PLACE-IDENTITY AND SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HISTORICAL EUROPEAN CAPITALS: A MULTI-YEAR FIELD STUDY ON FIRST-VISITOR FROM DIFFERENT EU and non-EU COUNTRIES

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2014

Genesis, development and actuality of the Social Representation theory in more than fifty years (1961-2011 and beyond):   the main paradigms and the "modeling approach"

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The less visible part of cities…

The feel and the fabric of the town or city is always present to citizens as it is to the visitors. Appreciated, seen, touched, smelled, penetrated, whether consciously or unconsciously, this fabric is a tangible representation of that intangible thing, the society that lives in it – and of its aspirations. (Rykwert 2002: 6)

Cities are a collection of many things: memory, desires, signs of a language, cities are places of exchange, as they explain all the books of economic history, but these exchanges are not only trade in goods, they are exchanges of words, desires, memories. (Italo Calvino 1993: IX–X)

The relations between representations and practices of the city fall outside the power of mental maps, even if built with maximum accuracy: these mental maps assume their meaning through ways of living, cultural models, and not only through visual acts. The representation of the city is inscribed in an ethno-history. (Lombardi Satriani 2004: 23)

Place-identity and Social Representations of European Capitals in first visitors of six different nationalities

- **1992-1995 – First Research Wave by de Rosa, based on multi-method modelling approach (de Rosa, 2013b):** imagined and experienced Rome in the eyes of first-visitors from six different countries
(de Rosa, 1995, 1997, 2010a, 2010b, 2013c)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK (Constructs)

- **PLACE IDENTITY** (Proshansky, 1978, de Rosa et al., 1992)

- **SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS,** focusing in particular :
  - **FIGURATIVE NUCLEUS** (Moscovici, 1961; Jodelet, 1984; de Rosa and Farr, 2002)
  - **TRANSFORMATION ENTAILED BY SOCIAL EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICES** (i.e. Von Cranach, 1992)
  - **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN S.R. AND COMMUNICATION**

- **SOCIAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES** RELATED TO PLACES

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- Follow-ups and, broadly speaking, diachronic perspective mean to understand the triadic relationship between the research OBJECT, the METHOD and the populations in a TIME-SPAN PERSPECTIVE (T1…T2)

- Such triangulation is due to a definite THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE underpinning the rationale for building up a multi-method research program
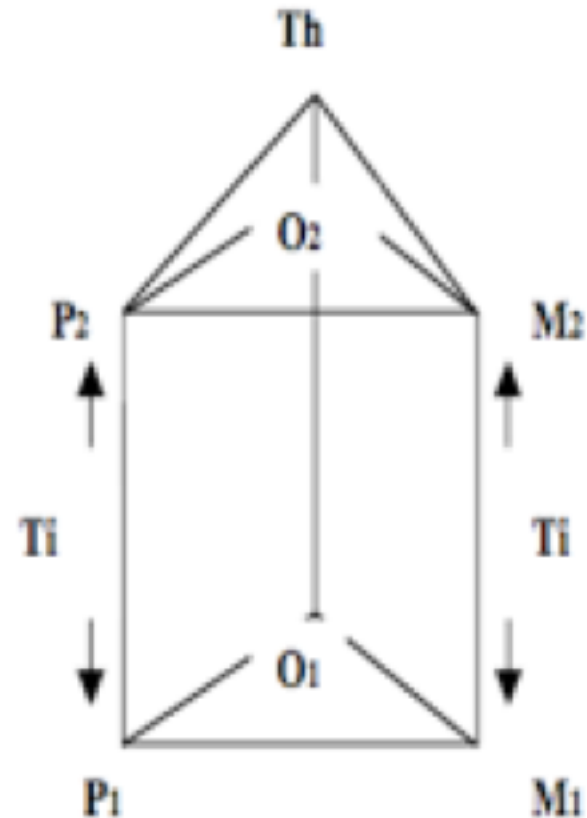
Theoretical construct of *place-identity*

- *The study of Places*, as pertaining to a complex system of people/environment relations and *not simply as physical settings* and of the *city image* as a *semiotic object;*
- *The Social Representations of the Environment and its Social Memory*, assuming the environment as an object of shared symbolic and cultural representations and at the same time as a social context in which representations are produced;
- *Various theories of the Self*, which, although quite different each other, share the view that the self identity is developed by the individual as a function of his/her emotional–cognitive experiences of a wide range of objects in the physical–natural and social world.

