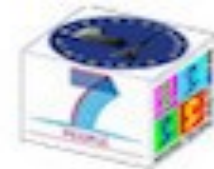European/International Joint PhD
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The "Anthropological", "Narrative", "Dialogical" and "Subjective" paradigmatic approaches to Social Representations

at the European/International Joint PhD in Social Representations & Communication Research Center and Multimedia LAB

26th - 29th April 2015

SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

Knowledge in Context:
further reflections on social representations across time and culture

Sandra Jovchelovitch
London School of Economics
April 2015
European International/Joint PhD on Social
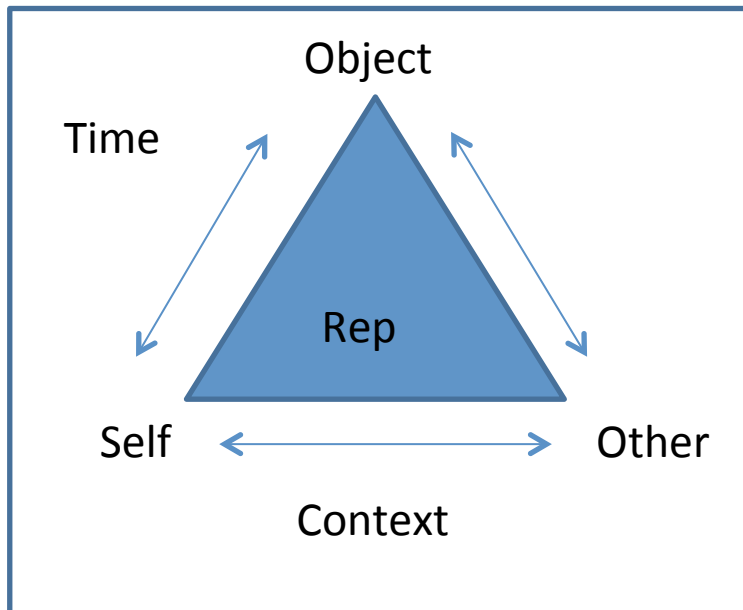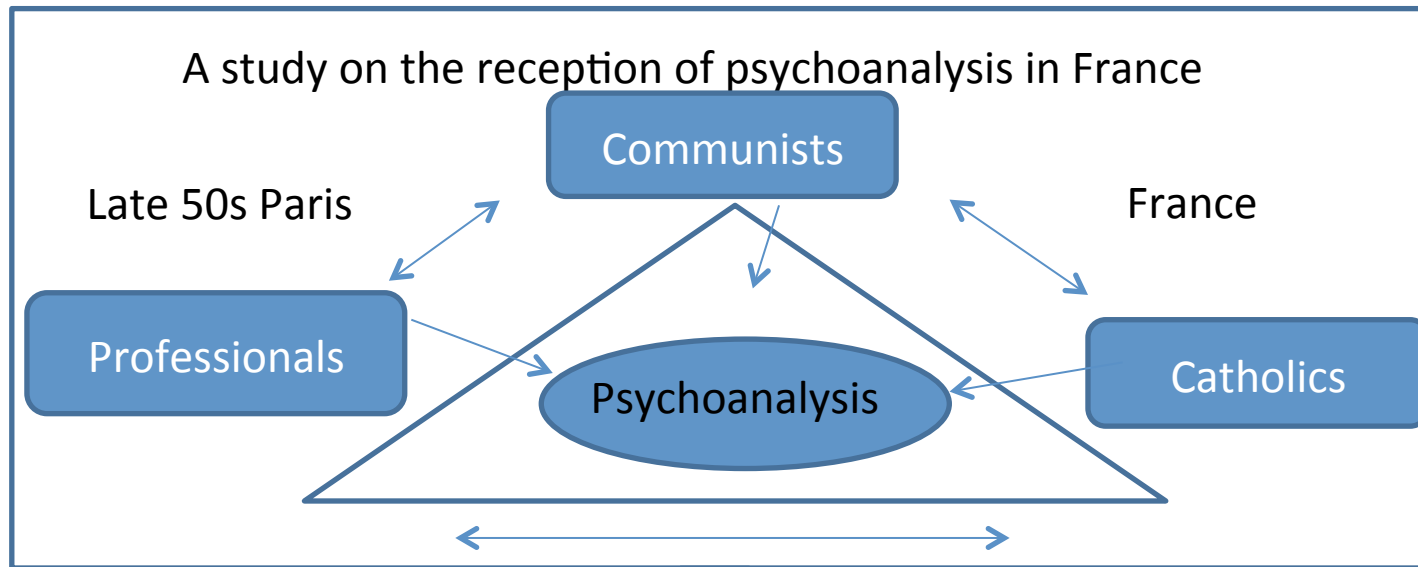Representations and Communication

Starting point: two inter-related problems

- The psychological foundations of society
- The societal foundations of psychological processes
- →these are inter-related conceptually as the elements of the system (the individual in our case) are formed as the system is being formed.

> Properties of social structure → properties of psychological structure

> Properties of psychological structure → properties of social structure

Plan: theoretical issues through empirical studies of social representations, cultures and public spheres: children, the Chinese in England, Brazilian public sphere.

