

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF SELF-IN-MOTION: EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSTRUCTION OF "BECOMING"

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of semiotic regulation in youth transition to adulthood from the perspectives of *cultural developmental psychology* and *dialogical self theory*. The focus is on the transformations that occur in youth's self-system configurations during a critical developmental period when they start to participate in the world of work. In this paper, we will advance the idea that semiotic regulation may lead to the construction of a future-oriented time perspective – and more specifically, to a new sense of *becoming "professional"* – through a cycle of production of innovation, leading to the construction of intransitive hierarchies of meaning and creating more flexibility in the self-system. We present a longitudinal case study of three young people who participated in a social project in Salvador, Bahia to illustrate the process. Data was collected through two rounds of in-depth interviews at ages 18 (1<sup>st</sup> round) and 21 (2<sup>nd</sup> round) years. Analysis followed a mapping of positions and counter-positions, as well as emerging tensions and their resolution over time and in different spheres of life (i.e. work and family life). The idea is to show how negotiations of self-positions evolve and activate a mechanism of hierarchical integration and differentiation of meanings, in which flexible meanings are created that allow for the emergence of alternative life trajectories, building an architecture of the self-in-motion.

**Keywords:** Semiotic Regulation; Self-Transformation; Future Time Perspective; Youth Transitions.

### Resumo



Este estudo tem como objectivo analisar o processo de regulação semiótica na transição da juventude para a vida adulta a partir das perspectivas da psicologia do desenvolvimento cultural e da teoria dialógica do *Self*. O foco é nas transformações que ocorrem nas configurações do sistema do *Self* da juventude durante um período crítico do desenvolvimento em que começam a participar no mundo do trabalho. Neste artigo, propomos a ideia de que a regulação semiótica pode levar à construção de uma perspectiva temporal orientada para o futuro – e, mais especificamente, a um novo sentido de se tornar "profissional" – através de um ciclo de produção de inovação, levando à construção de hierarquias intransitivas de significado e criando maior flexibilidade no sistema de *Self*. Apresentamos um estudo de caso longitudinal de três jovens que participaram num projeto social em Salvador, Bahia, para ilustrar o processo. Os dados foram recolhidos através de duas séries de entrevistas em profundidade aos 18 anos (primeira série) e 21 anos (2ª série). Análise seguiu um mapeamento de posicionamentos e contra-posicionamentos, bem como das tensões emergentes e sua resolução ao longo do tempo e em diferentes esferas da vida (ou seja, trabalho e vida familiar). A ideia é mostrar como as negociações dos auto-posicionamentos evoluem e ativam um mecanismo de integração hierárquica e diferenciação de significados, no qual são criados significados flexíveis que permitem a emergência de trajetórias de vida alternativas, construindo uma arquitetura da *Self*-em-movimento.

**Palavras-chave:** Regulação semiótica; Auto-transformação; Perspectiva de tempo futuro; Transições da juventude.

## Introduction

Young people's development to adulthood is one of the most critical moments in the life course, when several changes and psycho-social transformations simultaneously pervade the person and his/her context. As young people develop, they begin to navigate new spheres of experience that can bring significant ruptures to their sense of self continuity (Zittoun 2011, 2007). For instance, a sense of self discontinuity can emerge when a young person enters the world of work and starts to question what she is able to do, her position in relation to others in the new contexts, as well as her sense of identity and the meaning of her actions. Therefore, we consider that the years

of youth – especially when a young person is entering new educational or work spheres – are a crucial juncture in a person's life, a moment when there is a tendency for proliferation of complex experiences that demand the development of a person's capacity for self-organization. In this sense, we believe that youth transitions may provide a significant window for the study of the construction of self-regulatory processes related to the use of signs (semiotic mediation processes) and for the development of hierarchical semiotic control systems, as well as for the understanding of the role of catalytic processes in shaping life trajectories.

The notion of youth transitions that we elaborate here comes from ideas developed in the field of **Cultural Psychology** (Valsiner 2007, 2012; Valsiner & Rosa 2007; Zittoun 2006; 2007; 2012) and **Dialogical Self Theory** (Hermans 2001; Hermans & Hermans-Jensen 2003; Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010). The aim is to go beyond traditional approaches to the phenomenon of “transition” as linear sequences of events organizing individual pathways. Instead of privileging an outcome view of transitions, in this paper we will advance a more systemic and dialogical perspective of youth transitions, focusing on transition *processes* (instead of outcomes) and on the occurrence of *simultaneous ruptures* in a young person's life (Abramo, 2005; Camarano, Mello & Kanso, 2006; Sato 2006). We stress the centrality of *semiotic mediation* in human experience, and the different ways in which individuals configure their respective “selves” through self-positioning and repositioning along the life course (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010; Valsiner 2008; Zittoun 2007, 2008, 2012). The idea is to explore how young people semiotically build a future-oriented time perspective, focusing on the movement by which a person (re)configures her *self-in-motion* and creates new life projects, exploring how the dynamic of affective-semiotic-dialogical regulation of the self-system operates overtime to produce *promoting processes* leading to *self* transformation.

Recent studies on transition phenomena focus on the *processes* themselves rather than *outcomes* (Carugati 2004; Valsiner 2008; Zittoun 2006, 2007). Developmental transitions are therefore regarded as multifaceted and mediated by the production of signs, involving *ruptures* and *bifurcation points* that allow for the emergence of novelty, as well as the promotion of a qualitative reorganization of human experience (Zittoun, 2007, 2012) and of the *self system* (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010; Cunha et al. 2011).

Here we will explore the mechanisms of self-regulation that occurs within a



specific time frame, leading to production of innovations in the self-system that enables the construction of a personal sense of *becoming*. This process involves the search for integration across spheres of life experience and across time, mediated by dialogical relations with significant others. More specifically, the idea is to clarify *promoting processes* that enable the person to create a personal version of herself in the future, projecting "imaginatively" something she not yet *is* but can *become*.

These processes lead to a new sense of *historicity* as the person starts to establish a relationship with the space-time in which she projects her future from her past in the present and, in the process, is perceived as the author of her own story. It enables an *integration* as well as a *differentiation* of the flow of experience in a continuum of time that is future-oriented, i.e. a flow of irreversible time (composed of *past-present-future*).

This paper has three sections. The first draws on the perspectives of **Cultural Psychology** and **Dialogical Self Theory** to develop an understanding of the construction of a future-oriented time perspective, highlighting both the dialogical-semiotic nature of processes of self-regulation that characterize transitions and the catalytic approach to the creation of life trajectories. The second section presents the cases of George, Marcelo and Neuza, highlighting their interactions in the sphere of apprenticeship and work over the period ranging from 16 to 23 years of age, leading to a new sense of *becoming professionals* capable of projecting their actions, thinking and feelings that allow for their adaptation to the uncertainty of the futures. The third section demonstrates and elaborates on the dynamics underlying the processes of self-regulation by the action of *promoter positions*, suggesting that the emergence of *promoter positions* in the field of *self*, i.e. *meta-positions* that emerge at a higher level than the one of everyday experience, allow for the construction of meaning bridges between the past and the future in the present, leading to a semiotics of *becoming*, creating flexibility in the self-system and putting the "*architecture of the self*" in motion.