Place-identity

Space: emotionally connoted, imbued with social meanings through its functional and contextual roles

Time: dimension involved in sedimentation of past, present or mentally anticipated experiences related to the different places or social-environmental settings
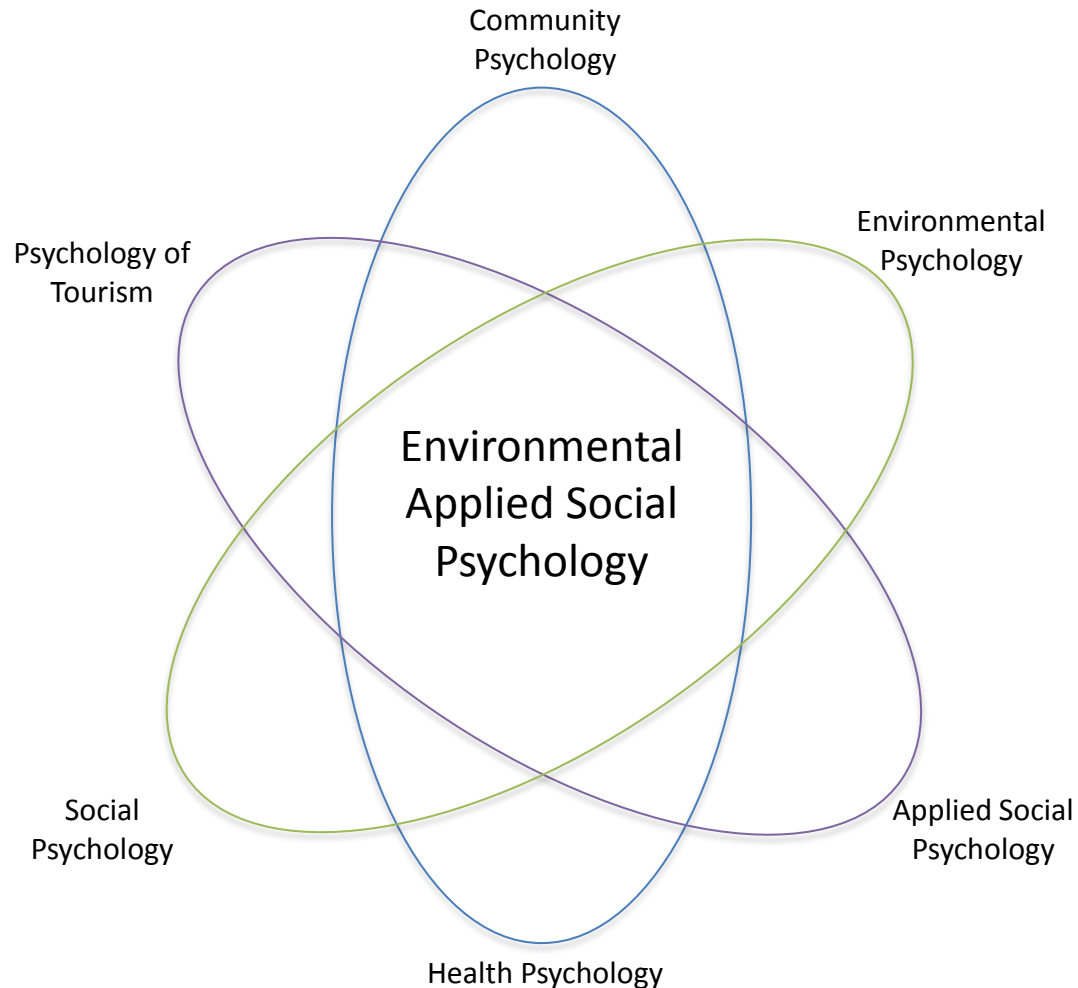
Environmental Applied Social Psychology as multi-perspective disciplinary space

Community
Psychology

Psychology of
Tourism

Environmental
Psychology

Environmental
Applied Social
Psychology

Social
Psychology

Applied Social
Psychology

Health Psychology

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- To propose a way to operationalise the theoretical construct of place-identity (linking both spatial and temporal dimensions);

- To contribute to the intercultural exploration of social representations of the historic European capitals and the social memory related to places;

- For both dimensions (place-identity and social representations of the environment), our aim was to identify possible connections with the subjects' social identity, in particular as related to nationality and other population variables (age, sex, place of residence, and length of residence in that place).

