Globalization and individualization have radically changed both the economic system and the personal life world in industrial or postindustrial nations. To survive hypercompetition and volatile consumer choices, learning organizations and a workforce engaged in lifelong learning are needed. Constructing "the good life" has become an individual responsibility demanding reflexivity and skills. The question pursued in this article is how current policies in the context of lifelong learning relate to the requirements of a competitive economy, on one hand, and the good life on the other hand. To be able to evaluate dominant and alternative answers thoroughly in terms of lifelong learning, the authors look at the consequences of globalization and individualization. After having analyzed lifelong learning policies in the Netherlands, the article examines an important alternative, the so-called biographicity approach. In conclusion, the authors outline their own "transitional learning" perspective as an integral approach to lifelong learning as life-wide learning.

**Keywords:** globalization; individualization; lifelong learning; transitions; biographicity

Globalization and individualization constitute the driving forces of the information society. Global hypercompetition, markets on the move, and individualized consumer choices make demands upon an increase in technological and cultural intelligence in the organization of work. In the face of continuously changing circumstances, both organizations and employees have to become flexible. Creating the learning company and developing lifelong learning (LLL) with a view to economic competitiveness have become the gospel of the "knowledge economy."

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At the same time, individuals are, more than ever before, on their own in facing the speed and scope of changes in a globalizing information society. Transformations are not restricted to the sphere of the economic system but are clearly visible in the social and cultural dimensions of the personal life world. The significance of traditional social structures (e.g., social class and gender relations) together with canonized cultural orientations (e.g., religious ethics, scientific truth, and civic virtues) for leading one's life is rapidly eroding. Rather than social or moral conformity, individual distinction is the new, postmodern imperative. In a de-traditionalized world, women and men are expected to make their own plans and decisions on how to construct their personal, working, and public lives, and, what is more, how to combine all of these in what they value as "the good life."

The question explored in this article is how current policies of LLL relate, on one hand, to the requirements of a competitive economy and, on the other hand, to the good life. To be able to thoroughly evaluate dominant and alternative answers in terms of LLL, we have to look in some greater detail at globalization and individualization, and their consequences. We analyze how LLL in the Netherlands addresses the problems involved, and we examine the implications of "biographicity" as an alternative response (Alheit, 1995). In conclusion, this article elaborates our own approach, which is based upon the notion of "transitional labor markets" (TLMs; Schmid, 1998) and which we call "transitional learning" (TL). This article aims at grounding and outlining a program for LLL as TL. It must be stressed that our analysis of globalization, individualization, and LLL is addressed to late modern industrialized or postindustrialized societies and aims at developing new perspectives for adult educators based in the West.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a much-contested concept (Held & McGrew, 2003). Debates pertain to its novelty, universality, ideological nature, market character, and the risks and opportunities involved. Does it enhance cultural convergence in the sense of Westernization or, rather, divergence in terms of reverse colonization, and what is its impact on the autonomy and sovereignty of nation-states? In our analysis, globalization is neither a univocal nor a finished condition. It is rather a multifaceted, historical development with differential impact according to the place and the specific dimensions involved. Although it builds on a history of international relations between nation-states, it is new in the sense of the growing extensiveness of social networks involved, the intensity and speed of flows and interconnections within these networks, and the reach of its impact. Globalization entails the increase in mobility as witnessed, for example, in the international financial markets, on the Internet, and in migration processes. Important consequences of the radically increased mobility of capital is, first, its capacity to bypass devalued peoples and territories (Castells, 1996), its general disengagement with regard to labor, and the growth of social inequality (Beck, 1997; Hutton & Giddens, 2001).
Bauman (2001) argues, for example, that the more important relationship for capital in the development and selling of ideas is no longer with labor but with consumers. This means, second, that job insecurity is on the increase worldwide as a result of the speed and interconnectivity of capital movements. Third, there is the process of mass migration among those on the receiving end of globalization. This confronts the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, for example, with both the enriching and disturbing features of cultural and ethnic diversity (Glastra, Meerman, Schedler, & Vries, 2000). Fourth, there is the emergence of different forms of resistance against the “converging powers” of globalization, as exemplified in social and popular movements around the struggle for national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities.

