

# Challenging Organisations and Society

reflective hybrids®

## Inner Outer Spaces

**Editors: Maria Spindler and Christian Stary**

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**Journal “Challenging Organisations and Society . reflective hybrids® (COS)”**

COS is the first journal to be dedicated to the rapidly growing requirements of reflective hybrids in our complex 21<sup>st</sup>-century organisations and society. Its international and multidisciplinary approaches balance theory and practice and show a wide range of perspectives in and between organisations and society. Being global and diverse in thinking and acting outside the box are the targets for its authors and readers in management, consulting and science.

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*Maria Spindler with the Cosmonaut Franz Viehböck*

## On an Inner Journey into Outer Space



I realise my excitement on the way to Franz Viehböck's office. I arrive with an inner image: He is the guide who really flew a tour in outer space and has also very often retraced that trip as a narrating guide. I see myself as a fellow traveler who is allowed to experience this inwardly, in connection with his outer and inner experiences. This is new country for me, a shared inner journey about Franz Viehböck's journey in outer space.

Maria: Mr. Viehböck, thank you for guiding us into outer space. The idea of this journey is that inner and outer spaces relate to each other, that outer space does something with inner space, and that this influences relations that we have with each other. I address you as a human being who experienced a special trip and who now is involved in management. My hypothesis

is that this flight influences how you manage, how you think about and shape organisations, and how you shape your own life. In my luggage I have stored the trip on a logical and on an emotional-physical, material level.

Franz: Where shall we begin?

### **In Outer Space**

Maria: I would like to begin with outer space right away. This outer space: How can I envision it? Do you have an inner picture of outer space?

Franz: Outer space is vast, unimaginably large, deep black, a completely, totally deep black. In this deep endlessness there are various sun systems and ever more universe. And then our Earth, and just above this Earth we flew into outer space. We were weightless, floating: a fantastic feeling, this enormous endlessness and the deep black. You perceive this endlessness by seeing moon, sun and stars much more clearly than you can from the Earth.

His voice becomes deeper, slower, and I slow down as well, becoming calmer, and my energy resets to a lower level; I feel and see inwardly the deep vastness and how the peace within me expands. This is what I came here for.

His voice becomes logical and technical again.

Franz: Everything is much clearer; there is no pollution. On one side you see that you are flying rapidly around the Earth at 28,000 kilometers per hour, orbiting the Earth in ninety minutes. On the other side you have vast dimensions; you look to the other side and notice that it is extremely large.

Maria: I have the picture: speed and tension on the Earth side is high, and on the other side it is...

Franz: ... irrelevant.

Maria: What is this like, being a human in between the Earth and infinite space?

Franz: That is an interesting feeling, because you are aware that you are away from the Earth but yet near to it – it is less than 400 kilometers to the Earth's surface. The gravitational pull is gone; it is a feeling that you are not part of Earth any longer. If something goes wrong in a passenger plane, you fall back to Earth. If something goes wrong in outer space, it can be that I leave Earth and don't ever come back.

Maria: The connection to Earth isn't there anymore. Do you feel some other connection?

Franz: You have radio contact, so you feel that connection.

Maria: I have fantasies such as a connection to outer space, a new dimension or quality forming, something like a growing, an enlightenment, a spirit, God, unity; you have another perspective on the world, other connections to the world; something turns; something turns me upside down; something engrosses me – or something else unexpected.

Franz: No, the disappointment was great that we didn't meet the extraterrestrial "It", God, etc., that we got to outer space and then (*snapping his fingers*) and then the enlightenment, the flash of lightening, then nothing happens.

Maria: What was most exciting for you?

Franz: One outstanding experience happened on the morning of 3 October [1991]. The mission control centre woke me up and told me that I had become father of a daughter. This was mixed with the successful start (as this is a perilous story). At that moment I was euphoric, which communicated itself to my crew colleagues and influenced everything on an emotional level very positively. It was interesting that through this euphoria a positive mood was communicated and had good effects: problems of a technical nature were more quickly repaired.

Maria: This euphoria: Where and how did you feel it?

Franz: It was a good feeling, an all-around good feeling in me and in the team.

Maria: What changed during that week?

Franz: The euphoria paused briefly on the last day. The spaceship in which we were to land did not operate properly during a test, so the mood was depressed because we didn't know what was wrong with it. It wasn't until hours later that the error was identified.

### **In the Inner Space**

Maria: How did this trip change you as a human being?

Franz: I can't say exactly, but I suspect not seriously. My values haven't changed. Naturally it is an experience that you don't have every day. It was an enormous enlargement of my treasure trove of experience; that makes you more mature, richer, more experienced. Mentally and physical you are placed in an exceptional situation. Those are experiences that make a person richer.

Maria: Earlier I felt uncertainty and risk; the probability is higher than you will die than when you are sitting at home in your living room, and yet you speak about it so calmly.