Modelling approach

Subjects	Research Aim	Research instrument	Method of analysis	Hypothesis
First-visitors to seven European historic capitals coming from seven different countries, with varying demographic characteristics of sex, age, nationality, length of residence in place of origin	To identify the most meaningful places for the subjects in various phases of the life cycle	Place-identity life timeline (childhood, adolescence, youth – i.e. the twenties – maturity)	Content analysis, frequencies and percentages	We expected that 'home' would prove to be the most important place overall for all subjects
	To analyse any differences between significant places indicated by the subjects as functions of population variables	The most significant place for respondents over the entire life span and the reason for this choice	Correlation analysis, analyses of variance, carried out using the ANOVA statistical technique of the SPSS package	We expected to find differences among the significant places indicated for different phases of the life cycle
	To determine the subjective salience of each phase of the life cycle, i.e. the temporal dimension implicit in the concept of place-identity	The relative importance each phase of the life cycle for the respondents, as shown by how they divided up a modified timeline scaled from 1 to 50 into metric–perceptual segments representing each phase of their lives, starting from birth	Techniques of multidimensional analyses (multiple correspondence analysis, carried out using the SPAD-N program)	We expected to find significant differences as functions of population variables in the salience of the phases of the life cycle on the basis of studies emphasizing socio-cultural determinants in the organization of the temporal dimension
	To reveal the places of greatest significance to first-time visitors from different countries, investigating the reasons behind such choices and analyzing any differences found with reference to the subjects' population characteristics	The first, administered to first-visitors upon arrival, asked for the most significant places in the city at the imaginary level and at the experiential level	Categorisation into seven comprehensive categories including both prototypical places (i.e. unnamed ones lying at a higher level of abstraction, such as 'city', 'square', 'museum') and specifically named places (such as Paris, Piazza di Spagna, Prado Museum)	We hypothesized that differences with reference to the subjects' population characteristics would exist
	To analyse, cross-culturally, the evaluations implicit in lists of adjectives produced by the subjects about the city and its historic centre *before* and *after* the visit	The respondents' evaluations (again using free associations with adjectives) of the city and its historic centre at the experiential level (after having seen it and lived in it)	Content analysis, frequencies and percentages	We expected to find significant differences between these two levels, basing our hypothesis on the theories which give importance to the transformative impact of action and experience on representational systems
	To reveal cross-cultural differences in the social representations of our first-visitors' 'Ideal City', by comparing descriptions obtained through free associations using adjectives	Descriptions (again using free associations of adjectives) of their 'Ideal City'	Content analysis based on eight dimensions; comparative techniques (calculation of chi-squares)	We anticipated differences to emerge as a result of different expectational structures regarding 'places' inherent in different cultural contexts.

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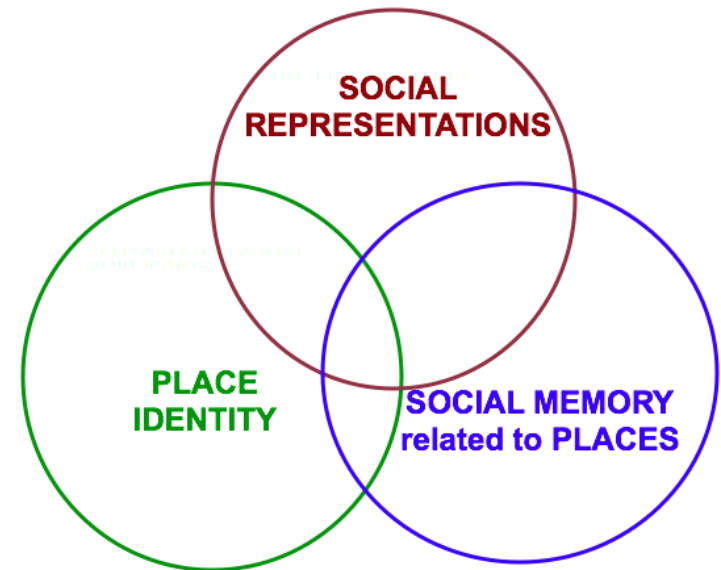
Place-Identity and Social Representations of Historic European Capitals:
Multi-Year Field Study on First-Visitors from different EU and non-EU Countries

- **2002-2006 – Follow-up field study starting with a first comparative study between Rome and Paris by de Rosa and d'Ambrosio (de Rosa, 2010a, 2010b, 2013b, de Rosa and d'Ambrosio, 2009, 2010, 2011)**

- **Since 2006 – Extension of research to five more European capitals: Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Vienna by de Rosa and d'Ambrosio (de Rosa, 2010a, 2010b, 2013b, de Rosa and d'Ambrosio, 2009, 2010, 2011)**