Globalization is also closely related to the role of information and communication technology in facilitating almost instantaneous access to information without regard to spatial dimensions and time horizons. The application of information and knowledge in all spheres of social life has become the most dynamic feature in the transformation of late-modern societies. This, in turn, gives rise to learning as a permanent feature of social life. Globalization confronts nation-states, organizations, and individuals with learning challenges as they struggle to cope within rapidly changing and unstable global and local environments. This is not a necessity that is felt in the same measure by the populations of all continents. As Castells (1996, p. 34) has pointed out, “There are large areas of the world, and considerable segments of the population, switched off from the technological system.”

INDIVIDUALIZATION

Unlike globalization, the concept of individualization is rather straightforward, even though related concepts such as social capital have lately stirred up debate (Putnam, 1995). Individualization refers here to the growing autonomy of individuals vis-à-vis social structures and cultural and moral orders, and the fact that individuals must resolve systemic and institutional frictions essentially on their own (Beck, 1997). This is witnessed by such phenomena as the decline of political participation of citizens in parliamentary democracy in most western countries, the erosion of the nuclear family, the withering away of the standard biography, the incorporation of women in the labor process, and individual labor contracts. We will pay attention here to three of the many consequences and manifestations of individualization: insecurity in social relations, the emancipation of women, and the differentiation in life courses.

Where people become socially disembedded and loose their faith in traditional cultural guidelines, they face the “tyranny of choice” (Beck, 2001) on their own. This tyranny arises from the fact that they cannot be sure about the preconditions, nor predict the consequences, of their choices in life, although they know that they have to choose and will be individually responsible for the outcomes. This shallow nature of “life politics” can result in a sense of insecurity that pertains most of all to
questions of identity. Identity is usually understood as a stable social-psychological construct that enables individuals to locate themselves along a path from origins to a given destination and to relate themselves to—or distinguish themselves from—“the other.” In postmodern times, this conception of identity has become problematic (Hall, 1992). A wide variety of such identities has become available, transforming and eroding traditional identities based upon social class, gender, or religion (Bendix & Roodenburg, 2000). Moreover, when flexibility constitutes the crucial capacity that work organizations and the unpredictability of life demand of individuals, having a stable identity can be a disadvantage. People must become individuals through constructing or reconstructing their own biographies and life courses. They have to deal with conflicting institutional and cultural demands to show both authenticity and malleability at the same time. Questions such as “Who am I?” and “Whom do I want to be?” can become quite haunting existential questions (Beck, 2001) when normative regulation is gradually replaced by the ambivalent urge to want more than you have or to perform better than you can. The insecurity with regard to the social relations that individuals establish follows the same pattern. As Bauman (1995) points out, social bonds in late-modern societies are increasingly established on the basis of exchange relationships, where there must be some quid pro quo. Because personal situations can change overnight, one should be wary of taking on too many responsibilities with regard to the other. Of course, when widespread, such a pattern can increase the precariousness of life even further. With the withering away of the influence of the ethics of institutions, such as the church and the state, life choices have also become burdened with the question of morality (Bauman, 1995). Which values with regard to the self, to the other, and to nature should I follow? The individualization of morality in social interaction also adds to the unpredictability of situations and to feelings of insecurity, especially in the public domain.

A second important consequence of individualization is the emancipation of women. This is an example of the successful concerted action of the feminist movement and the micropolitics of women on the home front. Of importance here are three issues. First, there has been an increased participation of women in the labor market, even though this still leaves a lot to be desired in terms of both their quantitative and functional representation (Benschop, 1996; Schedler, Glastra, & Hake, 2003). With the entry of women in work organizations on a massive scale, questions of equal treatment, diversity, and the gendered distribution of work have been put on the agenda. Women are generally still regarded as the first-responsible for the care of children, and the breadwinner culture is not yet overcome. They still have to weigh the importance of raising children against the pleasures or necessities of (half) a job. However, recent statistics about the alarming number of well-educated young women among recipients of occupational disability benefits in the Netherlands show that this is another tyranny of choice rather than an easy decision for many. Second, on the home front the distribution of tasks between men and women in the care of children, parents, and relatives and in household chores is
slowly changing. New demands arise here that are addressed to governments and employers to create space to sustain this development. Third, women have also increasingly emancipated themselves from patriarchal patterns, as is witnessed in the growing number of women (and men) living on their own and the increasing divorce rate (Castells, 1997). Marriage and the gendered distribution of tasks throughout the life course are losing their character as "beds" for the making of life choices.

