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The Role of Emotions in the Dynamics of Remembering/ Forgetting the Collective Traumatic Event 9/11 2001 from September 11 to the Iraq War

Abstract : The article concerns the role of images and their emotional impact in the construction of social memory mediated by the new scenarios in mass communications systems. It starts with considerations of a theoretical nature by critically discussing the statute of images in Flashbulb Memories paradigm – which still remains anchored to an informative and computational model – and in the almost ignored field of study about the iconic representations and their invisibility in psychological research on social representations and collective memory. The data analyses focus on the mediated role of emotions in the collective remembering : realized then and then re-elicited 5 weeks, 7 months, 1 year, 15, 17 and 18 months after the traumatic media event of the attack on the World Trade Centre in the United States and the day after the invasion of Iraq by the Anglo--American-Australian coalition. The results are presented in a double *temporal* (*then/now* and in a time frame lasted 18 months) and *social* (between individual and collective memory) perspective.

1. Introduction

This article concerns the role of images and their emotional impact in the construction of social memory mediated by mass communications systems. After a few considerations of a theoretical nature, I will present some of the results obtained from a research program for which data gathering was conducted from October 2001 to March 2003 on „The impact of evoked and selected images and social sharing of emotions on the construction social memory : from September 11 to the Iraq war"[2].

The constructs examined in this research program were concerned with an extremely complex social event. The research program by necessity had to be conducted using an

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2. *Cf.* de Rosa, Bigazzi, Bocci, „Iconic representations, emotional impact and construction of the social memory about September 11, 2001", in de Rosa (2002).

equally complex methodological apparatus (see table 1). Here we will refer only to the following dimensions :

- *images* (both as research tool and object of investigation, in the multiple meanings of displayed-stimuli, of mentally activated eidetic scenarios and socially chosen images)
- *emotions* (individually evoked and socially negotiated in the impact with the images).

These dimensions, which correspond to an equal number of constructs, are involved and investigated in the research design concerning *eidetic memory* (individually elaborated and socially shared) concerning the representation of the tragic events of September 11, object of a mass-media „tom-tom" with spectacular unprecedented effects on a global scale, a kind of *mass flashbulb memory*.

2. The statute of images in the Social Psychology and in the Flashbulb Memories paradigm

A preliminary consideration of a more general character is based on a conviction that once I used to cautiously limit myself to propose as only an impression : that social psychology seems to almost completely ignore the role of images, to the point of making it invisible in research on the processes of construction and reconstruction of social reality. This disinterest is reflected as well in the infrequent use of images, both static (photographs), or dynamic (films) as research tools.

This is true not only in research on attitudes and social representations, but also in the study of *collective, mass and social memory*. Many authors use these terms in an indiscriminate way, almost as if they were synonyms or, alternately, as preferential options, such as the adoption of the term *social* by Fentress and Wickam (1992) or Celso de Sà (2000) compared to *collective* preferred by Jedlowski (2000). Other authors, for example, Jodelet (1992) and more recently, Viaud (2002), even if they recognize their articulations, work with clear distinctions among the various denominations according to the specificity of disciplinary references (i.e., cognitive psychology and neuropsychology, social psychology, sociology and anthropology), constructs around which research traditions have developed (see de Rosa, Farr, 2001 ; Seca, 2001). Traditionally, when considering the role of images, psychology interested in research on memory as a basic process and faculty of the mind (like perception, cognition, etc.) even when taking into consideration the role of images, did so using them either as a pure *perceptive stimulus* or as a *mental image*. That is to say, as cognition or representation, in a great measure de-contextualized and de-socialized ; an individual product of mental activity.

After the change brought about in 1978 by Neisser in cognitivist circles to bring the study of memory in the context of daily life and aimed at objects salient from the social view point using an ecological research approach, beginning in the 1980s one sees the rediscovery of nature and social functions of collective and social memory (already postulated by Bartlett, 1932 and Halbwachs, 1925) and a return to cultural mediation systems based on „the community's interpretive practices" (Vygotskij, 1934). This revised perspective, on one hand, encouraged researchers to take interest in social facts/actions as target events. On the other hand, it transformed the study of memory and forgetting as forms of social action, rather than as individual properties of the mind (Middleton, Edwards, 1990).