Franz: That's right. Things can go wrong – the start, the vacuum in outer space, high speed, the reentry into the atmosphere, many dangerous situations. I am not a cool, case-hardened guy. "Feel the fear and do it anyway": I think that's a good saying, because if you launch yourself into the unknown something good comes of it: riches, a wealth of experiences, the good feeling, the euphoria. Surviving the start, the acceleration, is fascinating and unique, a flood of happy chemicals.

Maria: You conquered something, accepted a challenge, responded to an incentive; all that involved overcoming something – the stress in outer space, the two-year-long training.

Franz: Many factors tantalized me: the technical-scientific experiment, the floating, undertaking something, thinking big, the path to get there. You have to accept the challenges; to master them requires energy and strength. If I want to climb Mount Everest I will manage it because I take it in hand to master the challenges. Any person can take on experiences and challenges that make them richer; they only have to want to.

Maria: Five hundred eighty-eight human beings have been in outer space. You could claim to be something special, but instead you say, yes, it was something extreme, something special, but not because I was in outer space and not because I am one of those 588 human beings.

Franz: I believe that every human being can experience something special. With some of them it is more public, with others not so much. But there are many people who have done fantastic things.

### **Back to Earth**

Maria: Back on Earth, what was different for you? What had changed? How do you think you have developed from this experience?

Franz: I have developed a different view of the Earth, not only geographically. Many things are clearer that were not so well in focus before: the people who destroy each other; the pollution, the destruction of the planet by human beings. On the one hand that happened because of my view of the planet from beyond; on the other hand I spoke with my wife from outer space. At that time there was war in the former Yugoslavia. She asked if I saw the smoke from the bombs over Dubrovnik. I looked down and saw no artificial borders. I became aware of how idiotic it is for human beings to kill each other. That sensitized me to become consciously active in environmental

protection. This position – as one of the 588 – has the advantage that I can try to make things happen with the relevant stakeholders.

Maria: I first got to know you more than ten years ago as a manager, and at that time you were convinced of the idea of team development. How did this outer space experience influence the way you deal with people, teams, organizations and business?

Franz: I learned a great deal in the two years of preparation and the flight, much of which I can apply in my life as a manager. Teamwork: try to understand the other side. Dealing with stress. It is important to be aware that negative stress hinders performance. When you are not under so much stress, you can see the big picture and evaluation situations better.

Maria: What has changed for you as a global citizen and as a human being?

Franz: At that time, in 1991, there were about two hundred human beings who had been in outer space. Through this spaceflight I meet many of those people, from many nations and speaking many languages, and “up there everyone is the same”. You become aware that we are all equal. An awareness and tolerance for people from other nations.

Maria: I suppose that through the risky, extreme situation, through the high level of uncertainty, you are much more dependent on each other. You need each other to survive; you need each other in order to work well, no matter what a person’s skin color is or where they come from. These experiments cannot be repeated every day; they are rare opportunities and they generate a high level of solidarity.

Franz: Trusting each other and relying on each other are the basis. The teamwork is different than in a company; you are in confined spaces and dependent on each other. When something goes wrong in management it’s not that big a deal. When something goes wrong in outer space, your life is at risk.



### **Outer-Inner-Space Development**

Maria: I imagine that when you are out there in outer space and it is so vast, endless, infinite, then it may open up a space inside you that I cannot even conceive of.

Franz: I don't believe that the inner space was opened because I was out there in outer space. I believe every human being has the possibility to open their inner space; they just have to let it happen. People also experience many extreme situations here on Earth.

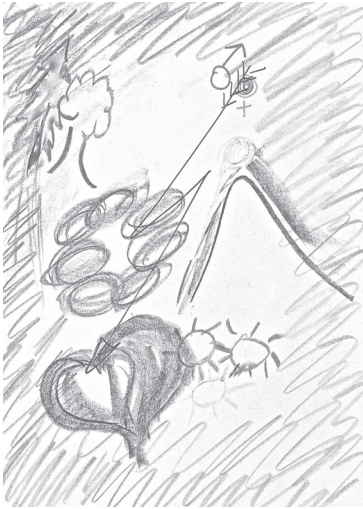
Maria: I find your interpretations and value systems humble. You could also say, "I am a super-cool guy, one of the 588 in the history of humanity." Others have never been away from the Earth; their space is just the Earth. You interpret it as, "I am only one of many people on this Earth who has experienced something extreme." You make all human beings equal in rank through the geographic outer space in relation to the inner personal space. Every human being is responsible for their own inner development, regardless of which "outer space" they are or were in.

Franz: I can have been in a geographically big outer space and still have a very small personal inner space; or I can have never been in a geographically big outer space, but only within my own four walls, and still have developed a very big, open inner space.

Maria: I see inner space as a consciousness that I can enlarge within myself.

Franz: It is not definable as a quantitative-geographic measure.