The third major consequence of social change pertains to the withering away of the "standard biography" with its specific class and gender manifestations. Originally, the crude idea of the standard biography was that in childhood, there is a period of education and learning; then, in midlife, there is work for men and children for women, and, at the end of life, there is a period of retirement. As is now well established, the standard biography has been replaced by the "elective biography" (Castells, 1996). Phases of learning, work and unemployment, caring, and resting have become spread throughout the course of life in recurrent cycles. This development has two corollaries. One is that in certain periods of life, many different tasks must be combined. In particular, young families between the ages of 25 and 35 suffer from what are called "combination pressures" (Leijnse, Baljé, & Oomens, 2001). The second is that given the individualization of life courses, coordination of life and work on an aggregate social level becomes problematic (Ester, 2001). Conflicts of interest arise continuously where these life courses intersect.

As is the case with globalization, the process of individualization does not hold for everyone to the same degree. First, there are still persistent cultural differences between national cultures in this respect (Hofstede, 1980). Second, as Bauman (2001) has pointed out, for the underclass, those who are dependent on social security and charity, normative regulation through state agencies has become more stringent than ever before. Third, in a world that is ridden with ambiguity, insecurity, and fear for the other, collective identities offer safe havens for many.

**INTERSECTING INFLUENCES OF GLOBALIZATION AND INDIVIDUALIZATION**

Where globalization and individualization intersect, a number of crucial developments occur. First, many people seek refuge or better economic prospects in the wealthy but strange nations of the Western world. At the same time, these nations are subject to a process of more or less rapid detraditionalization, individualization, and growing social inequality, and face confusion regarding their social and cultural identities. The insecurity that this uprooted situation brings for both the established and the newcomers is more often than not transformed into xenophobia, segregation, and violent confrontation. The fear of "the others"—be they immigrants, homeless people crowding the inner cities, or even youths experimenting with every last rule or role model they can find—is eating away at the remnants of social support for the welfare state and the multicultural society (Bauman, 2001).
Second, whereas individual achievement features as the top priority in all spheres of life, traditional social and financial buffers against life's hardships are gradually eroding (Ester, 2001). Reflexivity about life choices has become increasingly urgent. However, because many individuals experience a lack of control over the outcomes of their actions, critique has turned inward toward the self, and there is a feeling that one can only blame oneself (Sennett, 1998). The gradual disappearance of a societal level in the diagnosis and resolution of individual problems is significantly facilitated by the withdrawal of power into the global network (Bauman, 1998). This reflects the declining significance of the nation-state as a rallying point for amending social injustice and as a powerful actor in defining the common good.

Third, globalization and individualization also enhance the vulnerability of the nation-state from two sides. Nation-states increasingly turn into secondary players that are restricted to operating within the confines laid down by supranational governmental bodies and international corporations. They have nothing to sell to mobile global corporations but their technological infrastructure meeting the latest standards, their favorable tax regimes, and a highly qualified working population (Kuttner, 2001). At the other extreme, citizens turn away from active involvement in official politics and leave the nation-state to its own devices. A privatized form of politics has taken to the streets for a multiplicity of causes. It has resulted, in the Netherlands as in many other European countries, in party politics that promise to protect individuals from the threat that others, fellow citizens but most notably, strangers, constitute to them a turn toward law-and-order politics and away from the multicultural society.