A study on the reception of psychoanalysis in France

Communists

Late 50s Paris

France

Professionals

Psychoanalysis

Catholics

The social psychology of representations
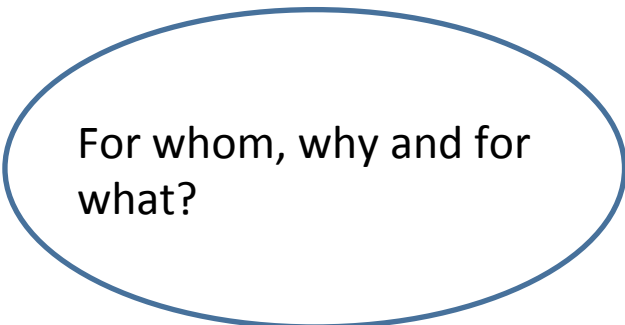
Triadic model

Object

Time

Rep

Self   Other

Context

- self-other-object relations
- inter-group communication
- perspective: perspective-taking and recognition of the other
- power relations
- contextualisation in time and space

The study of social representations

- Meaning
- The use of symbols
- How different people produce different meanings, views, symbols and narratives about what is real
- How these different representations relate to each other in the social world and the consequences of these relations

→What is AIDS?
→What is mental illness?
→What is a healthy life style?
→What is psychoanalysis?

For whom, why and for what?

Unknown Object – What is going on?

Early symptoms of AIDS
(Kaposi's sarcoma and
opportunistic infections)

Charcot and Hysteria

→ Societies think and construct theories about the unknown.

→ Human communities draw on multiple resources to make sense of the
world: social representations amalgamate different sources, practices
and systems of knowledge (cognitive polyphasia, more of which later)

Knowledge in Context

- Key insight of SRT: socio-cognitive systems need to be understood in relation to the context in which they are produced.
- We need to problematize context:
→ What is a context? Communicative patterns, institutions, cultural traditions, history.

A substantive social psychology *needs* the social sciences and the humanities as much as it needs biology and neuroscience.

(anthropology, sociology, communication studies, history: theories of public sphere and community; theory of cultural variation; theories of communication; 2007 book)

But also, lessons from history (more recently, 2012)

So what is in a context?

- A context is a 'meaning horizon' that is already there for us; it is established by culture and gives us the language game in which all propositions and signifiers 'live' or 'die' (what James called a 'live hypothesis')

- A context is a socio-economic grid of institutions and material determinants.

All of these shape psychological structures. They shape self, attribution, representations, emotions, etc.

Example: a favela context (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2013)

Culture:
1. Mind and the cross-cultural

- Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan (2010): WEIRD people

Research addressing putative universals/cross-cultural commonalities and differences in mind have largely focussed on participants who are WEIRD:

W: Western
E: Educated
I: Intelligent
R: Rich
D: Democratic

→ More research is needed on people who do not fall under these headings – progress has been made on W, but others have proved harder to change

→ Given this, there are currently very large gaps in our knowledge about the nature of cross-cultural variations in mind – their range and depth

Cultural Diversity and Mind: Culture/cultures, Society/societies, Mind, minds

☐ The universal features of *homo sapiens* are explanatory of its diversity as a species;

☐ We all share the same body and basic cognitive skills that enable all humans to become members of a society and a culture

☐ We all grow up in particular societies and particular cultures, so that as well as being the same, we are different from each other.

Cultural Variation
(cognition and social representations)

- Different classification schemes (Durkheim, Moscovici)

- Different relationships and cultural meanings (Gergen, Cole)

- Sequencing of major cognitive stages has remain a robust phenomenon up trough the concrete operational stage *but not in formal operational thinking (we know this since Vygotsky and Luria)*

- Different modes of self understanding

However…

* New findings from research on children's representations of the public sphere suggest that:

→ the type of public sphere in which children grow up has an impact on cognitive development itself, with culture showing a more significant impact overall than age.

* Jovchelovitch, S., Priego-Hernadez, J., Glaveanu, V. P. (2013) Constructing Public Worlds: The impact of culture and socio-economic context on children's social representations of the public sphere. *Culture and Psychology.* 19(3) 323–347.

Our premises

- Children's ability to think about and understand their social world is a competence rooted in their social interactions and wider social environment (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990; Jovchelovitch, 2007).

- The development of cognition and the development of socio-cultural frames are deeply inter-connected.

- Cognition is 'hot' from the start: knowledge develops bound to the psychosocial dynamics of self-other relations.

Working Hypotheses

- Children's representations about public spheres develop in direct relation to the public sphere they inhabit and grow into;

- The type and social dynamics of public spheres shapes the content of representations children construct about public worlds as well as the processes whereby these representations are constructed.

Research Questions

- How do children depict the public world and position themselves in it?

- How does social context across and within cultural boundaries shape children's pictorial constructions?

- How does the socio-cultural context of different public spheres impact on the development of children's representations about the public world?

Methods

- 4x2x2 design in cross-cultural comparison:

  →4 cultures (Germany, Mexico, Brazil and Romania)

  →2 socio-economic milieus within cultures

    adapted to the specificity of different public spheres: urban/ rural, affluent/deprived, institutionalised/non-institutionalised).

  →2 age groups (7 and 10-year-olds)

  To date data have been collected in Germany, Mexico, Brazil, Romania, Lebanon, Greece and Palestine.

Participants

VARIABLES / COUNTRIES	CONTEXT 1		CONTEXT 2		TOTAL
	1st Grade	4th Grade	1st Grade	4th Grade	N=359
GERMANY	28(7)	24(9;7)	15 (6;8)	21(10)	88
MEXICO	32 (6;10)	30 (9;11)	24 (6;11)	25(10)	111
BRAZIL	23 (6;9)	27 (9;10)	24 (7;10)	26 (10;10)	100
ROMANIA	18 (7;7)	18 (10;7)	12 (8;4)	12 (10;5)	60

Procedures

- Drawing task.

- Ethnographic observations (classroom, institutions of care, streets).

- Support Interviews after the drawing task.

Use of puppet with younger children.