### **The Emergence of a Future-Oriented Time Perspective**

In order to understand how people construct of a future-oriented time perspective, it is necessary to highlight both the dialogical-semiotic nature of processes of self-regulation and the catalytic approach to the creation of life trajectories. According to the perspective of *Cultural Psychology*, *semiotic mediation* is the process that allows human beings to synthesize new meanings, both in the reflexive (i.e.,

through generalizations from the meaning of words) and affective domains (Valsiner, 2004). This perspective regards the experience of time as central to human life, because the person has the capacity to question *what-is*, to imagine a possible futures-to-be (*as-if*), and to continuously project herself in that imaginary meaning field to orient her life trajectory (Abbey & Valsiner 2005).

However, projections of imaginary futures seem to be intensified among young people, because at this age people start questioning what their future may hold. This is the time when people usually wonder: Who will I be in the future? What am I going to do in life? What kind of job can I get? What will I study? Etc. Interacting with new environments, experiencing new values and creating new bonds of belonging with these life spheres, young people may start to plan future goals and to construct *intensely* and *intentionally* a new sense of their *historicity*. But what is the mechanism that allow for such projections? How young people regulate their relationship with time, creating and recreating future goals that orient their actions and feelings towards the future?

Valsiner (2006, 2007, 2012) stresses that the developing person acts in the present moment departing from a *pre-figuration of reality*, because what she sees in the present (and takes as a basic starting point for her actions) is the moment immediately following (Lyra, 2007; Lyra & Valsiner, 2011; Valsiner 2012). *Semiotic mediation* is essential in this dynamic, because self-regulatory processes may enable people to take their immediate reality as a holistic pre-organization for their actions, thinking, and feeling. These processes allow for an *integration* of different elements into a whole that cannot be reduced to its parts (Valsiner, 2008). People experience the present moment through *imagined constructions*. They create something that *is* not yet present in their immediate environment, but that may *come-to-be* in the next moment, in a near future. Elaborating on these aspects, Abbey (2012) suggests that the person acts in the present based on the relationship between *real* and *unreal* (imagined) meanings, transcending her immediate here-and-now context. Therefore, people live in a constant process of *becoming* something/someone else, and semiotic mediation is needed to deal with the tensions and uncertainties both in the present as well as in future (of what the future may bring).

In the same direction, Zittoun (2006) argues that adolescents and youth elaborate situations of rupture and discontinuity through the use of "*symbolic resources*" (i.e. cultural elements and/or objects such as films, books, music), searching to restore self-



continuity in their life trajectories. In this sense, we may think that the use of symbolic resources enables young people to move towards what they not yet *are* (in the immediate present), but may *become* in the future (acting as *if...*). The author points out that these processes are critical for development because they create *transitional spaces* (in line with what was proposed by Winnicott, 1896-1971) in which the person may build new semiotic positions, expanding her "*architecture of the self*" (p.53).

Therefore, we may think that *rupture-transition processes* enable young people to build an *imaginary space* (Zittoun, 2006), from which they can access a *different space-time relation* – more distanced from the immediate present and from their current environments. According to Zittoun (2006), this process is critical to the production of new affectively charged meanings that enable a reconfiguration of experience (both the experiences from the "past" – via explorations of memories – as well as current experiences, lived in the present moment). In her studies, Zittoun (2006) emphasizes the importance of the *use* of resources for the creation of such *transitional spaces*, but she does not further elaborate upon the specific semiotic processes that operate to the construction of a future-oriented self-perspective, of putting the "*architecture of the self*" in motion.

### Putting the "Architecture of the Self" in Motion

A dialogical approach can be of use in understanding the process of generating a future-oriented time perspective. The *Dialogical Self Theory* was elaborated by Hermans (2001) and colleagues (Hermans 2001, 2002; Hermans & Hermans-Jensen 2003; Salgado & Gonçalves 2007; Salgado and Hermans 2005;) to highlight a dynamic and multivocal movement of construction and re-construction of meanings inside the self-system. Unlike a *unified static entity* or an *internal essence* of the subject to be *revealed* through language exchanges, the *self* maintains its unity through dialogue, and is produced as plural and polyphonic through communication interactions (Hermans 2001, 2002). Therefore, the *dialogical self* is seen as multifaceted and complex, endowed with multiple voices and different positions that co-exist and hold different perspectives about the world. (Hermans 2001; Ribeiro and Gonçalves 2010; Salgado & Gonçalves 2007). In our view, the notion of the dialogical self may serve to illustrate the idea of an "*architecture of the self*", because it highlights the structural aspect of the self-system.

However, in this paper we argue that building an "*architecture of the self*", and

highlighting structural or synchronic aspects of the self-system, is not sufficient to account for the construction of a future-oriented time perspective. Such a perspective requires putting the architecture of the self in motion, that is, highlighting the *diachronic movement* of constantly projecting a future self-perspective over time, at the *border zone* between the *past* (what was already lived/ experienced by the person) and the unknown future (what is already to come) (Abbey, 2012; Valsiner, 2006). Moreover, we argue that this movement takes the form of an *intransitive cycle of production of innovation* (Valsiner 2006, 2008), where the past and the future become interwoven together through the emergence of higher level meanings in the self-system (*promoter signs or positions*). We depart from the idea that a person builds a future perspective in irreversible in time, in a movement created in the present moment (infinitesimal moment) by making a “*constructive recovery*” (i.e. retrospection) of past events (through selective criteria for access – i.e. memory) and building a *projection of the future* (through imagination and abstraction) (Lyra & Valsiner, 2011). This movement leads to the construction of semiotic hierarchies of entangled meanings that simultaneously *integrate* and *differentiate* previous meanings, and allow for a pre-adaptation to the uncertain future. By using signs, the person creates her *historicity*, a time perspective that situates her in the flux of *past-present-future*.

We propose that dealing with the uncertain future involves the ongoing creation of meanings and transformations in the self-system – i.e. putting the “*architecture of the self*” in motion. As people create new meanings for themselves, they seek to *integrate* what they have experienced in the *past* (and which can be constructively recovered) to what they can anticipate in the *future*. This movement not only *integrates* the person’s relations in space-time, but also brings *differentiation* to the self-system, because new emerging meanings are qualitatively *different* from former meanings about the *self* and the world. Therefore, we can think that transformations in the self-system imply putting the *self in motion over time*, both in terms of *integration* as well as of *differentiation* of the *self-system*, and allowing for self-transformation. In order to understand self regulation processes leading to the construction of a future-oriented time perspective, we must take into consideration not only *dialogical inter-relations between positions and counterpositions* (synchronic relations), but also one’s *movement among different spheres of experience and across time* (diachronic relations).



## The Centrality of Ambivalence in Self-Transformation

In the center of the movement of self-transformation lies ambivalence. Several authors have suggested that tensions are important for meaning construction that is oriented towards the future (Abbey, 2012; Abbey & Valsiner, 2005; Lyra & Valsiner, 2011; Raggatt, 2012; Valsiner, 2006). Abbey (2012) argues that the ambivalence between different time periods (present and future) can be seen as an inclusive separation between two opposing fields (A and non-A).