In any case, even in this recognized nature culturally „mediated" by memory, linked to the „semiotic" character of thought processes, images, which alongside other languages constitute the living material of iconic language and a powerful semiotic tool, do not appear to have attracted a lot of attention among researchers. This includes neither those inspired by renewed cognitivist traditions nor those inspired by socio-constructivist paradigms and „discorsivists".

Even when the role of images seems to be taken into consideration, as in the research paradigm called *flashbulb memory*, in reality, it is done by assuming the images to be metaphors of photography or its attributes. That is to say, their character of figurative *vividness*, as if, in addition, each image had the clarity of well-developed photographs and there were no ambiguous or polysemous images or out-of-focus photographs. In other terms, always as a body of information, a sum of details, an original scenic event against which to measure „photographic" clarity, the accuracy and persistence of memory and the mediational incidence of cognitive and evaluative factors (*prior Knowledge, personal consequentiality, importance and salience, novelty*) and emotional/communicative factors (*affect and overt rehearsal*). This is the case, even if behind the appearance of a figurative evocation, research plans also deduce an almost metric and mathematical concept of memory; reproductive rather than symbolic.

It is true that studies on Flashbulb Memory have the merit of investigating memory processes in relation to great social-target events that have a strong impact on the collectivity and that are very pregnant from the communicative and visual-scenographic point of view.

As one can see from this list of the most notable studies ascribable to the Flashbulb Memory current, even though the target events have a strong valence in the polarization of collective sentiments and opinions, beyond a strong media and communicative impact, the accent is still on a model that departs from cognition-information (associated to eidetic elements, especially as the contextual scenario of the fact/action/event to be remembered) to obtain a mnemonic re-cognition. This remained based in an informative and computational model (individual capacity for *special encoding*) in which the social factors are reduced either to elements contained in the target event, to the context of learning about the news (*autobiographic insertion* of news of the event, collective object of the memory), or to communication factors via the *rehearsal* mechanism, that allows for elaboration of the narratives (*FB reports*).

It is evident that a study on memory, individual or collective, that intends to uncover its symbolic, evocative and both communicative and social dimensions is, instead, geared not so much towards discovering *how much* and *how much exactly* is remembered of a fact/action/event but rather, *what* and *how* the memory is constructed, socially reconstructed and communicated. This, in relation to which interlocutors, which representational systems, which filters are employed by subjects' and social groups' ideological visions, what role is played by the emotions unleashed or evoked by the event in relation to the network of events significant in the subject's life, etc.

We believe that central to the reevaluation of the links between these research areas is an investigation that includes reference to the visual and iconic aspects as well as the representation and memory, as socially mediated process and as product.

With the acceleration in forms of mass communication, in a society that assigns factual primacy to the visual code, rather than, for example, to the written code and to

the reading register with its reflective time, research on memory from a social psychology perspective can not avoid confronting the problem of how to operationalize the role of images in the construction and social sharing of memory and in the forgetting of facts and public events.

Events are social not only because they concern the life of the collectivity, but also because they are socially elaborated via the more or less polyphonic orchestration not only of the texts, but also of the images transmitted via various media channels (press, television, Internet, cinematography, etc.) and, therefore, suggest a possible (mutual) social sharing. Media sharing is not by itself a sufficient condition that memories of events, transmitted contemporaneously to many millions of people will take root in the collective memory.

According to Luhmann's theory (1995), the mass media constitute a system that represents the substitute for rhetoric in controlling or orienting the constructions that guide communication. Their function consists in the creation of a „second" reality shared by all the communication actors, reconstructing possible conversation objects in this common referential universe (daily news, characters from films or TV series, commercials, etc.). Consequently, this reestablishes the continuity in communication interrupted by the generally non interactive and asymmetric means such as the press, television, films and radio, a condition that allows for speech and mutual understanding, and filling the role that ancient rhetoric assigned as common references to the apparatus of the *loci*.