The contexts

GERMANY, Context 1

MEXICO, Context 2

BRAZIL, Context 1

ROMANIA, Context 1

Drawing task

- **First Graders:**

  This is Marsi, he has come all the way to …… from Mars in his UFO. I met Marsi on my way to school this morning and decided to take him with me to meet you. Marsi needs your help! Do you think you can help Marsi?" (Wait till children reply with "yes") Can you draw a picture about your community, your world here in …. for Marsi to show this drawing to his relatives?

- **Fourth Graders:**

  "I want you to draw a picture for me that shows how is your community, your world here in …. as if it were for someone who has never visited or lived in ….."

  Post task interview:

  Now, I want you to write/tell me what did you draw and why.

The puppet

GERMANY

BRAZIL

MEXICO

ROMANIA

Outline of Coding Frame

A. Subjective (all drawings that include elements of the internal world of the child)

1. Presence of self and/or

2. Presence of family/family home

Elements: the self, family home, parents and siblings, pets, garden, etc)

B. Intersubjective (all drawing that include elements of the internal (subjective category) and external world of the child (objective category)

1. Presence of subjective elements (1 and 2 above)

2. Presence of objective elements (1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 below)

3. Presence of mediating other (Puppet from drawing task)

Elements: all subjective and objective elements identified in these categories

C. Objective (all drawings that include elements of the external world of the child)

1. Presence of other persons beyond family and/or

2. Presence of institutional world and/or

3. Presence of generic places of the public sphere and/or

4. Presence of symbols of nationhood and/or

5. Presence of local symbolism

Elements: schools, hospitals, churches, police, parliament, town hall, public transport, shops, streets, city, sports and leisure, urban connectors, flags, maps, natural landscapes and environments, monuments, national food, local cultural markers, etc.

D. Other (all drawings that do not fit the above)
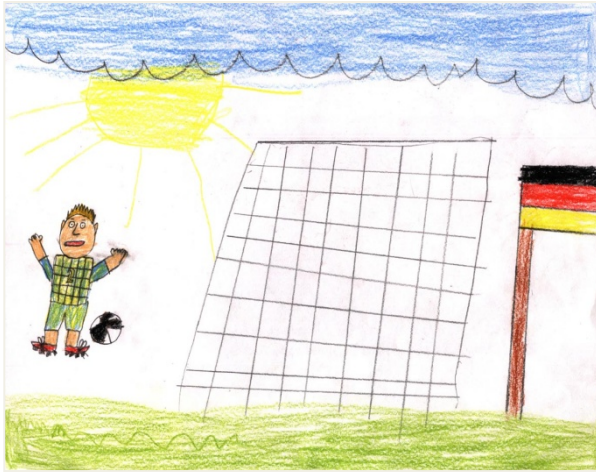
SUBJECTIVE

GERMANY

MEXICO

BRAZIL

ROMANIA

INTERSUBJECTIVE

GERMANY
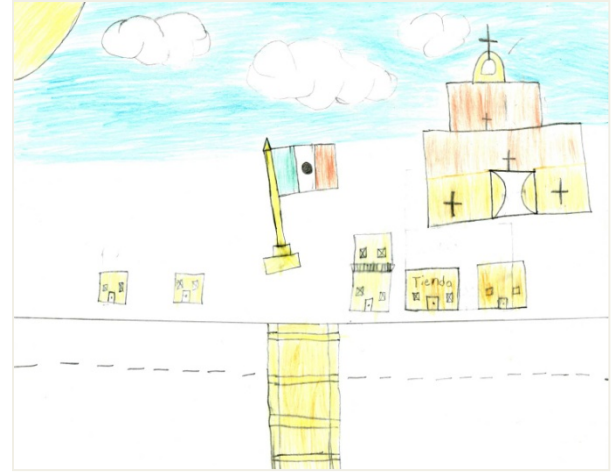

MEXICO

BRAZIL

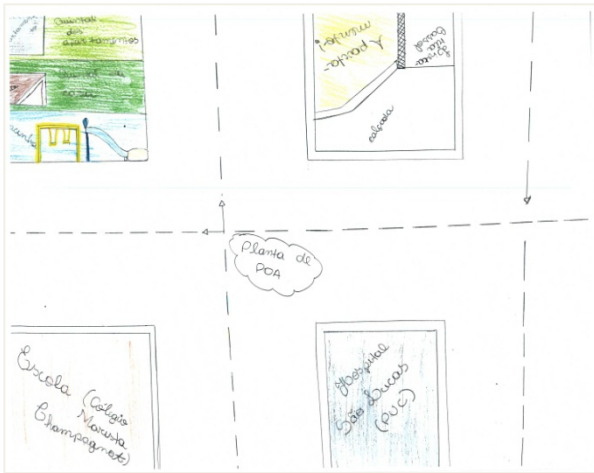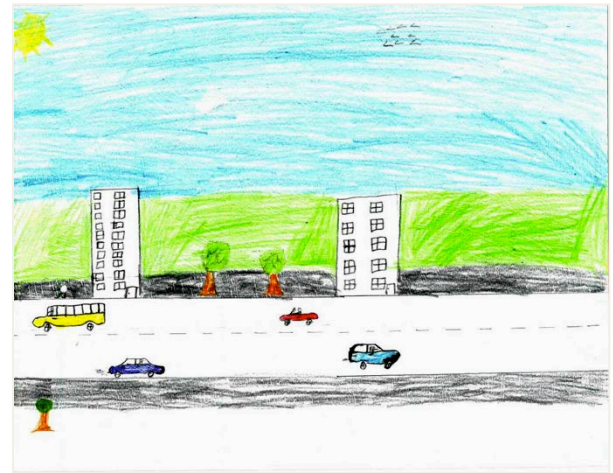ROMANIA

OBJECTIVE

GERMANY

MEXICO

BRAZIL

ROMANIA

Results

- We observe differences at the developmental and social levels of analysis;

- Public spheres shape the <u>content</u> and the <u>processes</u> of children's representations of their public world.