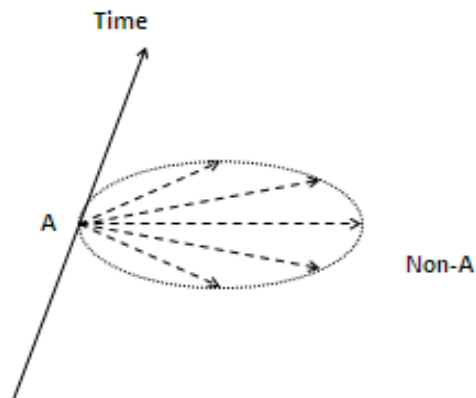


Figure 1 - Formation of the field non-A containing all the potential transformations of A

As shown in Figure 1 (adapted from Valsiner, 2006, p. 126), when we focus on (A) simultaneously we are opening a window to the opposite field (non-A), which includes all the possibilities of transformations A may suffer in the future. Non-A corresponds to the potentiality of A, everything that A has the potential to "*become*" in the future, Non-A corresponds to the "*coming-to-be*" of A in the future. The field non-A, however, is diffuse and vague. The person is not sure about what the future will bring, but this reference serves to guide her, to orient her acting, thinking and feeling, and creating new goals to be pursued.

However, when we consider the construction of meaning from a longitudinal perspective, we have to admit that the present moment results from a *previous synthesis of past experiences*. (i.e. between what existed as a possibility for



actualization and what actually took place). Or, as proposed by Lyra (2007), such synthesis may take the form of an *abbreviation* of past experiences (Lyra, 2007; Lyra & Valsiner, 2011). In any case, a synthesis of prior experiences or abbreviation needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand the role ambivalence plays in the construction of new meanings by the person in a longitudinal perspective.

Abbey (2012) points out that the boundary of time is mobile, fluid, and can be seen as a *process of emergence*. Therefore, such synthesis are never totally closed, but instead they are open, triggering new *cycles of production of innovation in the self-system* that are *intransitive* in nature (Valsiner, 2006; 2008). We propose to consider the cycles of production of new meanings as *promoter processes*, i.e. processes that *promote* transformations in the field of *self*. They are intransitive because they are operate through catalytic synthesis, and involve the emergence of promoters signs (or positions) that are capable of overcoming (through integration and differentiation) previous ambivalent positions in the field of self. These cycles create a hierarchy of emerging positions, which exercise a flexible control over other positions/meanings. They produce a new version of the *self*, projected into the future as a "*coming-to-be*." In this sense, one can overcome tensions and ambivalences in the present through the generalization of an idea, which simultaneously *integrates* and *differentiates* the past and the future (Abbey, 2012).

A similar idea was recently advance by Raggatt (2012). He emphasizes the role of subjective ambivalence in building space-time relations. Based on *Dialogical Self Theory* and the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), the author proposes the notion of *personal chronotope* (p. 237) as a way of building time-space relations in field of the *dialogical self*. Revisiting the fundamental concept of *triadic relationship* established by the American pragmatist philosopher C.S. Peirce (1931-1058), Raggatt suggests that *personal chronotopes* emerge from processes of mediation, where a Third term or position (i.e. Thirdness in Peirce's conception) plays a mediating role in the relationship between an Initial term or position (Firstness) and a Second term or counter-position (Secondness).

Along these lines, Raggatt (2012) argues that *personal chronotopes* are built in a mediating relation between ambivalent or opposed self-positions. They can take on characteristics of both *simultaneity* in space (i.e. through ambivalent or opposed positions), and *historicity*, considering the unfolding in time of relations between positions. More specifically, Raggatt (2012) argues that *personal chronotopes* involve a



complex semiotic chain or "*meaning thread*" (p. 241), composed of multiple triads between self-positions. His model highlights the complex multivocality whereby an "*architecture of self*" can be built over time, and the *ambiguity* of the Third terms or positions acting as mediators between opposing positions.

The model proposed by Raggatt (2012) is innovative because it shows how a person can build time-space relations (i.e. *personal chronotopes*) that are simultaneously multivocal and historical. He points both to the *synchronic* as well as to the *diachronic* aspects of self-regulatory processes that operate in the field of *self*, and may contribute to the construction of an "*architecture of self*". However, his model seems to contain certain *linearity*, albeit complex, because the chain of self-positions remains relatively *fixed over time*. The main opposition in the self-system is not *overcome*, but rather *maintained*. New positions emerge from a reconstruction of the past made by the author of the narrative from the perspective of the present moment (see analysis of the case presented by Raggatt, 2012), but we don't really see the emergence of qualitative *difference* between past experiences and imagined futures. The model emphasizes the *succession* of relations between positions over time, and does not take into consideration that the emergence of new patterns of interconnection of positions may actually grow out of intransitive cycles of meanings production, leading to the construction *hierarchies between positions*.

### **Hierarchies of Meanings in Motion**

In order to understand the construction of a future-oriented time perspective, we need to carefully take into consideration the operation of *intransitive* cycles of meaning production (Valsiner, 2004, 2006; 2008), leading to a breakdown of previous patterns of position configuration in the self-system. According to Valsiner (2004), this mechanism may involve the emergence of *promoter signs* or positions in the self-system, which play a relevant role in self-regulation of a person's experience of space-time. Promoter signs or positions are able to generate new patterns of relationship between opposing positions and simultaneously create *hierarchies* of meanings in the self-system (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Valsiner, 2004;). Promoter signs work interweaving multiple levels of meaning, giving a new configuration to the "*architecture of self*" in space-time.

Following this line of reasoning, we can propose that the construction of new patterns of interconnection between positions (and of *personal chronotopes*) seems to

depend not on a *succession* of triadic relations between positions over time, as proposed by Raggatt (2012). This process can be associated with the emergence of *intransitive cycles of production of hierarchical meanings* in the field of *self*, acting as "border zones" in which *changes* occur (i.e. production of new forms, self-regulation processes etc.) (Abbey, 2012; Marsico & Innaccone, 2012; Valsiner, 2006).

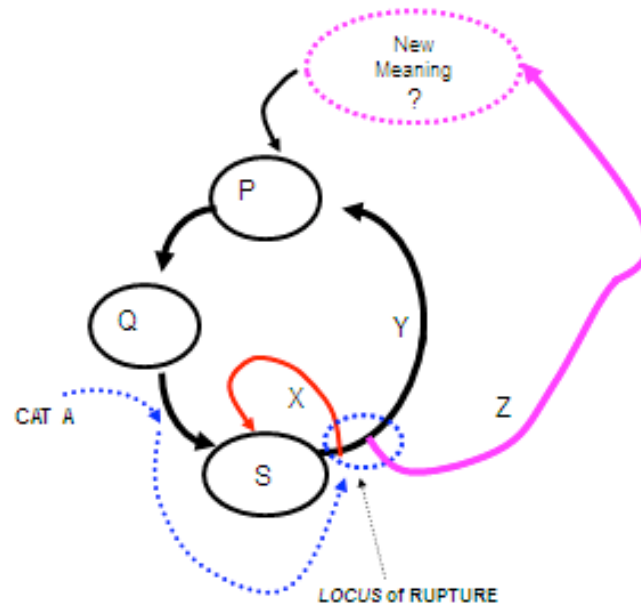


Figure 2 - Intransitive hierarchy and its innovation rupture

Figure 2 (reproduced from Valsiner 2006, p.181) illustrates the basic structure of an open system which is constantly being innovated by the action of a catalyst (CAT A) upon its elements (Q) and (S). Within the self-system, this process creates *new structures* (i.e. *new meanings or positions*) which have regulatory functions in the entire system, so that a multilevel *hierarchy* of meanings is being created and recreated, always renewing itself. Valsiner (2006) suggests that such innovations (in the form of new meanings) provide a regulation of ambivalence (Abbey & Valsiner, 2005).