- **2009-2012 – Extension to Warsaw by de Rosa and Dryjanska (de Rosa, Dryjanska and Bocci, 2012, Dryjanska, de Rosa and Bocci, 2013, de Rosa, d'Ambrosio and Dryjanska, 2013)**

- **Since 2013 – On-going Follow-up field study on social representations of Rome and Paris underground and on surface and contextualised multi-modal choice of transportations (to be extended to other European Capitals and cities)**

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Italy   *United Kingdom*   *United States*   *Spain*   *France*   *Germany*   *Poland*
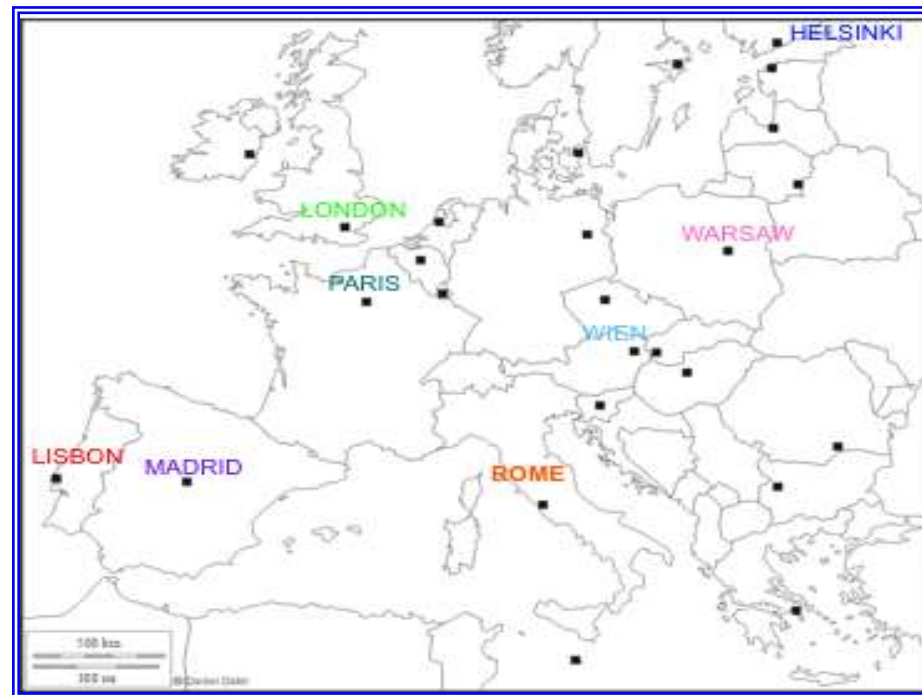
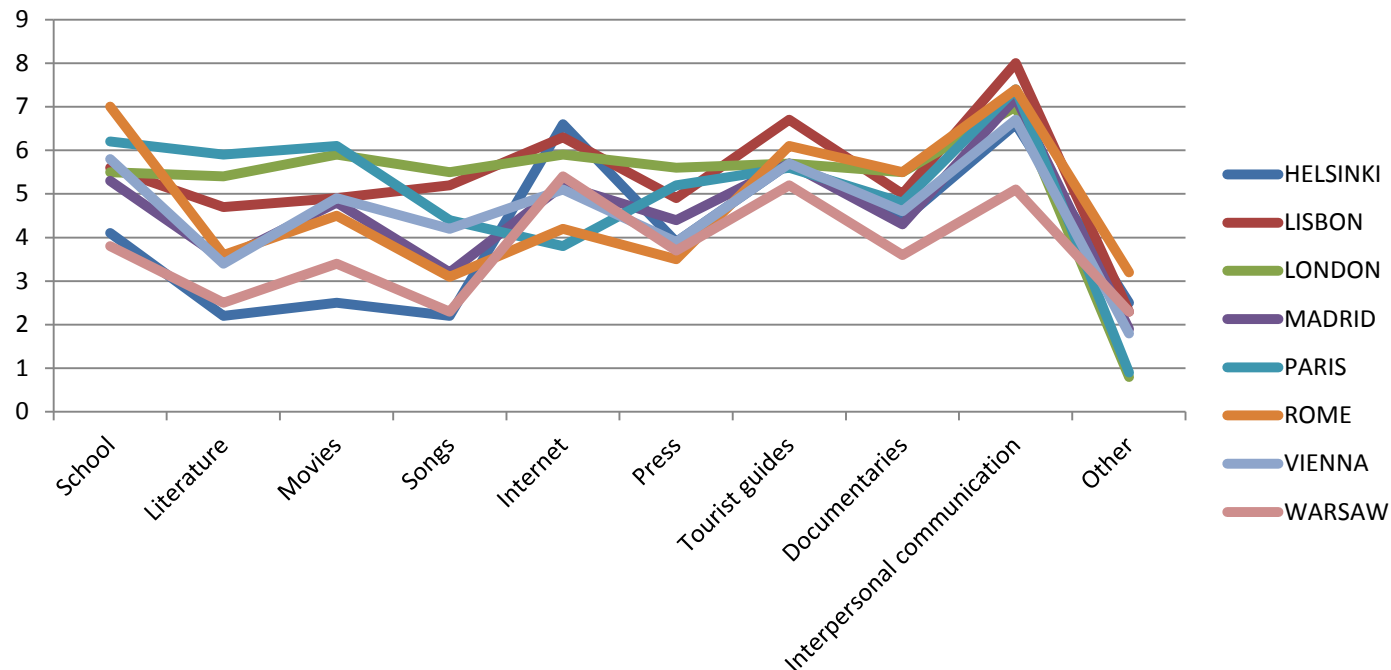HELSINKI