Results

- Chi square tests revealed significant main effects for age ($X^2(2, 341) = 43.19$, $p<.001$) and public sphere ($X^2 (6, 341)= 38.71$, $p<.001$) but not socio-economic context ($X^2 (2, 341)= 1.84$, $p>.05$).

- The public sphere itself significantly shapes the way in which children represent it. The size of the effect of public sphere on the drawings ($\phi= .337$, $p=.000$) was comparable to that of age ($\phi=.356$, $p= .000$), pointing to the importance of the overall culture of the public sphere on children's representations.

Results

- The absence of a main effect for socio-economic context was surprising and to explore it further we conducted Chi square tests on the interaction between age and socio-economic context and age and public sphere. We found significant interaction effects for both.

- Age has a stronger effect in affluent rather than deprived contexts and in Germany more than in Mexico, Brazil and Romania.

- We conducted a final Chi square test to investigate the combined effect of age, public sphere and socio-economic context on the main categories of the drawings. Results show that both the culture of the public sphere and socio-economic context within public spheres mediate the way age impacts on the development of representations.

- Specific cultures channel the developmental pathway of representations and how children move between the internal world of the self and the objective world of society.

GERMANY. A traditional Piagetian pathway of development with a slight deviation in the City context

Context 1, older

Context 2, older
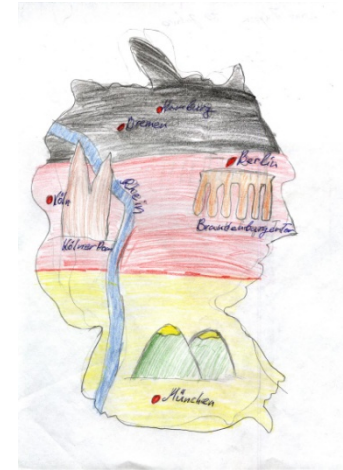
Context 1, younger

Context 2, younger

MEXICO. In a collectivistic society there is intersubjectivity from the start

Context 1, older

Context 2, older

Context 1, younger

Context 2, younger

BRAZIL. An unequal public sphere: Co-presence of private and intersubjective social worlds

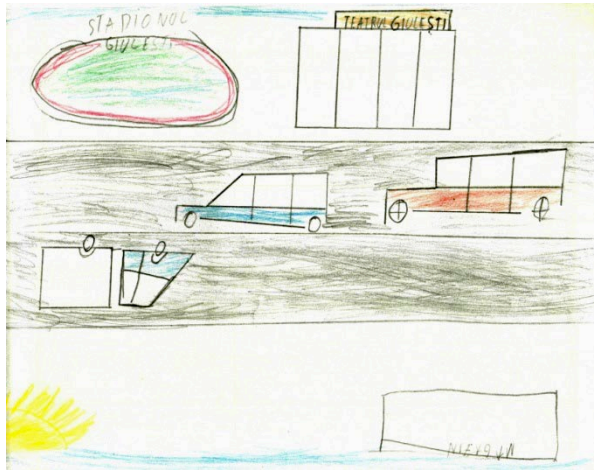Context 1, older

Context 1, younger

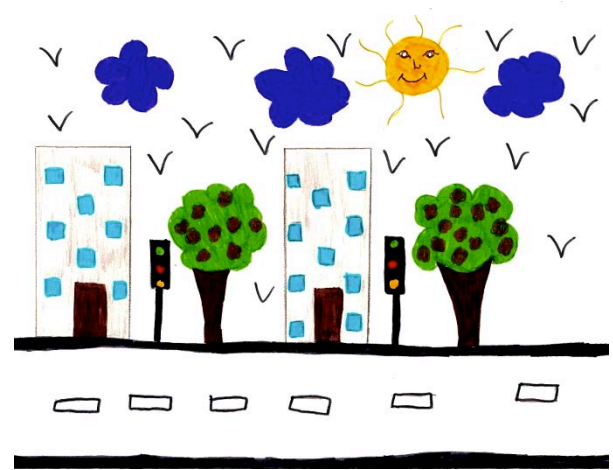Context 2, older

Context 2, younger

ROMANIA. From a constrained subjectivity to an objective public sphere without the presence of self

Context 1, older

Context 2, older

Context 1, younger

Context 2, younger

Children's Representations of the Public Sphere

- Between the ages of 7 and 10 children acquire complex emotional and cognitive capacity to express the public world.

- Between the ages of 7 and 10 children move from a world related to self and family to a world peopled by institutions, politics, economic life, inter-group relations and strong symbols of nationhood associated with group identity.

- The specific dynamics of this movement is shaped by the social context in which children develop and the nature of their public sphere.

Children's Representations of the Public Sphere

- Social context plays a significant role in shaping how children move between subjective, intersubjective and objective worlds.

- This is less so in early childhood and clearly so in later childhood, with a consistent age effect in both contexts.

- This corroborates our expectations that, as children grow, public spheres acquire a more prominent role in their lives and are represented differently.

Children's representations and public spheres

- Public spheres characterised by poverty, high collectivism and marginalisation:

  → bring the public world and its complexity to the foreground of children's depictions;
  → accelerate decentration.

- Traditional Western public spheres characterised by affluence:

  → follow the more traditional pathway proposed by Piaget, with a clear movement from subjective to objective depictions of the public world;

Conclusions

- Culture and socio-economic contexts shape children's representations of the public sphere

- Culture is a stronger determinant of children's representation of the public sphere

- Children's knowledge of the public world is situated and evolves through adaptive strategies to specific socio-cultural environments.