At the moment one selects an event about which one intends to study the elaboration of a social memory (perhaps destined to become collective), most of the researchers suggest to verify if there are certain essential conditions, such as :

- the events represent or produce significant long-term changes in individuals' lives ;
- a social sharing of the events is generated via conversation, discussion, narration and that may have, in addition, an adaptive and elaborative purpose in the assimilation/ anchoring of the event to the system of memory and forgetting of individuals and social groups ;
- events that are particularly emotion generating can be inscribed in a paradoxical type communicative dynamic (*forget – never forget*) which inflates the media's space and at the same time generates an avoidance motivation in public conversation space. This has the consequence of inducing interior rumination via unexpressed thoughts and dreams.

3. 9/11 : a shocking mass flashbulb memory

Among contemporary events, it seems to us that the September 11 terrorist attack meets the conditions to be a candidate to remain in humanity's collective memory as a *shocking mass flashbulb memory*.

Historic events and natural or man-made catastrophes of apocalyptic proportions are not unknown to the backdrop of a civilization that often has assumed the likeness of barbarity.

However the *media spectacularization* of the dramatic September 11 terrorist attack (pursued both by its planners in their intentionally engineered construction and in the reiterated representation offered by the media) has conferred on that tragic event a key

position in the host of momentous events, that marked a „NEVER BEFORE" threshold in the history of humanity (Chomsky, 2001).

The relevance of the subject can be recognized in some of its typical aspects:

- UNIQUENESS of the EVENT (at least unique in being the „first"): „The world will never be the same" (Chomsky, 2001). Terror, an unedited war scenario and piece of history (as a collective backdrop for individual actions) suddenly breaks out in the daily life of all people;
- SURPRISE EFFECT causing DISCONTINUITY (Luhman, 1995): even though it was a long term human plan, compared to the usual natural catastrophes it was an unexpected and unforeseen event and therefore represents a special case study in *discontinuity and surprise effect*. The effect was so extraordinary as to be located on the border between fiction and reality;
- GLOBAL SCALE EFFECT ON THE ALL SOCIAL DIMENSIONS (political, economic, military, psychological, etc.);
- GLOBAL INVOLVEMENT OF ALL THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS (perception, attitudes, representational systems, action plans, communication, memory...);
- ANCHORING OF THE EVENT IN VERY CONTRASTING LOCAL CULTURAL UNIVERSES.

Although the event was spectacularized on a global scale by the media, it was transmitted and anchored in very contrasting ideological local cultural universes. The world was divided into two pieces of the representational system: Pro-Against USA, Pro-Against WEST, Pro-Against ISLAM, Pro-Against WAR-PEACE, Pro-Against TERRORISM, etc.

What follows is an attempt to explain how we developed an empirical research program on the September 11 attack. Conducted in collaboration with doctoral research trainees Sara Bigazzi and Elena Bocci and a large group of undergraduates, this study concerned the role of images and their emotional impact in the construction of social memory via the filters of representational systems vis-à-vis „cultural objects" either directly or indirectly implicit in the evaluations of the event and its consequences.

Individually and in focus groups, about 522[1] subjects were involved in the administration of a series of tools and techniques dealing with different dimensions and constructs, as described in the multi-method research plan (see table 1). In the light of the theoretical issues here discussed, the following dimensions should be mentioned, although due to the limits of this paper, it will be necessary to present only a representative selection of the results.

IMAGES at the level of:

1. *the images diffused by the media* – via the Analysis of the mass-media source: Semiotic analysis of the *narrative structure* of the most relevant *photo-dossiers*, TV programs and web sites dedicated to September 11;

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1. The total number subjects (522) who globally participated in the data collection is higher compared to the 433 subjects who attended the photo-language sessions. This is because according to the multi-methodological research plan we limited the time series of data collection for some of the instruments designed to the first administration of the techniques (October 2001).

2. *the evoked mental images to remember/to forget elicited by individual subjects* – via questionnaire of flashbulb memory (FBM)[1] investigating also the communication routes of socialization of the news;

3. *socially chosen images* at the group level via photo-language in focus groups[2] using the booklet *Per non dimenticare* published on October 10, 2001 for *Panorama* magazine used in order to identify:

3.a. the *images selected the most* and that made the *strongest impression* first on individual subjects and on the group via negotiation of the choices;

3.b. the images judged *more representative of the events by the group* as whole, via negotiation of their choices (aimed at both selection and rejection).