GLOBALIZATION AND THE INDIVIDUALIZATION OF WORK

The world of work is also transformed by the combined influence of globalization and individualization. Global hypercompetition, together with increasingly individualized consumer cultures, demands a continuous innovation of all aspects of business. The development, storage, distribution, and deployment of professional knowledge and cultural intelligence emerge as the core strategic element in the survival of work organizations. The corollary is an organization that can be reassembled, as it were, overnight according to projects and processes that may prove profitable in the market. In this connection, Castells (1996) speaks of the “network organization.” Its horizontal architecture and its highly autonomous and malleable work units have come to gradually replace or supplement Taylorist organizational forms. It is seconded by the strategic repertoire of human resource management that is geared to sustaining a flexible workforce (Walton, 1999). Higher educated employees need to be employable for a broad range of nonroutine and developmental tasks. A disposable buffer of flex-time, part-time, and temporary workers (mostly women, youths, and the minorities) is meant to adjust for market failures, conjunctural change, and doing routine work. Both core personnel and
flex-time employees are expected to be capable of internal or external mobility when corporate interests so demand. They will be more frequently off the job, be it for longer or shorter spells of unemployment or for refreshing their knowledge and skills (Alheit, 1995; Schmid, 1998). Although the flexibility requirement may lead to high social and moral costs (Sennett, 1998), part-time work is also viewed as an opportunity for satisfying the growing need to combine waged work with care tasks. Of course, the fairness of the exchange between capital and—predominantly female—labor in this case is still contested (Benschop, 1996).

In a world where almost any producer can make a car or a television of the same quality for roughly the same price for a given market segment, a premium is put on capabilities for product invention and innovation, organizational redesign and management, and for branding and marketing; in short, the handling of ideas and meanings. Therefore, what is demanded—especially of highly trained core employees—is their initiative, their creativity, their sociability, and most of all their authenticity. In these rather intractable areas of the “soft skills,” the real profits must be made. The authentic talents of highly trained employees have a strategic significance in that they are hard to copy by competitors. These days, it is the destiny of the personal to become profitable rather than political. The downside of hiring the head, the heart, and the spirit of these employees is that what is hard to copy is also hard to manage, at least in the still-dominant sense of planning and control. In many cases, an exchange relation is involved. The profitable must also become personal; that is to say that work must contribute in positive and meaningful ways to personal development and personal identity. The flexibility of employees must be met by flexible arrangements with regard to labor contracts, working hours, learning opportunities, and so forth (Glastra, Hake, Meijers, & Schedler, 2001; Leijnse et al., 2001).

Stimulated by the increasing importance of individual talent for knowledge creation, the life world, which Habermas pronounced to be colonized by the system, returns to the system’s center stage, the world of work (Baetghe, 1997). This is witnessed in the deployment of a bundle of soft human resource management practices for individual integration such as personal development plans, empowerment, and diversity management. This is also evidenced in individualized labor contracts and companies that sell themselves as whole life worlds catering for practically all the needs that their employees may have (Schedler, Glastra, & Kats, 2000). Jobs are more and more consumed by (especially core) employees who seek personal fulfillment and growth but who do not necessarily identify with the specific corporation (Baetghe, 1997; De Beer, 2001). For managers and shareholders, corporations are still primarily systems that only exist to serve external goals such as profit, market share, and plain survival. They will have to find new ways to accommodate the unruly life world that develops inside their work organizations. Employees have remained workers subjected to labor relations, but at the same time they have become the storehouses of authenticity, consumers of tasks and jobs, and, last but not least, individuals seeking personal meaning in their work. One important and
troubling consequence of these developments is that the boundaries between the world of work and the personal life world are slowly fading away as the knowledge economy and the culture of individualization become more and more entangled.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS: THE CASE OF THE NETHERLANDS

The question we raised at the outset is how the policies and practices of LLL, as illustrated in the case of the Netherlands, relate to the complex of developments and problems previously outlined. On the basis of a state-of-the-art country study on LLL in the Netherlands (Doets, Hake, & Westerhuis, 2002), we provide a brief overview. The study was commissioned by CEDEFOP, the European Centre for Development of Vocational Training, as part of a Europe-wide overview of LLL policies and practices. It consists of literature studies and empirical research and deals with policy development, provision arrangements, curriculum, and participation patterns with regard to LLL.

At the outset, it must be noted that since the economic crisis of the first half of the 1980s, the Dutch adult education sector has undergone a transformation from primarily social-cultural and community education toward adult general education and vocational education and training. The general adagium for almost any government policy at the time became “Work, work, and again work,” and given the scale of unemployment during the 1980s, this seemed to be a sensible orientation. This has set the scene for further developments with regard to the organization of education and learning. During the 1990s, when economic development and job creation stirred international interest in the success of the Dutch polder model, emerging policies and practices with regard to LLL came to reflect dominant economic orientations. These policies and practices are by no means determined by educational actors but constitute a joint venture with such powerful economic actors as the national employers’ organizations and the trade unions, and the Ministries of Economic and Social Affairs. The arguments for LLL issuing from this socioeconomic bloc involve the competitive edge of the Dutch economy in a globalizing world, the wish to transform the Dutch economy into a knowledge economy, to correct for shortages on the labor market, and to support “weak labor” threatened with social and economic exclusion. The fundamental premise is that work constitutes the single strongest integrative and cohesive mechanism in society.