Transformation of Public Spheres: collective and social representations in the health beliefs of the Chinese community in England

A Chinese granny and a BBC in Chinatown – exposed to:
1. different architectures of community
2. producers and holders of different representations

Gervais, M-C. and Jovchelovitch, S. (1998) The health beliefs of the Chinese community in England: a qualitative research study. Health Education Authority, London, England. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2672/

Changing public spheres: From collective to social representations

New architectures of community and representation

- The change in words is intended to express a real change in the nature of society and in the process of production of knowledge:

⇨ The transition from a tradition-dominated society to conditions of late modernity calls for a new focus;

⇨ A focus on creative process, on the generation of new, representations arising during process of social interaction and communication between different (very different!) people.

⇨ Key phenomena: cognitive polyphasia; inter-cultural communication, change and stability of representations, changing identities.

From Durkheim to Moscovici in Society and Representation

Traditional	Modern
Static; agrarian	Fast moving; industrial
Low literacy	High Literacy
Tradition	Innovation
Ruled by elites	Wide participation
Religious	Secular
Low specialization	High specialization
Collective representations	Social Representations
Homogeneity of belief	Diversity of opinion
Consensual/highly shared	Dissent/Highly contested
Shared social identity	Multiple Identities
Resists proof and experience	Works with doubt
Relies on the social bond and its value	Relies on argument
Social integration/solidarity	Social differentiation/ risk of fragmentation and anomie

Representations of Health and Illness amongst the Chinese community: cognitive polyphasia

Chinese knowledge	Biomedical knowledge
generational transmission	Institutional transmission
Belief and trust	Open to proof and by its very logic, challenges belief.
Wisdom, history and cultural identity of Chinese people.	Impersonal, abstract, 'universal'
* is learned, transmitted and enacted through the most fundamental dimensions of culture: language, food and kinship relations	* comes from the doctor and institutions, transmitted formally and is associated with having acute pain and very serious conditions.

Contested Objects – Inter-group relations and identities, power relations

Same sex marriage

GM Foods

→ Thinking societies are contested spaces, where different groups hold different visions, values and interests about issues.
→ Consensus and dissent are active projects of communication and inter-group relations in public spheres.

A health centre in a small village in Mexico:

Co-existence of religious and bio-medical discourses

Resources for thinking and living

Jovchelovitch, S. and Priego-Hernández, J. (2015) Cognitive polyphasia, knowledge encounters and public spheres. In Sammut, G., Andreouli, E., Gaskell, G and Valsiner, J. *Resistance, Stability, and Social Change: A Handbook of Social Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

City of walls: a divided urban space, where extreme wealth and extreme poverty live side by side; resources for thinking; the foundations of contestation and clash over what is the public sphere. (Sao Paulo, Brazil) Jovchelovitch, Sandra (2013)

Self, community and urban frontiers in Rio de Janeiro. City Transformations: *Urban Age Conference Newspaper* (Oct 2013)

Contested Urban Spaces: the Waly Salomao Building in the favela Vigario Geral, Rio de Janeiro, where new representations of favelas and favela-dwellers are being forged.

Jovchelovitch, S. (2015) The creativity of the social: Imagination, development and social change in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. In V. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Perspectives from cultural psychology.* Milton Park: Routledge.
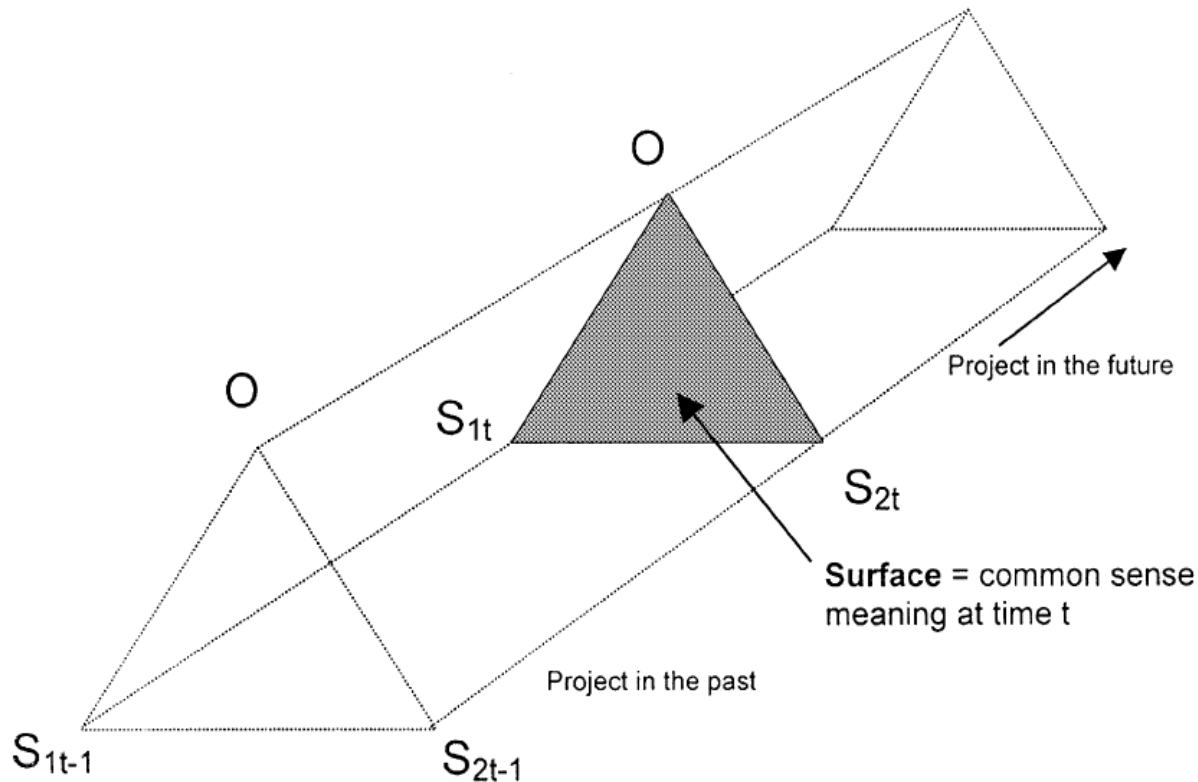
Averling, E. and Jovchelovitch, S. (2014) Partnerships as Knowledge Encounters: A psychosocial theory of partnerships for health and community development. *Journal of Health Psychology.* Vol 19(1) 34–45. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55270/