Along these lines, we propose here that a mechanisms by which such intransitive cycles operate, building hierarchies of meanings or positions in the self-system, allows for the emergence of a future-oriented time perspective, in the form of a new sense of *becoming*. This temporal perspective is especially useful among young people, because it helps to configure pre-adaptations in face of tensions they face in an



emergent domain of their lives – the world of work. In these circumstances, intransitive cycles of meaning production may operate generating *promoter signs* that emerge and take on a relevant role in *integrating* and (qualitative) *differentiating* ambivalent positions that mark the experience of young people in the work sphere. Promoter signs or positions act as facilitators for the emergence of hierarchies of intransitive meanings at multiple levels of the self-system, through a mechanism of generative synthesis.

In the following section, we will bring the cases of George, Marcelo and Neuza to illustrate the mechanisms of semiotic self-regulation that young people develop in the present moment, as they start to participate the world of work, in the “border zone” between their past and future, building a sense of *becoming “professionals”* that contributes decisively to the overcoming of previous tensions and to guiding their future actions and choices, creating an “*architecture of self-in-motion*”.

## Method

The present study was designed as a longitudinal qualitative study of multiple cases (Stake, 2006). It was structured in three rounds of in-depth interviews with six afro-descendant youths who participated in a youth apprenticeship program developed by an NGO in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. During the first round of data collection, the youth were 18-19 years old. In the second round they were age 20-21, and in the third round, 22-23. In this paper will report the cases of George, Marcelo, and Neuza and focus on their experiences from between 15 and 23 years of age. These particular cases were chosen among others in our study because they showed the operation of the cycle of intransitive production of new meanings – the mechanism of building a flexible hierarchy of meanings within the self-system over time. This mechanism allows for the construction of a time perspective that directs young people’s action, thinking and feeling towards the future.

Interviews took place at the NGO headquarters and lasted about two hours. Data were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. Primary themes explored during the interviews were: significant changes and challenges experienced, work experience and family relations, and educational experiences. The present analysis focuses primarily on youths relations within the dimension of work – because this is a significant spheres of experience established in literature concerning Brazilian youth at this age range (Dayrell 2010; Sarti 2004). The cases illustrate *an affective-dialogical-semiotic approach to youth transitions*, emphasizing self-configuration strategies and

negotiations of self-positions in different spheres of experience and across time. Following the presentation of cases (synopsis and analysis), we will articulate the analysis with theoretical perspectives.

### Case Synopsis

In this part of the paper, we will present a synopsis of the cases of George, Marcelo and Neuza, emphasizing their interactions within the world of work. Then we will analyze the cases describing the mechanisms that operate in their self-system as they build future perspectives for themselves – i.e. a new sense of *becoming “professionals”* – emphasizing the important role *promoter positions* play in the catalytic processes of self-regulation and of *self* reconfiguration over time. Departing from their interactions with the sphere of work, these young people have built a new synthesis within their *self-system*. The process was characterized by a cycle of production of innovation leading to a *rapid shift to a promoter position – Responsible-Apprentice* – able to *integrate* past experiences with future projections, producing a new self-version, a positive view of themselves in the future. Simultaneously, a *differentiation* between former positions is also created. Therefore this synthesis functions as the starting point for the emergence of new cycles producing innovations, especially around the positions of *Responsible-Worker* and *Good-Administrator-of-Money*. Youngsters construct a projected view of themselves as *“professionals”* in the future (as *becoming professionals*), which guides the construction of their life trajectories.

*George - "I can trace my own path, I plan my future".*

At the age of 18, George was living with his parents and sister in a poor neighborhood located in the city of Salvador, Brazil. He began to work during childhood (at 11 years old) in his father's bakery, acting as a clerk, cashier and baker, after a period of economic hardship in his family. His mother is a housewife and his father, after spending a period unemployed, is currently working as operator of topography equipment. In late adolescence, George attended a Social Project, and became apprentice in the computer lab of a private university. When he arrived in the company, George realized that there wasn't a place for him in the sector to which he was located. At first, he felt *"lost"* as an *"extra element"*, because the team was already formed and he was just watching the other employees work. Then, he decided to *"find [his] space there"*, and began to actively seek and perform activities he had seen others doing.



Over time, he began to gain recognition from his colleagues and supervisor for his achievements. George thought that this experience *"opened [his] mind to different things."* He went from being "a boy" to become a person "with responsibilities," as he committed to strict work schedules and tasks to accomplish. In this process, he gained autonomy to accomplish tasks without adult support, and earned other people's trust. He began to see himself as a *"professional,"* to have a broader view of the professional world, as one in which he would have to grow and develop as a professional. Working as an apprentice, George learned to manage very well the wages he earned, not only contributing regularly to his family expenses, but also saving money to invest in something for his own future. After finishing high school, George decided to continue his training in the domain of computer technology. With the money he had saved, he took several courses to complement his work experience as computer technician and instructor. He became instructor in the computer lab of a social project, and set up a small business in his neighborhood in partnership with friends – an *Internet Point*<sup>1</sup>. George also began to focus more on his studies and passed a competitive exam for a technology course. He realized the need to have a technical qualification that, in the future, would increase his professional opportunities. He believed he could *"trace his own path"*, because he developed a *"matured view of the future."*

*Marcelo - "I'm pursuing a career, and I'm increasingly growing"*

At our 1<sup>st</sup>. interview, Marcelo was living with his mother and siblings in a poor neighborhood, located in the city of Salvador. He began to work when he was a teenager (at 14 years old) in an electronics workshop in his neighborhood, after a period of economic hardship in his family, when his mother got very ill as a result from complications with diabetes, and his father had lost contact with his family. Marcelo began the apprenticeship program at the age of 16 years old, and started to work at the administration's office of a private school. The training he received at the NGO helped him develop a professional interest in the area of computer technology and *webdesign*, and represented *"the starting point of his professional career,"* because it provided a direction, a path for him to follow. Once he arrived at school's Office, however, much the same way that happened with George, Marcelo got very disappointed because he realized there wasn't a place for him at the at the Computer Lab, and he could not put

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<sup>1</sup> A small shop to sell Internet connection.

into practice the computer skills he had learned during the NGO training. After this initial disappointment, though, he realized that *“there are two sides of the coin: the good and bad side.”* He realized he had the support of his colleagues, who explained all the activities he could do, and soon he gained recognition from other for his achievements. Within just three months, he was transferred to work at the pedagogical coordination, a school department that demanded greater responsibility (he was responsible for the distribution of exams for the students). Marcelo realized that his superiors *trusted* his competence, and recognized his good performance. Working as an apprentice, he could gain more autonomy and experience with different kinds of activities. Using the money he earned, Marcelo could not only contribute to his family expenses, but could also buy a computer. He became an autodidact, self-teaching himself at home after work, and becoming savvy in computer technology. After the completion of the apprenticeship contract, Marcelo took a course in computer programming, and worked as an instructor at a training company in technology. He started to work as *webdesigner*, but continued studying and practicing at home. Over time, besides working as technology instructor, he decided to start a business, and became a consultant on *webdesign* and computer programming. He reflected he could *“turn a hobby (design) into a profession (webdesign)”*, and is *“building a career”*.