LONDON

WARSAW

PARIS

WIEN

LISBON   MADRID

ROME

Place-Identity and Social Representations of
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Average importance of sources of information: "cultural baggage" of first-visitors

Chart — X-axis categories: School, Literature, Movies, Songs, Internet, Press, Tourist guides, Documentaries, Interpersonal communication, Other. Y-axis: 0 to 9.

Legend: HELSINKI, LISBON, LONDON, MADRID, PARIS, ROME, VIENNA, WARSAW

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"Imagined" (anticipated representations) versus "experienced" places

HELSINKI
the harbor both before and after, clubs as a new place

LONDON
from the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace and Big Ben before to Soho and pubs after

PARIS
Eiffel Tower both before and after

VIENNA
from Schonbrunn as Sisi's Palace to Danube and generic places

LISBON
Belem Tower both before and after, Cascais as a new place

MADRID
from Prado Museum before to Parque del Retiro and Puerta del Sol after

ROME
Colosseum both before and after, Trastevere as a new place

WARSAW
from the Old Town and Palace of Culture as Stalin's Palace to Vistula and generic places

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Preferences of places by first-visitors' nationality

ICONS OF THE CITY: Eiffel Tower in Paris, Piazza Navona in Rome, etc.

NATURAL PLACES: parks and sun in Helsinki, river and ocean in Lisbon, nature in Warsaw, etc.

SYMBOLIC PLACES (often known from movies): trams in Lisbon, Oxford and Notting Hill in London, Notre Dame in Paris, Venice and Vatican in Rome, Prater in Vienna, etc.

PLACES FOR SOCIALIZING: pubs and clubs in Helsinki, bars and restaurants in Madrid, cafes in Paris, discos in Vienna, etc.

ARTISTIC PLACES: cathedrals in Helsinki, places designed by Haussmann in Paris, Sistine Chapel in Rome, etc.

POPULAR TOURIST AREAS: Kampi in Helsinki, Trastevere in Rome, Heuriger in Vienna, etc.

POLITICALLY AND HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT PLACES: Palace of Culture and Presidential Palace in Warsaw, etc.

Place @-branding of historic European capitals through e-tourism channels

• **2003-2013: "City Visiting Cards" via municipal websites of Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Vienna (de Rosa and Bocci, 2012, de Rosa, Bocci and Picone, 2012, de Rosa and Bocci, 2013)**

• **2013-2014: Place-branding via Institutional and commercial brochures of Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Vienna**

The role of digital environment and social network for anticipating and exchanging Social Representations of imagined/experienced city destination and its significant places/itineraries among potential first visitors and past visitors

- **2009, 2013 and 2014 - Virtual tours on *the imagined/experienced city destination and its significant places/itineraries among potential first visitors and past visitors* by Google Earth of Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Vienna (de Rosa and Bocci, 2013)**

- **2010 and 2013 - Conversational exchanges about city destination (Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Vienna) and their significant places among past visitors and potential future first visitors via SOCIAL NETWORKS (Facebook and Yahoo! Answers) (de Rosa and Bocci, 2013)**

- **2013 - Conversational exchanges about city destination (Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Warsaw and Vienna) and their significant places among past visitors and potential future first visitors via TripAdvisor.**

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