With regard to LLL policies, a division of tasks has been agreed upon in that the government concentrates on basic and general qualifications and finances students generally until the age of 30. Older learners are expected to purchase education and training at market prices. Most of public investment in LLL is subsequently directed at initial formal education and is primarily concerned with adolescents and young adults. Training and education for specific interests must be financed by companies and/or the individuals concerned. Research by Houtkoop (2001) shows that in fact, the bulk of participation in LLL is paid for by employers and takes place
during working hours. Moreover, it is overwhelmingly directed at improving work skills related to the present job. Employability motives were found to be less important. Only 16% of the courses were followed with a view to personal development goals. The current division of tasks results in an institutional field of LLL in which private education providers dominate on the supply side. The greatest part of postinitial LLL has an in-company character and therefore is not accessible to the wider public. Having paid work, and particularly having received earlier education, are consequently the best predictors of participation in LLL, and being young is a great advantage.

Strange as it may seem in the light of this empirical evidence that shows LLL to be an adaptive rather than an innovative mechanism for both employers and employees, the enhancement of individual employability is the core argument in the Dutch policy discourse on LLL. With international economic competitiveness as the goal, LLL is made instrumental in support of globalization. The emphasis on employability that makes individuals responsible for their choices and opportunities on the labor market serves as a further inducement toward individualization. In this way, LLL becomes LLL for work.

There are several disadvantages to this dominant economic logic that underpins LLL in the Netherlands with which we can deal only briefly (Glastra et al., 2001). First, LLL ignores most of the problems stemming from the trend toward individualization that we have dealt with under the header of the tyranny of choice. In its current form, LLL helps individuals to adapt to changes in the economic process. It does not prepare work organizations for growing diversity and individuality, nor does it enable individuals to take responsibility for their own employment in meaningful ways. LLL is one-sided in that it reduces life to work. It also is outdated in the sense that it ignores both the return of the life world to the economic process and the problem of the erosion of boundaries between the personal sphere and the world of work. Second, current LLL practices with their focus on the improvement of performance provide mainly for forms of learning of the first degree (mastering knowledge and skills) and to some extent the second degree in the form of acquiring styles of learning. Bauman (2001, p. 125) argues that “tertiary learning—learning how to break the regularity, how to get free from habits and prevent habituation...acquires a supreme adaptive value and fast becomes central to what is indispensable equipment for life.” Third, our analysis of the consequences of individualization and globalization for the world of work shows that the fundamental premise of the LLL program must be qualified. Waged work, these days and in the foreseeable future, is clearly as much a mechanism of social exclusion and of fragmentation as it is an integrative or cohesive mechanism. Fourth, existing LLL arrangements enhance the gendered distribution of tasks in paid work and care, together with the massive outflow of employees from the age of 55 onwards (Muffels, 2000), and block the access to postinitial LLL for weak labor. Fifth, LLL policies and practices are not thought through from a life-course perspective (Sociaal Economische Raad, 2000). The Dutch Social-Economic Council has called upon
the government to introduce financial measures to ensure that men and women can alternate periods of work with periods of caring or learning throughout the life span in forms that will do justice to the growing diversity of life courses. This last point brings us to an alternative conceptualization that takes the flexibility of life courses as its point of departure.

**BIOGRAPHICITY AND LEARNING FOR LIFE**

Alheit (1995, 2002; see also Alheit & Daussien, 1999) has developed an interesting conceptualization of LLL. Alheit (1995) states that as part of the erosion of traditional social structures, the world of work and the Protestant work ethic are of declining significance in guiding life choices. Life courses will soon be seen as self-actualization biographies, and only peripherally as employment biographies or as careers. Living a life has become a serious problem for individuals, and there are no ready-made curricula for learning life skills. Alheit refers to this as a special challenge for adult education. He rejects the “therapeutic turn” in adult education and argues that most adults are quite capable of coping with their problems without the help of adult education. This can be understood in terms of the special capacity possessed by individuals that Alheit refers to as biographicity. This is defined as

an ‘inner potential’, a sort of ‘autopoietic’ (= self-creating) resource of coping with current reality...an active construction of what personal needs actually are. But it is more: in a very particular way, it represents reality. We could say that, biographical constructions are a result of ongoing coping processes with social reality. (Alheit & Daussien, 1999, p. 5)