*Neuza - “Today, my goal is to build ‘blue ocean’ of tranquility in my professional career”*

At the beginning of our study, Neuza was living with her mother and two brothers in a poor neighborhood, located in the city of Salvador. When she was 14 years old her parents got divorced, and her mother left her home. After sometime, her mother returned to live with her grandmother, and Neuza went to live with them. When she was 17 years old, her father got unemployed, and Neuza entered the apprentice program, and started to work at the administration’s office of a private university. When she started her new job, Neuza felt a little confused because it was necessary to rotate between various sectors, and she realized that she wasn’t going to spend enough time in each activity, in order to learn the tasks and to find out what people were expecting from her. There were some people who had patience to explain what she had to do, while others didn’t. So, at first, Neuza was a little disappointed too with the work environment, and even created enmity with a colleague, but soon she overcame these negative impressions. Throughout her work as an apprentice, there was a person who gave her support in the workplace, a person who looked after her and gave her some advice about future changes. While working, Neuza never abandoned her duties at



school. She has always been a good student and got good grades, therefore she never stopped studying because of work. She had a quite tiring daily routine because, besides work and school, she took a pre-university preparatory course during the evenings. And soon after the end of the apprenticeship contract, she entered college to take a course in International Relations. By the same time, she was hired to work in the sales department of a local newspaper. But she didn't like very much that job because she thought *"selling was a very big challenge, because we always had to hit performance targets."* Therefore, she sought for another job and started to work in the administration's office of a residential condominium. She studied at night and worked all day long. In that job, Neuza could learn a lot of different tasks and administrative routines, and was able to coordinate other workers. Moreover, she earned a good wage, and could not only help her family but also save money. Neuza thought that the experience *"was important to [her] personal growth and maturation in relation to work,"* because she could start to "think much more about her future and about the consequences of things". Neuza acknowledged that there was a significant change in her life around the age of 23, because she came to see that *"everything is a process"*, and it is necessary to plan the steps to achieve future goals. She realized she would have to do an internship in order to become a professional in her field of studies. With this objective in view, she saved money so that the internship was secured. She began an internship in Foreign Trade in the last semester of college. After her graduation, Neuza continued working as project coordinator, and she explained: *"Today, I'm doing everything to get into a 'blue ocean'. It's my goal to build a professional life that looks like a blue ocean of tranquility"*.



Table 1 - Synthesis of I-Position's Changes Over Time

Moments	GEORGE	MARCELO	NEUZA
1	<p><b>Dependent-Son</b> Assistant-In-family-business (acts as support for)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Apprentice</b> (Computer Lab)</p>	<p><b>Dedicated-Son</b> Assistant-In-Electronic-Workshop (acts as support for)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Apprentice</b> (starting point for career)</p>	<p><b>Dependent-Daughter</b> Dedicated-Student</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Apprentice</b></p>
2	<p><b>"Without-Space-There"</b></p> <p>+ Underskilled (external position)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>"Running-after"</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Responsible-Apprentice</b></p>	<p><b>I-Disappointed</b></p> <p>X I-Recognized (supported/guided/taken care of) (external position)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Responsible-Apprentice</b> I-Guided <b>"Running-After"</b></p> <p>+ <b>Provider-Son</b></p>	<p><b>Inexperienced</b></p> <p>+ <b>Unprepared</b></p> <p>X <b>Recognized / Oriented</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Responsible-Apprentice</b></p>
3	<p><b>Responsible-Worker</b> (integrates and differentiates previous positions)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Technology-Instructor</b> <b>Entrepreneur</b> <b>Dedicated-Student</b> (Technical Training)</p> <p>+ <b>Provider-Son</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Good-Administrator-of-Money</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Professional</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible-Worker</b> (integrates and differentiates previous positions)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Technology-Instructor</b> <b>Computer-Programmer</b> <b>Entrepreneur (webdesigner)</b> <b>Autodidact</b></p> <p>+ <b>Good-Administrator-of-Money</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Professional</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible-Worker</b> (integrates e differentiates previous positions)</p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Seller</b> <b>Auxiliar-Administrativa</b></p> <p>+ <b>Dedicated-Student</b> (university)</p> <p>+ <b>Good-Administrator-of-Money</b></p> <p>↓</p> <p><b>Professional</b></p>



## Case Analysis

The trajectories of George, Marcelo and Neuza show how the processes of semiotic regulation in the field of *self* emerges over time, leading not only to a dynamic positioning and repositioning within the self-system, but also to the emergence of *promoter positions*, that participate decisively in building a future-oriented time perspective and an architecture of the self-in-motion. These *promoter positions* enabled the emergence of new hierarchies of meaning in the self-system, leading to a new version of the *self*, facilitating a synthesis of previous positions, and making young people more able to confront past experiences with a prospective future. A future-oriented perspective of *becoming* emerges then, through intransitive cycles of production of new meanings.

Our analysis of cases departs from the initial dynamic in field of *self*, in which the family is the central sphere of experience in the lives of these youth. As shown in Table 1, at the time of the 1st. interview, the position of *Dependent- or Dedicated-Son/Daughter* was the most prominent in self-systems of George, Marcelo and Neuza. Such positions emerge from dialogical exchanges with significant others in the family, especially with their mothers. These positions create a field of meaning that reflects the family experience as a sphere of proximity and significant ties between people, where everyone worries and takes care of the welfare of others. They express how young people interacted with their families, as a place of mutual support and help in times of need. On the one hand, they show that parents must act as providers of the needs of their children, and on the other hand, the reverse may also occur, because children should support parents and provide for their needs later life and in times of distress. Therefore, in the initial stage of our investigation, the interests and concerns of young people were significantly influenced by the needs of their families.

At the same period (see Table 1), however, other prominent positions emerged in the self-system through young people's interactions within life spheres other than the family: *Assistant-in-family-business* (George), *Assistant-in-electronic-workshop* (Marcelo), and *Dedicated-student* (Neuza). In the work sphere, George and Marcelo had exercised paid activities, respectively from 11 and 14 years old, as a way to directly support their families. George had worked as an assistant in his father's bakery and Marcelo worked as assistant in an electronics workshop in his neighborhood. Neuza hadn't worked, but she was always a dedicated student and interested in academic activities. Besides, she sought to support her family (especially her mother)

after the separation of father and unemployment. All three youth entered the Apprentice Program of the NGO as a way to overcome disruptions in the family, seeking to help support their parents and siblings who were facing hard times. Therefore, it is possible to suppose that these alternative positions as *Assistant-in-the-family-business* (George), *Assistant-in-electronics-workshop* (Marcelo) and *Dedicated-student* (Neuza) acted as previous meanings supporting their move towards the *Apprentice* position in the world of work. They acted as relevant *symbolic resources* in facilitating their adaptation to work routines and demands, because they voiced an internalized *confidence* these youth had already built in themselves, in their *competence* and *skill* to perform work and academic tasks. But this initial *confidence* was challenged in their new work environments, by new emerging demands.

