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How resistance to social change undermines personal change? Perspective of the Model of the Agonistic Self (MAS)

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The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the usefulness of the MAS in analyzing relatedness between social and personal change. MAS is developed by integrating key ideas from Dialogical Self Theory with contributions of Foucault's analytics of power, and conceptualizes the self as a polyphony of voices struggling to obtain power. The model entails: a) functions of voices, b) forms and practices of exercising power, c) relationships between voices, and d) formative and legitimizing effect of the context. Context-embedded self appears in the form of a constellation of voices whose time-limited dynamic follows the specific and repetitive scenario which has a particular psychosocial purpose. The focus of this paper is "King and his Kingdom" constellation – "default" functioning when a person's prevailing values, personified by the King's coalition, direct the behavior. The disturbance in the order of power between social discourses can lead to legitimization of the interior voice which represents values different from the King's. This voice can shortly "take over the scene", which marks a temporary personal change, with the possibility of becoming a new King. However, reasserting the previous order of power between social discourses results in strong delegitimization of change within the self, and in restoring the prevailment of "the old" King, even when the person identifies more with the values proposed by the prospective "new" King. This points to the strong dependence of permanent personal change upon the change within the social context, which will be illustrated by the case study from the psychotherapeutic practice.

Keywords: *Dialogical self, Agonistic self, Power relations, Personal change, Social change*