What about time?

- Time is equally relevant to understand the context of representations.
- Time introduces the problem of history: development as well as continuity and change in social representations. How do contexts emerge and change? Why some look different and yet, a bit of scratch shows that they remain the same?
- Invariance in representational fields: without a historical dimension we cannot assess continuity and change in representations.
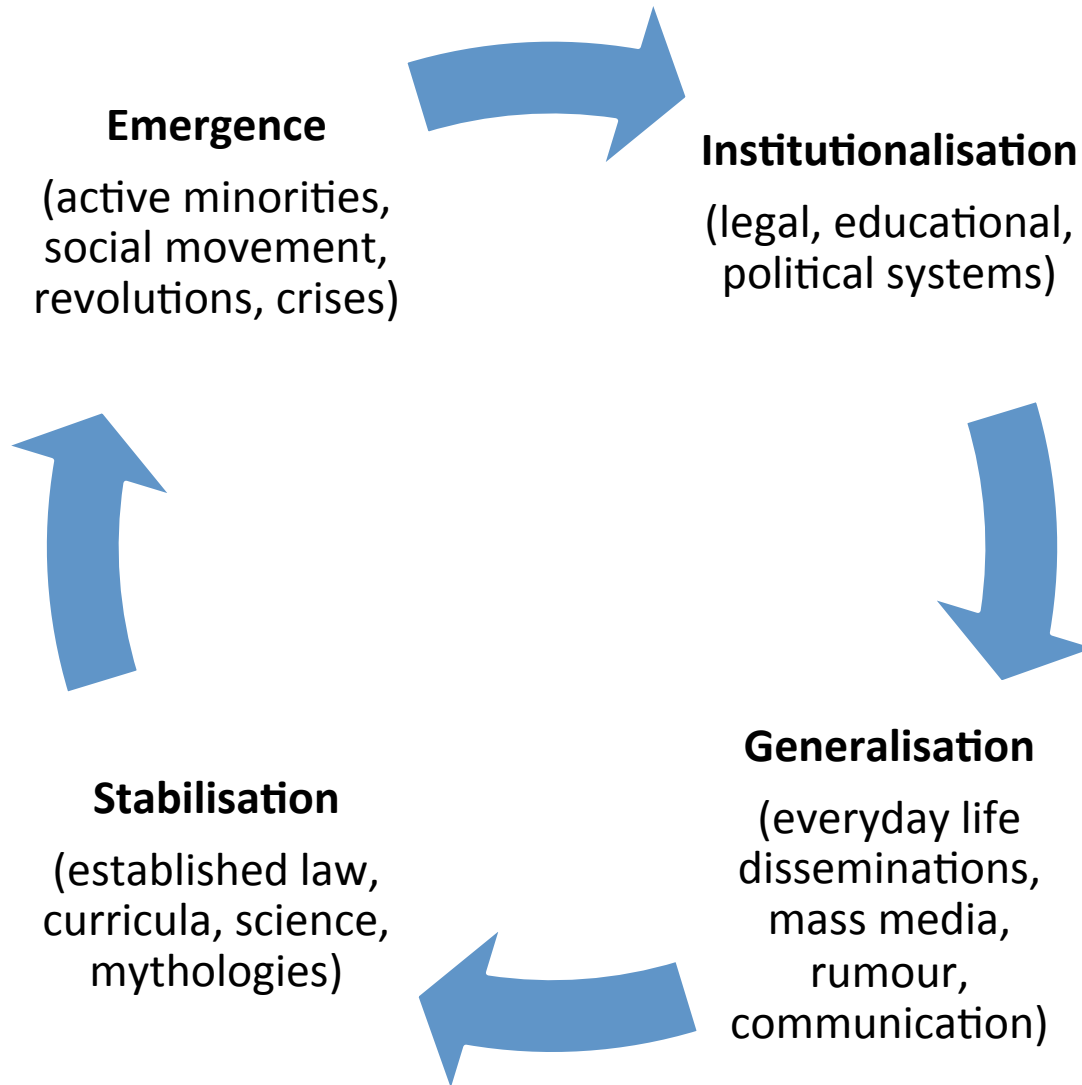- Bauer and Gaskell, 1999, 2008; Brondi *et al*, 2012; Hass,

Social Representations in the Public Sphere: The Toblerone and Wind-Rose Model (1999; 2008)

'Toblerone' model

(Bauer and Gaskell, 1999)

Process of Representational Change (after Castro, 2012)

Emergence
(active minorities, social movement, revolutions, crises)

Institutionalisation
(legal, educational, political systems)

Generalisation
(everyday life disseminations, mass media, rumour, communication)

Stabilisation
(established law, curricula, science, mythologies)