Therefore, their transitions into the new position as *Apprentices* were not without conflict. The three youth confronted ambivalent discourses when they entered the world of work – discourse both *accepting* and *rejecting* youth in the workplace. They were accepted in the Apprentice Program, but people didn't trust their competence and skill to perform more complex tasks, and they had to keep observing the activities others were doing (instead of practicing these activities). As a result of facing these ambivalences, negative feelings emerged in relation to the work environment. George felt *displaced* and *excluded*, "*without a space*" for him there. Marcelo was initially "*disappointed*" because he couldn't put into practice what he had learned in the NGO training course, (as the activities he performed in the administrative office didn't require advanced technology skills). And Neuza felt "*confused*" and also "*disappointed*" due to her frequent change between sectors.

To address these ambivalences, the youths have developed close relationships with their coworkers. Marcelo, for example, indicated that his supervisor *Zelia*, played a key role in his overcoming of initial ambivalences. She was always willing to help him perform his tasks, showing him better ways to carry out his job activities, and highlighting his abilities and skills. The voice of *Zelia* anticipated to Marcelo a set of alternative positions, expressing confidence in his abilities to succeed. In the case of Marcelo, it seems that he managed to quickly internalize that *voice of confidence* and changed job attributions, starting to perform more complex tasks. He went to work in a school department that required more responsibility, and took control over the distribution of the students' final exams. As he explained:

*My superior, Zelia, told me everything I had to do, she was always available*



*when I had any question or doubt ... Then, in four months, I was transferred to another department. There, in a way, it is the most important sector of the school, because it was there where the students' exams were distributed. So much responsibility and they put a lot of trust in me when they put me in this sector.*

Likewise, George and Neuza also went through similar processes. George initially realized he was *"no space there"* in the workplace. However, he tried *"run-after"* job activities. He started to do the things he saw others doing, and gradually started to be recognized by his peers and supervisor who *"soon realized that [he] was able to perform that same job they were doing."* George, then, began to perform more complex tasks and take on more responsibility, processing the enrollment of new students. Neuza, was initially confused because of her frequent exchange between sectors. She felt she had no time to apprehend new job skills. But with the support and recognition of her coordinator, *Teresa*, she became informed in advance about future changes. She started to have more productive job relations, and her adaptation to work environment became easier.

Then, what we see here is that there was a movement of dialogical positioning and counter-positioning that quickly evolved toward the *internalization of alternative voices* (i.e. of the voices of *confidence*), and there was a relatively quick *recognition* – by significant others present in the work environment (superiors and peers) of their ability and effort to successfully perform new tasks. From that starting point, the youths could *take a distance* from the flow of opposite tendencies (ambivalent discourses) present in their daily routines, and could *recognize their own ability to perform* new functions. They created a *sense of belonging* to their work environments that enabled an overcoming of tensions through the rapid consolidation of a *promoter position as Responsible-Apprentice*. The following report from Marcelo illustrates that process:

*There are two sides of the same coin: the good and bad side. I was kinda sad because I just received training in webdesign and computer graphics. So I expected that the company would put me to work in that area, but unfortunately it didn't happen the way I expected. But, somehow, it was good for me [to stay where they put me to work] because I gained experience in other sectors. So, it was beneficial for me. One side was beneficial.*

Therefore, a new promoter position as *Responsible-Apprentice* emerged through dialogic encounters and the recognition of significant others present in the workplace.

There was a progressive internalization of their alternative external voices. These young people began to build meaning bridges with alternative voices, exploring and expanding new *self* meanings. Moreover, the *anticipated recognition* from social others represented a bifurcation point in the decisive *shift* towards the construction of a new perspective of the future.

The position of *Responsible-Apprentice* served as the starting point for the "entanglement" between past experiences and future projections, helping to build a hierarchy among positions in the self-system. The process gives rise to an *intransitive hierarchy of self-positions* that are unfolding in time, in the direction of *becoming-a-professional*.

The position of *Responsible-Apprentice* represents a generative synthesis in the field of self. It simultaneously integrates and differentiates previous positions, originating a first *cycle of production of innovation* – a *cycle of hierarchical intransitive meanings* (Valsiner, 2006).

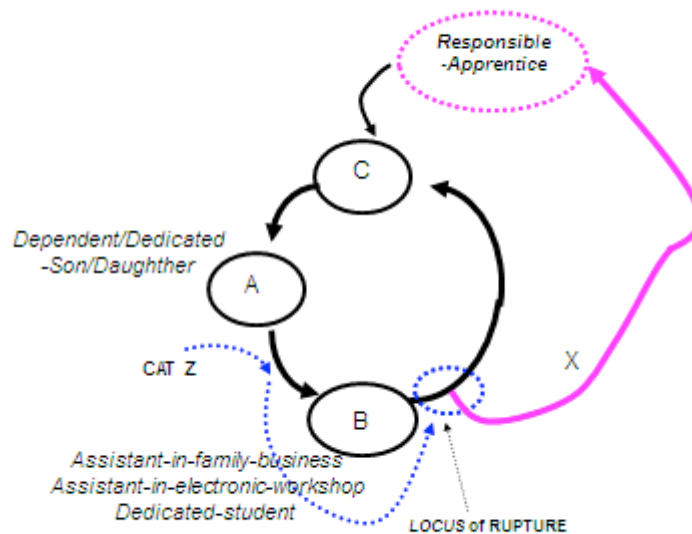


Figure 3 - Construction of a Hierarchy of Intransitive Positions

As shown in Figure 3, in the cases of George, Marcelo and Neuza, a first Cycle of Intransitive Meanings Production is created at the *border zone* where new positions are



confronted with former ones. This cycle is triggered when these youths entered into the sphere of work. At that time, their previous expectations and positions enter in opposition with the activities that they must carry, and with hegemonic discourses that are present in the workplace (discourses that distrust and devalue youth skills and capacity to perform). There emerged a *border zone* (the *locus of rupture*) for transformation in the field of *self*. To overcome these ambivalences, the youths have produced new synthesis. They have built a new meaning for themselves and their environment – as *Responsible-Apprentices* – which represent pre-adaptations capable of projecting them into the future. They developed a future oriented time-perspective of time-oriented – a perspective of *becoming (a professional)*. The new position as *Responsible-Apprentice* emerged out of confrontations between former positions and new demands at the workplace.

This new position plays an important role in promoting a creative and healthy adaptation of the youngsters to the work environment. They developed new skills and a sense of responsibility, and were also recognized by others as competent and were even "promoted", performing more complex tasks and activities. They began to feel more confident and assure of themselves, showing more autonomy at work.