According to Alheit and Daussien (1999), this potential of biographicity also explains why the breakdown of social structures and traditions in late modernity does not result in dramatic consequences for the individual. Biographicity constitutes a resource that on one hand filters and appropriates developments in the environment according to the experiential code that a person has developed over his or her lifetime. On the other hand, it also produces new forms of interaction, new social bonds, and, eventually, new social structures (Alheit, 2002). Learning according to the personal experiential code protects the individual, as it were, from the direct influences of the external social world. Alheit (2002) understands adult education and learning as “individual identity work and as a formation of collective processes and social relations, that means: to link stories and structures” (p. 18).

Alheit and Daussien (1999) argue that biographicity cannot be taught but that it is a capacity that people possess and that is involved in meaningful learning, which, therefore, should be supported by adult education. This means that the biographical, self-regulated learning practices of students should determine the logic of institutions and that educational professionals should become enablers and moderators. In cooperation with adult learners, they should discover the “unlived lives” stored
in the biographies of the adult learners and help them shape their lives in different spheres of life more autonomously (Alheit, 1995). We agree with the analysis of Alheit with regard to a number of important points. Because individualization has turned into a lived reality, it makes good sense for social theory to take “actor interpretations” seriously as a starting point of analysis (Beck, 1997). Furthermore, Alheit theorizes the discontent with the dominant economic logic underpinning the current discourse of LLL and begins to sketch an alternative program. Last, Alheit stresses the necessity of using LLL for the construction of new social structures for living together in late modernity.

However, we also need to voice some questions. First, biographicity seems to be an inherently “good” capability for learning, life planning, and social action and interaction. It only needs some coaching and a flexible learning environment in order to flower. We fear, however, that were all the unlived lives and the expressive drives underpinning them to become true—and they are becoming true already—we must also anticipate conflict and social breakdown in our individualized, unequal, diverse, and vitalistic societies. Therefore, the educational transformation of unlived lives requires more political, and therefore more substantial, troubling and controversial tasks for adult educators than Alheit foresees. What is more, in our view, the role of adult education must be both decentered and reconstituted on the grounds that at least some of the increasing insecurities clouding postmodern life must be tackled on the collective, social-political level. We return to this point in the following section.

Second, acknowledging that people make their own histories, we find that the “filter capacity” of biographicity is overstated and overgeneralized. Even if traditional structures are eroding, their joint institutional force is still powerful and will especially be felt by those on the receiving end of globalization and individualization (Bauman, 2001). Even if people nowadays work a relatively smaller proportion of their lives, they have to meet far more ambitious performance expectations and, accordingly, there are no signs that they attach less significance to their work (De Beer, 2001; Ester, 2001). Therefore, in our view, there is still much room for cultural and institutional orders that may in many cases prove too strong for self-creative biographicity to resist (Bourdieu, 1992).

Third, although “stories make structures,” as Alheit correctly informs us, will they be strong enough to provide clear orientations toward change? Will they be able to break through the particularly influential “out-of-control” structures such as the global financial network (Hutton & Giddens, 2001), the erosion of the welfare state, or the mental structures that feed the fear of “the other”? Can this all be achieved without supplementing feelings of individual guilt over lives unlived, with critical social analyses of the underlying reasons, without any sense of direction?

Fourth, LLL programs based on the notion of biographicity will have to make a determined effort to bring the social and the political back to the surface. If not, they
There are three substantial themes that seem to be of particular relevance for TL. The first is a critical social analysis with regard to globalization and individualization and their influence on the life course and the different life worlds in which people live. Such an analysis is a necessary prerequisite for TL in a society where blaming oneself or "the others" for one's plight or failure has become the dominant mode of thinking (Bauman, 2001). We think that a critical analysis can only be fruitfully undertaken if a connection can be made with the life experiences and meaning making of those involved in "situated practices" (Wenger, 1998). TL, therefore, requires the active participation of learners, and it should enable them to engage critically with the conditions in which they live their lives.

