded network. Mark this as P (promotor position).

2. Creating new positions that can become strong SR, U and E and connect many other positions in a new network with a new perspective. Mark these positions as PF: promotor positions for the future.

After a workshop a participant asked:....... „what can I do best now”

A lady with two energy bleeding values (her mother and her boyfriend she just divorced) these were also her core values and a very small energy giving area.
So she was very out of balance and focussed on closing the hole in the bucket, but got exhausted because there was not enough positive energy coming in her. I gave the suggestion to focus more on strengthening the energy giving area.
What she needed more is a new helping I position (a promotor position) from which she can steer this development.

A man who observed that all his areas were not connected.
Many isolated areas. So he lacked a centre or an organizing I position. (a promotor position.) I suggested him to go on talking between all these values areas and in doing so he creates connections. The connections are in the dialogue. I suggested a promoter position that strengthened the dialogues between the 'islands in himself'.

You want to share? Share with one person

Some talk about the methodology, and other professional or personal remarks? May be work out the example of one person? The work out of the methodology will be more in the training to become a Dialogical Coach.

Reaction from persons participating a workshop with futuring:
- The future: first I experienced tension, but later relief
- The values in my life came up: a gift
- You need imagination to have an idea of the future
- It felt like a long journey. For me it was the artist who came up
- First, when i took distance, the critic in me came up and said: do you want to do this your whole life?

8. Applications
Now I invite you to do this exercise as can be used in organisation development work.

a. Are you open to use the real situation here as an example of work on? (professional interested in dialogical coaching who may be can connect more in the future to realise their own interest)

b. Or we imagine an example in a company. What ever. The steps will be: First the setting: We are the 30 most important people, management, staff, in a company that produces all sorts of paint for all sort of applications. Your plant is positioned in Europe. The general board decide to invest tremendous in China: the market will grow enormous. The market in Europe is for years defined as declining, to many suppliers. So no growth and shrinking margins. You do not know what to do. All figures are known. Many advisors came with reports. No way out? No one with a new idea. The GM asked everyone to gather and have a talk. He has only one question: what might a future position be for us here that is characterised as: open chances for the future?

c. Suppose we take b. I propose we are a group of advisers, coaches on a monthly professional meeting. One of us come up with this project. He is asked to facilitate the process. He asks you of help and ideas? Shall we split up in five groups and work on it for let us say 20 minutes. then share and see what we can learn from each other?

d. Leadership

e. Coaching

f. Inspiring

g. personal development.

9. **Closing remarks**

Materials needed.
1. each participants a big piece of paper
2. many post its
3. pen
4. notebook
5. lists of internal and external optional I positions
Evaluation remarks by workshop participants:

Very creative workshop!
Excellent.
An interesting learning experience for myself.
I’d recommend having this one in all the rounds so everyone could attend and experience his method.
Strong, Powerful. Practical