When they finished their apprenticeships, all three youngsters remained employed, as they took up new positions in other companies. Progressively, there was a consolidation in the field of *self* of a position as *Responsible-Worker*. It represents the unfolding of the promoter position as *Responsible-Apprentice* and facilitates a continuity of the young people's trajectories towards professionalization (*becoming-a-professional*). In different circumstances, these youngsters show that they have managed to integrate and to differentiate previous positions with new rising demands.

As *Responsible-Workers*, both George and Marcelo became technology instructors, and, later, started small businesses, acting as entrepreneurs in the field of technology. George opened a *lan-house* (a kind of Internet point) with friends in his neighborhood, and Marcelo started a business to provide services in computer programming and *webdesign*. After the end of her apprenticeship contract, Neuza started to work at the administration of a residencial condominium, and later, entered the university (to study International Relations), increasingly integrating work with studies, seeking a placement in that area.

Along these lines, it is possible to think that the position of *Responsible-Worker* allows for the following characteristic to emerge: stability, accountability, attendance,

belonging to the working environment. Such characteristics are reported by Neuza as follows: "*I [gained more] stability in my job, I worked there for two and a half years, and I was never at fault, never late, or 'sick', never asked for a license, this kind of stuff. So I've got a backup in that company*".

Together with *Responsible-Worker*, other self-positions emerged and played an important complimentary role in the construction of a future-oriented time perspective of *becoming-a-professional*: *Good-Administrator-of-Money* and *Dedicated-Student*. These positions form an alliance with the *Responsible-Worker* in order to empower the self-system towards *becoming-professional*. As for the *Good-Administrator-of-Money*, the trajectories of these youngsters show that a relevant passage point (if not obligatory) in the direction of *becoming professional* is knowing how to manage – i.e. how to spend as well as to save – the money they earned as apprentices and workers. This achievement was important because it allowed for these young people to take technical courses in their area of interest (George and Marcelo), to buy computers for study at home (Marcelo), and to pay for a university course (Neuza), along with providing support for their families. About this process, George reveals:

*As soon as I get the money, I have a good control over money, I don't go on spending it... I'm not the kind of person who spends a lot of money, I keep it. I do the following: I try to invest in me. Part of the money I get I use to support my family, and the rest I take a small part of it to invest in something I need to buy. But most of it I use to invest in me, invest in something that will make me a better professional.*

Another complimentary position that is relevant for *becoming a professional* in the future is *Dedicated-Student*. For instance, after his experience as *Responsible-Apprentice*, George became more interested in studying. He realized that in order to achieve the goal of *becoming a professional* he needed to "invest" in himself, in something that could help achieve his goals "to be a better professional". So he decided to take short technical courses (e.g. computer maintenance), and later passed a very difficult exam for a long term course in Computer Technology. Marcelo also invested more in his area of interest. He bought a computer, took a course in computer programming, and started to study and practice by himself at home. Neuza got into the university and paid for her course with money she earned at work. She remained working throughout her university course, combining work and study, believing that, along with personal support, work could teach her useful skills to use in her



professional life (e.g. management skills). Even when she quit her job to become an intern, she had already saved a significant amount of money, so she could practice in her area of interest without worrying too much about her expenses. As George explained, it all seems to stem from a mature vision of the future that these youngsters have developed: "*I have already got a mature concept of the future, and of what I can do for my future to be better. I can trace my own paths. I do this, to see if I can get there, in order to get there.*"

It is possible to think that these youngsters have developed an internalized perspective of their futures that serves to orient their actions in the direction of something that they not yet *are*, but wish to *become*. Thus, a higher level of integration of positions begins to emerge. Departing from the initial point of *integration* and *differentiation*, achieved through the emergence of the promoter position as *Responsible-Apprentice*, a new perspective of *becoming-professional* started to guide the transformations in these youngsters' self-system. This integration occurs in a coordinated relationship between what has already emerged (from the past into the present) and what can still emerge (in a selection of future possibilities).

Therefore, the movement of transformation is guided by the projection of the self-system into *becoming-a-professional*, which guide new cycles of meaning production. In this process, when new positions are created they produce new levels of a hierarchical chain of intertwined positions. This "movement" can be seen as a *semiotic entanglement* or "*knitting*" between past experiences and future projections, that creates new meanings of the *self* and the world. The future projection as *I-Professional* (*becoming-professional*) emerges as a powerful version of the *self* in the future loaded with affect, and able to integrate and differentiate past and future perspectives, creating a continuity of *self* in the flow of irreversible time.

Along this chain of intertwined meanings, *promoter signs* act as *bridges* between different time perspectives (i.e. past and future). They are powerful because they can *integrate* as well as *expand* the sense of *self* and the world, facilitating the *differentiation* of previous, more limited, meanings.



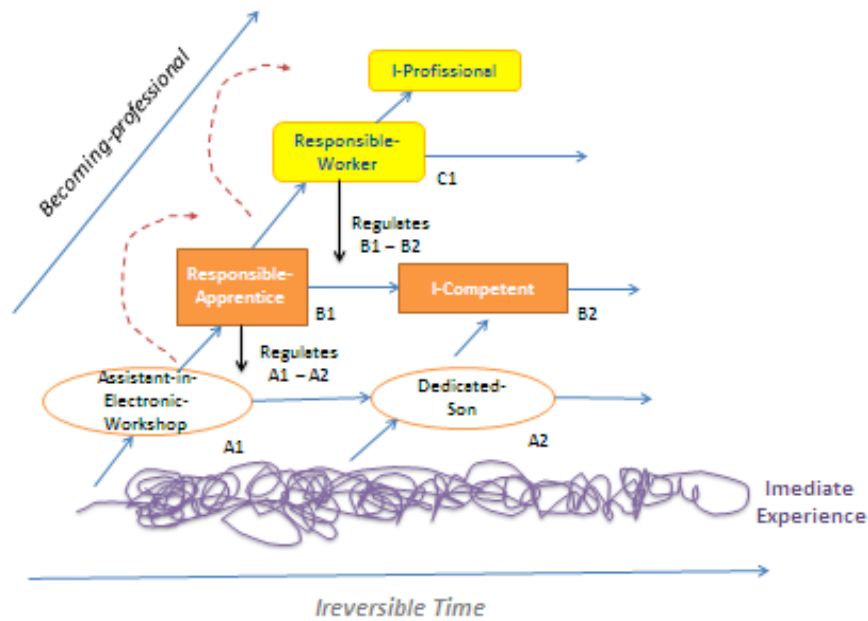


Figure 4 - Self-Regulation through the Creation of a Hierarchy of Flexible Signs

Figure 4 illustrates the mechanism of self-regulation operating through the production of a *chain of entangled meanings*. This chain is formed by qualitative "leaps" in which former positions in the field of *self* (A1) and (A2) (e.g. as *Assistant-in-Electronic-Workshop* and *Dedicated-Son/Daughter*) will be simultaneously *integrated* and *differentiated* by new emerging positions situated at a higher level (a more abstract level) in the "architecture of the self" (e.g. B1: *Responsible-Apprentice*). These new emerging positions take a flexible control over former positions, regulating their relations. New "leaps" are produced, from confrontations between young people and specific circumstances presented by their contexts, giving rise to new positions (e.g. C1: *Responsible-Worker*). The process generates powerful signs that dominate the landscape of dialogical relations of these youth in their work sphere of experience.