In order to compare over time a series of six data collections, using results obtained via „photo-language" concerning group negotiated emotions in response to images chosen from *Panorama*'s special photo-dossier and taking into account the different number of subjects in each group and the range of 5 options for choosing the image in order of importance, we calculated the percentages of the group negotiated emotions from among a reduced list of 31 emotions chosen because of higher frequencies out of the full list of 227 emotions associated, using the formula:

Absolute frequencies of emotions/total number of images) $\times$ 100 where the total number of images = the number of focus groups $\times$ images chosen by each group (5).

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1. The results derived from the FBM questionnaire here presented concern only the following questions:

Question 1: Describe the image of the attacks on the World Trade Center and/or the Pentagon that made the most impression on you.

Question 5: What other images concerning the event come to mind? Alongside each place a mark, +, -, 0+, to represent the positive, negative or neutral weight this memory has for you.

1._____

2._____

3._____

Question 6: What is the image that above all you would most like to forget? Why?

2. The „*Photo-language*" by focus group included various social negotiation assignments (consensus/dissent) in order to:

   – choose the five images that had the most effect on the group members;

   – indicate for each one the emotions felt and their intensity (on 1 to 5 points scale);

   – signal the reasons that motivated the choice, the elements of affinity and dissonance in negotiating a consensus on the emotions felt before the images;

   – signal the reasons that led to the exclusion of other images.

After the organization of the groups and distribution of the dossiers with the images the deliveries were as follows:

   • you have 10 minutes for skimming through the dossier and other 10 minutes for choosing the images, which strike you most;

   • discuss and choose together the 5 most representative images of the event indicating them with a coloured adhesive. Note on the adhesive the page number and the number of importance (from 1 = the most important to 5 = the less important) for your group;

   • write on this paper the five selected images, give a name to each of them and mark also the page number in the dossier.

All the discussion among the groups have been transcribed in order to analyze the argumentations for the choice/rejection of the images.

EMOTIONS:

1. *individually evoked*:
   1.a. the emotional impact revealed by eliciting mental images evoked via FBM in a double temporal perspective (then – now);
   1.b. the emotional impact with the displayed emotions at the exhibition „September 11" via Associative Network (de Rosa, 2002, 2003)[1], using as stimulus-phrase: „What do you feel, looking at these images?";
2. *socially shared and negotiated by focus groups* via the negotiation of choices to obtain a consensus on emotions representative of the group as a unit of analysis both in the selection and rejection of images;
3. *evaluation of each emotion's intensity* assessed on a 5 point scale.

The results chosen for this paper highlight the role of emotions in the individual elaboration of images to remember or forget and in social negotiation via the photo-language technique in focus groups. The time frame was from October 2001 to March 2003: five weeks after the WTC attack to the day after the invasion of Iraq (see table 2: *The time series for data collection via photolangage in focus groups*).

Similar to the catalog from the exhibition at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, analysis of the *narrative structure of the sequence of images* published in the photo--dossier „Per non dimenticare" by *Panorama* magazine, which represented a catalog of the images most widely circulated by the media (TV, press, web sites, photo exhibitions), allowed us to group the 78 published images into 14 categories. This included a variable number of photos that were uniform in terms of subject and scenic content and allowed us to identify the key photos representative of the series. The photos were labeled in order to be cataloged and accurately identified by page number (122 pages in total).

We compared the narrative structure identified in the photo dossier with the narrative structure that emerged from the five memories individually elicited in order of importance using the Flashbulb Memory questionnaire and the photo-language technique in focus groups done five weeks after the event.