The second, more specific, theme is diversity, because we think that this is a crucial and disturbing phenomenon that sums up the late-modern condition in more than one sense. It pertains to a world in which the cosmopolitanism of international business goes hand in hand with the insecure settlement of migrants and refugees and the threat felt by indigenous populations of urban areas. It refers to the dynamics of individual and collective identity formation between and within "the established" and "the outsiders" (Elias & Scotson, 1985) to questions of international, multinational, and transnational citizenship (Bauböck, 2002) and to the plurality of changing and "strange" situations in which people are expected to live their personal, working, and public lives. In the end, diversity envisages the continuous development of socially justified and viable forms of social interaction and mutual understanding in a world of constantly changing differences. We think that this can be more fruitfully undertaken when diversity is not only the object of learning but is also its social condition. TL will benefit from joint learning in diverse learning communities.

Learning about globalization, individualization, and diversity is closely related to learning about boundaries, and this is the third theme. At each transition in the life course, individuals will be confronted with questions of identity, competence, engagement, and risk. As Wenger (1998) has argued, participation in different communities of practice constitutes identities as trajectories into and out of such communities. Any community of practice provides models to show how newcomers can negotiate such trajectories. In TL, the focus is on the problem of bridging and combining multiple forms of participation and membership with regard to communities of practice and life spheres. TL is not primarily directed at learning specific skills for specific practices but at learning how to combine and critically question memberships and transitions. Transitions may be taxing to the reconciliatory powers of individuals who are to negotiate the often-conflicting rules and demands in different fields. The risk of disengagement, unreflected acceptance of dominant rules in specific practices, and the transference of such rules to new domains increases with the number and the pace of transitions. The emerging dominance of the rules of the market in almost all spheres of life from the late 1980s onward is a case in point (Glastra et al., 2001). Rather than preaching the gospel of the
enriching consequences of boundary crossing, we would argue that TL should also have an eye open for the pathologies that mobility may entail. People should not only be encouraged to explore and perhaps cross boundaries, they should also know how to define boundaries and to guard them without lapsing into exclusionist practices or into believing that one can achieve a life without risk or ambiguity.

Two methodical principles should jointly govern the practice of TL, namely, dialogue and social experiment. When learning about diversity, the aim is not to rob persons or situations of their otherness through forced consensus. Difference should be acknowledged as a social construction (Hall, 1992), together with its pros and cons. Janssens and Steyaert (2001) have proposed dialogue as the main learning device for this purpose. Dialogue should result in what they call “polyphony,” different voices and song lines constituting a distinct melody without one of them actually singing it. Polyphony is premised on a rejection of a consensus model of social reality, an open and inquisitive attitude of participants, and the organization of room for response and the unexpected. Learning about diversity, in our view, is definitively not about learning cultural grammars for speaking and acting as if one were “the other.” On the contrary, learning about diversity is to be conceived as the cooperative construction of new forms of social interaction and social relationships (Cohen, 1996). In this sense, TL is not only critical but also constructive. It is social experiment, because it cannot exist in isolation. It must actively seek and promote its own viability and the validity of its solutions in engaging the public sphere, social movements, and political actors (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1997; The New London Group, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Of course, many questions remain unanswered in our preliminary efforts to conceptualize and formulate the guiding themes and principles of TL. For instance, what could be the role of educational professionals and of scientific and professional knowledge in TL? How can its practices be opened up to those who traditionally avoid or who are excluded from educational provision? How can dialogue and social experiment be articulated with or result in a politics that addresses issues of general interest and a lively public debate? How can the ambition of restoring a critical and moral relationship to a world in flux be combined with the necessity of continuous innovation of learning routines (Bauman, 2001)? These are some of the key questions that we intend to explore in our own research program.

In this article, we have mainly dealt with the question of how individuals can learn to deal in critical and innovative ways with the systemic contradictions and complexities produced by globalization and individualization in late-modern societies. Turning LLL into TL does not necessarily imply that both public institutions and private organizations have learned something new. And it is open to serious doubt whether they are well prepared to deal with the new employees and citizens...
who are continuously in the making. Therefore, TL for individuals should be supplemented by the emergence of learning organizations in both the public and private spheres.

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