A *hierarchical intransitive chain of positions* is created in which the central axis is *becoming-professional* (as a version of *self* that is projected into the future). The meaning of *becoming-professional* emerged as a generalized meaning located at the highest level (i.e. more abstract) of a semiotic hierarchy, capable of integrating different



“times” experienced by these young people and to orient their developmental trajectories.

These emerging hierarchies are intransitive, i.e. irreversible, because new meanings operate as points of no return. After the emergence of *promoter position* (such as *Responsible-Apprentice*) there is no reversibility to a “former” position. Simultaneously, there is *integration* and *differentiation* of former positions at this bifurcation point. The new emerging position (*promoter position*) provides a *continuity* of some aspects of former positions but also is *qualitatively different* from them. Intransitivity, however, does not imply rigidity. The “*architecture of the self*” reaches a higher level and new meanings begin to take a flexible control over previously produced meanings. Without the creation of such (*intransitive*) hierarchies, the self-system becomes more rigid, fixated in sequences of positions. Therefore, these hierarchical chains of interwoven meanings seem to be essential for the creation of a future-oriented time perspective in the self-system and for the production of semiotic “*entanglements*” between positions.

As seen above, by building hierarchies of meanings around the position as *Responsible-Apprentice*, George, Marcelo and Neuza were able to distance themselves from immediate experience and put into a new perspective their previous positions, expanding the meaning of *being-professional* over time – *Responsible-Apprentice*, *Responsible-Worker* and *Dedicated-Student*. This dynamic was possible by projecting the self-system into the meaning of *becoming-professional*, which anticipates a perspective of something these youngsters not yet *are* (at the present moment), but wish to *become*. They built new identities, negotiating between various positions in a setting permeated by multiple voices. There emerged a new version of *self*: “*Being Professional*”. It refers to an integrated and integrative self-perspective, radiating its influence to different dimensions of life, and allowing for the overcoming of challenges faced by these youths across different contexts and time dimensions. George, Marcelo and Neuza developed a different outlook over their lives, taking a proactive role to gain social recognition and to achieve their goals.

This process, however, did not happen in a linear direction. It is permeated by comings and goings, ups and downs, advances and setbacks, conflicts and ambivalences. The progress toward overcoming ambivalence involves qualitative “leaps” and generative synthesis – in an intransitive motion of reaching for new meanings. The result is that George, Marcelo and Neuza were able to reposition

themselves, both in relation to the *past* as well as towards the *future*. The future becomes populated by different ways or alternatives of *being* (entrepreneur, computer instructor, project coordinator), and the past is reconstructed and turned into a "resource" for change. In this movement, these youngsters were able to "draw [their] own path" and "continue growing in [their] careers" and "build a blue ocean of professional tranquility".

### Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we have explored the processes taking place within the self-system of young people, highlighting a model of self-development based on the production of *hierarchical intransitive chains of meanings*. Through the cases of George, Marcelo and Neuza, we illustrated the operation of intransitive cycles of innovation in creating *promoter positions* and producing new perspectives for the *self* and the world. These intransitive cycles are not only able to *integrate* and *differentiate* conflicting former positions, but also *bring out new positions* that are loaded with affect, and are situated on a higher hierarchical level relative to previous positions. These new levels are important because they provide a *holistic pre-adaptation* in face the uncertain future (Valsiner, 2006, 2007). They start to take a flexible control over lower levels, precisely because they are located on a higher level of abstraction in the semiotic chain. Only through this intransitive movement we think it's possible to create "*entanglements*" or "*knittings*" between previously ambivalent meanings (or position).

It is important to highlight that the *border zone* where changes occur is a temporary space of transformation. It is the locus for the operation of a synthesis in the self-system, facilitating the emergence of new forms, and new cycles of self-regulation. But after the production of a generative synthesis this zone of permeability closes again – as time is irreversible and doesn't come back, unless in the form of a "*reconstruction*" (i.e. a *meaning* which is (*re*)produced at the present moment). We can think of the mechanism operating here as one of *semiotic entanglement*. As time doesn't return, the generative synthesis produces new – *qualitatively different* – forms that emerge "*knitting*" previous meanings.

Then, the *Intransitive Cycle of Production Innovation* can be seen as the minimum unit for transformation in the self-system, and for the construction of a future-oriented time perspective. The process, however, doesn't depend on a single *Cycle of Production of Innovation*, but on the formation of *chains of hierarchies of intransitive*



*meanings*, which become interwoven over time. Analyzing the trajectories of George, Marcelo and Neuza, we think that, through positioning themselves as *Responsible-Apprentices*, these youngsters initiate new cycles of innovation, from which emerges a new promoter position as *Responsible-Worker*. This position emerges after the end of the apprenticeship contract and with their insertion in new work roles. New meaning bridges being to be constructed over time, that are able to produce new integrations and differentiations between positions, always with having as central axis “*becomig-a-professional*”, an anticipated projection of the future.

In this motion, former positions become semiotically “*knitted*” with future projections, producing a new pattern, a new fabric of meanings for the *self* and the world. Thus, future and past intertwine, creating *historicity* of the person in over time, within the irreversible flow *past-present-future*. The process involves the projection of a new self-version in the future, in the direction of *becoming* something or someone that the person currently not yet *is*, but may *become*. The person begins to establish a relationship with the space-time putting into a new perspective her *past* experience and *future* trajectories, in the present. In this process, the person perceives herself as the *author* of her own story. We consider that the view advanced in here represents an “*architecture of self-in-motion*”.

Therefore, in our study, we could show how the moving of the dialogical self over time in a longitudinal perspective, outside clinical settings. We have brought to the foreground that dialogical relations operate not only at a microgenetic level (as researchers have already shown in clinical studies – see Cunha Gonçalves, Valsiner, Mendes & Ribeiro, 2012; Gonçalves & Ribeiro, 2012; Ribeiro, Gonçalves & Mendes, 2012), but also at an ontogenetic level. We suggest that certain processes – that we call promoting processes – may bring development to the self-system creating an entanglement of microgenesis with life trajectories over time.

Along this lines, our study complement clinical research showing that promoter positions may have a prominent role not only in macrogenetic change, but also in more long term changes, widening the horizons of the self for longitudinal transformations. We highlighted a perspective of a self in continuous movement through the work of intransitive cycles of production of innovation, fostering the creation of meanings bridges between past experiences (i.e. memories or recollections of past experiences), and future developments (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010).

Therefore, we believe that promoter positions may provide a reorganization of the

self- system creating a longitudinal dynamic of projecting the self-system into the meaning of becoming-professional, and facilitating the emergence of new identities, negotiated between various positions in a setting permeated by multiple voices. A version of self emerged: "Being Professional", corresponding to an integrated and integrative self-perspective, radiating its influence to different dimensions of life, and allowing for the overcoming of challenges faced by these youths across different contexts and time dimensions.

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