And Franz Viehböck and I co-created a summary together: an inner-outer space map for us and for you readers. A serious map that is at the same time human, fun and light, and Franz and I had you readers in our minds and hearts. We and you probably know: Maps do not show reality; they show an image and images can show more than we know about ourselves.



This map shows:

The dark outer space and the inner space, which grows lighter through increasing awareness.

The awareness for the growing demand to do something for nature, for the environment of our planet.

The euphoria that came with the birth of the daughter and influenced the performance of the team.

The team that is productive like gears that mesh.

The challenges that we find and take on like Mount Everest, where we can feel the sun at the top and the happy chemicals when we take on the challenge.

The secret of love that connects everything through the Cupid's arrow.

And more ...

I left the conversation feeling included and disappointed at the same time. Yes, there was some impact; yes he can see the planet and the human beings differently through his experience. Yes, he is a humble human; he offers co-leadership instead of being overpowering and the hero of the universe. No, he did not become a different person; he had the same values; no miracle happened out there. Somehow my inner child had wished for that. And I as a grown-up I had to realise again: No-one and nothing – not even outer space – can make development easier for us. It is up to us; it is our decision and endeavour to grow. And it is up to us to choose the challenges which provide us with a context to grow our inner awareness in order to transform ourselves, our teams our organisations and our planet.

Thank you, Franz Viehböck, for taking us with you into outer space, for your inner images and awareness.

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## About the Authors

**Edda Heijting** has a post bachelor in management and social studies from the Erasmus University Netherlands. She has worked in different positions at municipalities and started her own consultancy company, Heijting Weerts Groep, in 2000. The main goal of the company is the development of social innovations together with researchers from different universities.

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**Stephen Gilligan** is a psychologist who received his doctorate from Stanford University. He was a central figure in the original NLP group, and then became a major student of and Milton Erickson, the great psychiatrist and hypnotherapist. Dr. Gilligan has been extending this work for the past 35 years in significant ways, while developing the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Trance-Formational Work. Recently he founded the International Association for Generative Change together with Robert Dilts. In 2004, he received the rarely given Lifetime Achievement Award from the Erickson Foundation in honor of his many contributions.

**Ervin Laszlo** is director of the Laszlo Institute of New Paradigm Research, founder and president of The Club of Budapest, fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences, member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, the International Academy of Philosophy of Science, senator of the International Medici Academy, and editor of World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigm Research. He received the Goi Peace Prize, the International Mandir of Peace Prize, the Conacreis Holistic Culture Prize, the Ethics Prize of Milano and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Laszlo is author or co-author of fifty-four books.

**Steeff Peters** has a PhD in elementary physics from the University of Amsterdam. He has held various positions in financial institutions and consultancy firms, combining organizational and information technology developments.

In 2001 he became professor at the Free University of Amsterdam on strategy, businesses processes and IT. Since 2013 he has worked together with Edda Heijting in the Heijting Weerts Groep.

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**Andrea Schueller** is international consultant & executive coach. Specialized in transformation and innovation with background in Economics, Gestalt, Group Dynamics, Systemic Constellation, Focusing & Generative Change she formed her own holistic style of integral consulting and a generative group dynamics practice. Working with business firms, NGOs, GOs and larger systems she bridges conscious(ness) individual and collective development for reaching meaningful innovative results. She is the heart and head of COS Creations and chairs the Austrian Association of Group Dynamics & Organizational Consulting.

**Maria Spindler**, PHD, has been organizational consultant for 22 years in economics and at NGOs. Her consulting topics are creating future, inventing organizations and structures, leadership culture, and organizational learning. She has been lecturer at universities in Europe and the US on corporate culture, organization and leadership, and group dynamics. Her book publications deal with organizational learning, innovation, leadership, group dynamics, consulting, and research. She has been qualified to train the trainer for the ÖGGO. Maria founded the cos-journal in 2011 and is its chief editor.

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**Christian Stary** received his Diploma degree in computer science from the Vienna University of Technology, Austria, in 1984, his Ph.D. degree in usability engineering, and also his Habilitation degree from the Vienna University of Technology, Austria, in 1988 and 1993, respectively. He is currently full Professor of Business Information Systems with the University of Linz. His research interests include the area of interactive distributed systems,

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with a strong focus on method-driven learning and explication technologies for personal capacity building and organizational development.

**Franz Viehböck**, electrical engineer, was Austria's first cosmonaut. He visited the Mir space station in 1991 after two years of training. At the Mir space station he conducted 15 experiments in the fields of space medicine, physics and space technology. He returned after 7 days and 22 hours with Soyuz TM-12, and landed in Kazakhstan on October 10. The following two years he gave numerous lectures on the mission, then went to the United States and worked for Rockwell. When Rockwell was taken over by Boeing he became Director for International Business Development in Vienna. Viehböck resides in Berndorf, Austria.

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