From the results obtained it emerged that:

- in both structures there is a *linear sequence related to a temporal web*, where all actions follow as an effect of a previous action-cause (crash of airplanes, the hopelessness of the people trapped, jumping, collapse of the towers, people escaping, etc.), reflecting the event-dynamic and its video spectacularization in the media (see slides 3, 4, 5 about the chosen images via different techniques). When one looks at the **justifications** provided by subjects for their choices, among other arguments, the uniqueness of the event and the impossibility to anchor it to previous experiences (besides in the virtual reality of the *star wars game*) appears to dominate. This gives to the images made real by the media the role of *objectifier of an extraordinary event that is still perceived as being between fiction and reality* and reveals the character of the *flashbulb*

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1. An *Associative Network on the Emotional Impact in response to the images displayed in the Exhibition „11 September"* (Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 19 October 2001) was administrated using as stimulus-phrase: „What do you feel while looking at these images?" Explore the exhibit carefully and complete the associative network following the instructions. Freely express all emotions you feel in response to the images displayed.

mass memory of this event mediated through images from the mass communication systems (see table 6 with key justifications for choosing or rejecting the images);
- furthermore, by comparing the results obtained by the *two techniques (FBM question-naire* and photo-language in focus groups), there is a strong concentration on the same few images and its linear temporal sequence in remembering the five *most impressive mental images* elicited in order of importance (in the absence of any displayed photos) and in the choice of the 5 images evaluated as the *most representative of the event* (in the presence of the figurative support of the photo-dossier, including the 78 photos most used in the media) (see slide 3, 4, 5 comparing FBM and photo-language).

However, at the same time as the data collection (October 2001), when the subjects were asked to choose 5 *images to forget* (via the FBM questionnaire), and the *most impressive* (via photo-language in focus groups), the linear narrative sequence, which emerged as first of the five images remembered (via the FBM questionnaire) and was evaluated as the most representative (via photo-language in focus groups), disappears.

In this case, first place in the sequence is not assigned to the *crash of the airplanes* – which elicited primary and subjective emotions like fear, anger, alarm, anguish, disbelief, terror, horror, but rather to images of victims (*people trapped in the tower, jumping* or *woman in red*) which elicited emotions that rose with identification with them or with the situation, such as desperation, anguish, courage, madness, terror, sadness, helplessness that were evoked by the photo *people trapped in the tower* and *jumping* and solidarity, horror, pain, hope, compassion, terror, pain, suffering, that were evoked by the photo *woman in red*.

We obtained confirmation that *emotions* play the role of selective filter for the mental images *to remember* vs *to forget* and for the photo-images chosen as *most representative of the event* vs as *most impressive*. This was provided by the emotions the subjects freely associated to their choices, and by the arguments and justifications for :

- empathy with the people jumping from the towers, desperately attempting to escape, placed the image of jumping in first place among the *images to forget*;
- empathy with a victim, covered of blood on a wheelchair, placed the image of the woman in red in first place among the *images chosen as most emotionally impressive* via photo-language in focus groups.

This result is particularly interesting because :

- it confirms the *role of emotions* in *both* the selective construction of the memory (as a vivid photographic mental image individually elicited) and in the social negotiation of the choice of the most impressive image (a photo chosen via photo-language in focus groups);
- within the limits of validity of our subject sample that came from Rome, Belgrade and Sarajevo, it acquired a sort of *trans-cultural consistency* and it was even more evident in the data collection with subjects from Belgrade and Sarajevo. In fact, their recognition of extreme suffering and identification with victims placed assigned the priority of their choice to photos like *jumping* or *woman in red*, since the first work session, rather than to the *crash of the plain* (which probably reminded them the horror of recent war in their own country and the so-called intelligent bombs from American military airplanes). Empathy with trapped people has a trans-cultural value and meaning, because of its non-ideological and unequivocal character as an emotion that

calls for identification with an extreme condition : victims are considered as human beings, rather than Americans, even for the subjects from the former Yugoslavia. This supranational empathy with human beings partly obscured their ideological positions, linked to their recent history of interethnic conflicts, pro or con Americans, which clearly appeared during the photo-language sessions due to the selection of many other photos, by subjects from Belgrade and Sarajevo, that had political connotations : Bush with his father, Bush with firemen, Clinton, the Talebans and symbols of the USA (the flag, the Statue of Liberty...).

Now, what will happen when we try to reconstruct via a series of photo-language in focus groups what occurred in the emotional impact with this traumatic event represented through images and its change over time? In this case, the data collection time frame lasted 18 months and looked at the relations between images and the social dimensions of the emotions developed in memory (then). They were subsequently re-elicited 5 weeks, 7 months, 1 year, 15, 17 and 18 months after the traumatic media event of the attack on the World Trade Center in the United States and the day after the invasion of Iraq by the Anglo-American-Australian coalition.