Representations of Biotechnology (Bauer and Gaskell, 2002; Gaskell, Duran, Allum, 1999)
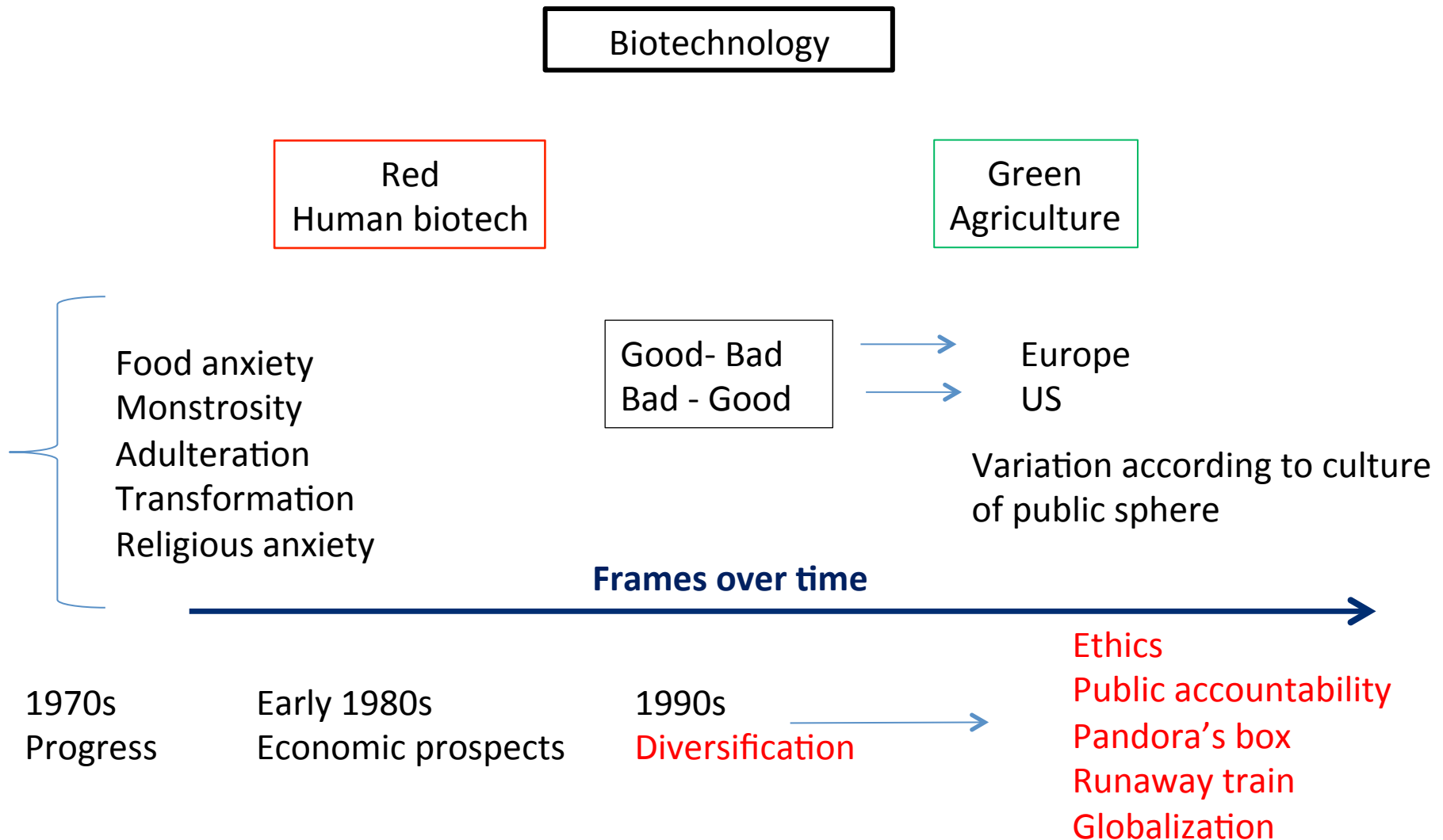
History in the Structure of Social Representations

- Core/periphery architecture (Abric, 2001)
- Narrative organisation of social representations (Laszlo, 2008)

A development: a socio-cultural approach to understand the core-periphery architecture (Jovchelovitch, 2012)

- Central core of representations is organised as a story (plot, events, etc, Laszlo, 2008)
- The semantic content of these stories is provided by themata (Moscovici & Vignaux, 2000; Markova, 2003)
- Stories act as metasystem (Doise, 1990): normative regulations that check and govern social representations

Social Representations: invariance

- Structure:

→ Hot cores; malleable peripheries

- Processes: making the unfamiliar familiar through

→ Anchoring and Objetification

- Functions: socio-cognitive systems that regulate:

→ Identity
→ Inter-group relations
→ Social cohesion

A case study: social representations of the Brazilian public sphere

- Thinking template: core/periphery
- Transmission: dialogue between multiple sources
- Mythical and polyphasic
- Regulates group identity, inter-group relations and social cohesion
- Provides knowledge of self, other and context
- Agencies : schools, the media, the government, the sciences, the arts.
- Agents: individuals, families, multiple groups.

Representations of the Public Sphere in Brazil

‘Corruption flows in our blood’: biological metaphors that connect corruption in public life with racial mixture and an impure blood.

X

Conviviality, creativity and ‘racial democracy’: a pleasurable sociality where different people mingle and unleash the creative potential of mixture

Everyday conversation

- Notes from the field (november 2011):

..decided to have a 'cafezinho' before boarding my flight. Am at the counter and my eyes drift to the television news reporting on a new corruption scandal in Brasilia. A conversation starts, and someone says:

'There is nothing we can do, corruption runs in the blood of the Brazilian' (Não adianta, a corrupção está no sangue do brasileiro).