Comparing the trends related to the two images chosen most by 57 focus-groups from October 2001 to March 2003, it emerges that the images of *jumping* and *woman in red* (both related to victims) increase significantly over the time and diminish the power of the factual image related to the attack (crash of plane into the tower). This means that *the emotion related to victims led to a shift of the factual and descriptive memory of the event and its first act to a secondary plane* (see slides 7 and 8 : *trend related to the two most chosen images by 57 focus groups over the time series October 2001- March 2003 : attack and jumping ; attack and woman in red*).

It is also interesting to note that these results confirm the same selective role of emotions in the impact with the same images from the beginning of data collection in October 2001, when *jumping* and *woman in red* were the most elicited mental images *to forget*. This means that the *process of forgetting* (more than *remembering* through mental images, freely evoked) denotes a sort of anticipation of the most emotional charge related to traumatic images.

There is an increasing trend in re-selecting the image showing the „crash of the plane into the tower" especially 15 months later, but also slightly the day after the invasion of Iraq when there was a renewed activation of the same prototypical images in the media corresponding to special dates commemorating the event. This photo is a sort of *a prototypical mass flashbulb memory of the event*, the most diffused on the covers of books dedicated to September 11, and the most popular image diffused both by the traditional and new media.

When we look at the sequence from the most to the least frequently elicited emotions (selected with a minimum $F > 10$) via the associative network we find an interesting confirmation of the *activation-deactivation processes*, according to the „circumflex structure of emotion concepts", by Russell & Lemay (2000). The emotional activation starts at the top of the circle with the mobilizing *Surprise* – which, consistent with the Luhman theory of discontinuity effect, represents the element which makes the news new. It moves in the left-high sphere of the circle (*unpleasant emotions*) from the *basic*

emotions, *Fear* and *Anger*, towards a *deactivation* in the lower-left sphere, *Sadness*. This result in the emotional activation-de-activaction processes is consistent when the data collected by different tools is looked at transversally (both at the individual and group levels) (see graph 9, *Circumflex structure of emotion concepts*).

The pattern of moving from basic self-centered reactive emotions (like fear) towards more elaborated emotions implying a socio-centric perspective (like solidarity) also is confirmed by comparing the freely evoked emotions by the impact with the images in order of appearance with the emotions evaluated according to their order of importance assigned by the subjects. This was done via the same technique, the *associative network*, but with a task requiring a less projective cognitive focus (evaluation of word according to the order of importance) compared to the association of words freely evoked in order of appearance. In other words, from *fear* as *reaction* to *solidarity* to *elaboration of the reaction* (see graph 10, *From fear to solidarity*).

It is also extremely interesting to look at the *methodological implications of data collection on the results*: in fact, we found an effect of emotions detecting modality:

- *via the associative network* from individually evoked emotions about the emotional impact of the images of the exhibition (September 11). The first emotion in order of rank is the *primary emotion = fear*;
- *via the photo-language* from the socially negotiated emotions in focus groups the first emotion in order of rank is the *complex emotion = helplessness*, which at the same time results last among the top 15 emotions elicited via the associative network. It seems that the process of negotiation within the group that aimed to express a socially shared emotion activated a choice of more elaborated emotion.

If we restrict our comments to the this type of *elaborated emotions*, we also find an effect of the detecting modality:

- *via the associative network* from the individually evoked emotions, the first complex emotion in order of rank was *solidarity*, revealing the feeling of a call for action, to be engaged in doing something;
- *via photo-language* from the socially negotiated emotions in focus groups the first complex emotion in order of rank is *helplessness*, mainly revealing the frustration of not being able to cope with the extraordinarily monstrous event (Action Inability).

In any case, there is no doubt that *fear* represents the most socially shared emotion in the face of September 11, at least 5 weeks after the event. When we look both at the content and structure of the representational field obtained by analyzing the free associations provoked by the impact with the displayed images, fear dominates the central space of the intersection of axes (the most consensual part of the representation). In a certain sense, the universe of this basic primary emotion represents the common ground of the whole sample. They occur in the centre of the representations in the same semantic space where other words clearly related to the mass communication system, like spectacle and film, are located.