This is almost verbatim reproduction of what appeared in focus group data I collected in July 1993!

Gobineau

(French Minister in Rio from 1869-1871)

"No Brazilian is of pure blood; the marriage combinations between whites, Indians and blacks, multiply to such an extent that the nuances of flesh are too many, and all that produces, in the lower as well as in the upper classes, a degeneration of the most sad nature".

Favela Logic

We have something of Exu, Xango and Ogum, who are African deities….we are Xango, the god of justice, Ogum, who is a warrior, and Exu, who is a messanger,. We have this mixture….It is Shiva and it is Ogum, your see? It is Ala. It is Our Lady of Fatima. It is Jesus. It is a mixture. So if someone tells you, let's do something together? The answer is:'Tamo junto e misturado (we are together and mixed'). Rio is like that, Brazil is like that, a fusion, and becomes a resonance box not only in Brazil but in the whole world. That is why Brazil is a trend setter! (interview with leader of Afroreggae, a favela based NGO working towards social development in Rio)

Alternative Representations Dealing with the Same Themata

- Narratives of mixture and miscegenation navigated through historical time in history books, mass media, novels, 'cordel' literature, bossa nova, the Tropicalia movement and even samba schools;

- Brazilian historiography, cultural production and lay thinking interacted and mingled to construct a foundational myth related to the origins and subsequent development of Brazilian society, its people and public life.

**Mixture
Self-Other**

Degeneration

Creative Potential Space
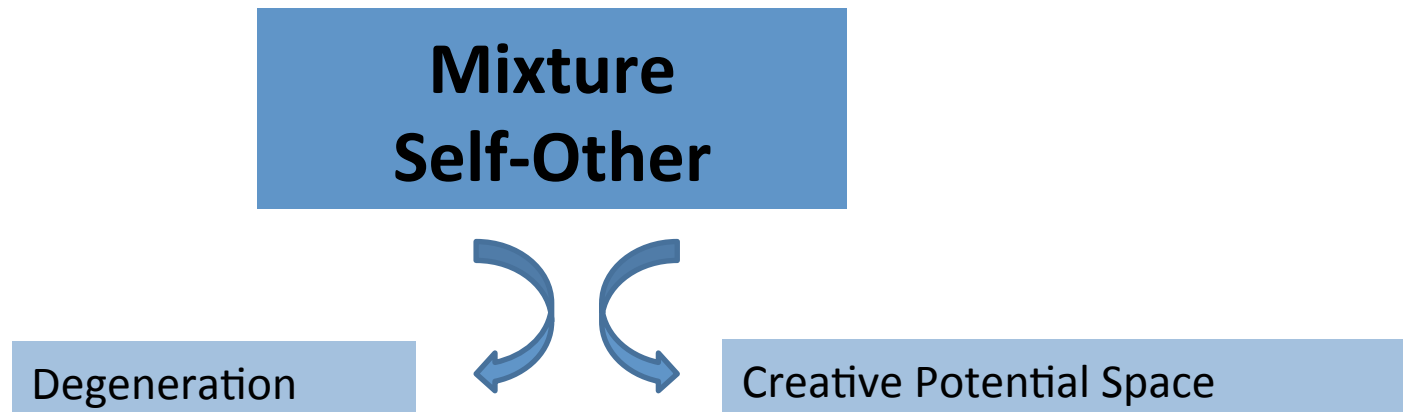
Dialogue of Sources:

- Common sense
- Historiography and Social Theory
- Science of the day (Biology, Eugenics, Epidemiology, Public Health)
- The Arts (Poetry, Opera, Fiction, Painting)
- Folk music and theatre
- 'Cannibalist' Movement; Bossa Nova, Tropicalia

The Endurance of Representations

- This can be explained by the operations of two artifices of representational work:

Socio-cognitive organisation; how content is drawn upon

→ Cognitive polyphasia (wide range of sources that combine and co-exist in representational fields

→ Myth → Invented Tradition (invariance)

Averling, E. and Jovchelovitch, S. (2014) Partnerships as Knowledge Encounters: A psychosocial theory of partnerships for health and community development. *Journal of Health Psychology.* Vol 19(1) 34–45. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55270/

Howarth et.al. (2013) Insights from Societal Psychology: The Contextual Politics of Change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, Vol. 1(1), 364–384, doi:10.5964/jspp.v1i1.64 http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/54828/

Jovchelovitch, S. (2015) The creativity of the social: Imagination, development and social change in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. In V. Glăveanu, A. Gillespie, & J. Valsiner (Eds.), *Rethinking creativity: Perspectives from cultural psychology.* Milton Park: Routledge.

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Jovchelovitch, S. (2012) Narrative, memory and social representations: a conversation between history and social psychology. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioural Science. Integrative Psychological Behavioural Science*, **46**:440–456. DOI 10.1007/s12124-012-9217-8 http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46752/

Jovchelovitch, S and Priego-Hernández, J. (2013) Underground Sociabilities: Identity, culture and resistance in Rio de Janeiro's favelas. UNESCO: Brasilia. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53678/

Jovchelovitch, S. (2007) *Knowledge in Context: Representations, community and culture*, London: Routledge. (**Portuguese translation**, *Os Contextos do Saber: Representações, comunidade e cultura*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2008).

Jovchelovitch, S. (2000) *Representações Sociais e Espaço Público: A construção simbólica dos espaços públicos no Brasil*, [Social Representations and Public Life: The symbolic construction of public spaces in Brazil], Petrópolis: Vozes.

Gervais, M-C and Jovchelovitch, S. (1998) *The Health Beliefs of the Chinese Community in England.* London: Health Education Authority. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2672/