On the contrary, other elements of the representations organize a differentiation of the factorial space, showing a clear contrast between the *photographic event's description* (with associations placed on the negative horizontal semi-axis like: photo, fire, massacre, memories, dust, prayer...) and the *emotional impact* on the positive semi-axis (with

associations like sadness, anger, solidarity, anguish, horror, unease, pity and admiration). This is a descriptive and factual view of the event as opposed to an emotional one. The contrast in the semantic space of the representation between *factual event's elements* (with associations like silence, explosion, commemoration...) and *value-emotions system* (with associations like liberty, innocents, family, insecurity, disorder, instability, poverty, love, power) is further confirmed on the second factorial axis (see the graph 11 illustrating the results obtained by analyzing via SPAD-T the free associations : first and second factors).

Another way to look at the construction of social memory of the event mediated by the emotions elicited in the impact with the images is related to the comparison of the emotions individually reported by the subjects as associated to their event's mental images (via *flashbulb memory questionnaire*) five weeks after the event in a double temporal perspective Then (September 11, 2001) – Now (October 18, 2001). Also in this case, when the subjects report the emotions referring to the mental images remembered as most involved in their returning to the day of the event and what they felt at the moment, an emotional deactivation occurs *comparing „then" with „now"*. There is a drop in the surprise effect (surprise, incredulity, astonishment...), an increase in Emotion-Concepts with minor activation (like sadness, pain, sorrow...), and anger compared to fear, *which still plays the central role* (see the graph 13 showing the emotions reported via FBM questionnaire from then to now).

However, the emotional patterns we tried to identify over the 18 months of data collection via photo-language in the 37 focus groups do not allow any rigid linearity in the evolution of the emotions activated by the displayed images of September 11 (see the table of the percentage of the negotiated emotions associated to the images displayed in focus groups). If we visualize these results by patterns, we find :

- most of the emotions follow what we call the *modular pattern* (Up-Down-Up-Down) or the *curvilinear patterns* (Down-Up-Down-Down and Up-Down-Up-Up) ;
- the unique emotion (selected to according the described formula) which shows a *stable pattern* is the feeling of *desperation* in the impact with the displayed images ;
- the other two *complex emotions pain* and *compassion* respectively show the pattern called *UP* and the pattern called *Down* ; results which by themselves look like contradictions ;
- emotions negatively connotated by the subjects sometimes follow the same pattern of emotions positively connotated : that means that not only in the representational field related to the event during each data collection session, but also in the pattern over the time period, we found a profound ambivalence of contrasting emotions (Despe-ration-Hope, Fear-Courage, Helplessness-Solidarity...) (see slide 14 showing the emotional patterns).

The displayed images of the events were always the same, as was the setting for administration of the photo-language in focus groups. The emotions elicited, however, follow different and apparently incoherent patterns.

This multiplicity in the patterns and also their apparent incoherence suggest that the chain reaction of events which followed the September 11 terrorist attacks (in particular, the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq) have contributed to re-contexualising both the social memory and social sharing of emotions about September 11.

Looking at the results derived from various techniques dealing with the emotional impact evoked by the mental or displayed images, we found a *deep ambivalence* in :

- the representational field related to the event (Desperation-Hope, Fear-Courage, Helplessness-Solidarity...);
- the relative mnemonic construction (Forget – Never Forget, Reality-Fiction...);
- the justification used by the subjects concerning the socially negotiated criterion for the choice/rejection of the images (Strong Emotional Impact – Too Strong or Weak Emotional Impact).

On one hand, we might interpret the deeply rooted *ambivalence* concerning the emotional impact with the displayed images and the constructive system of event's iconic memory by extending the concept of *cognitive polyphasia* to that of *emotional polyphasia* as peculiar of the nested phenomenon of social representations.

On the other hand, we believe that both the deep ambivalence in the emotional representational field activated by the impact with the displayed images in each photo-language session and the apparent incoherent patterns over time depend on the co-existence of multiple referential levels. These imply both the complexity of the social actors involved in the event's scenes presented in the displayed images as potential emotional targets (victims, rescuers, US political leaders, the Taleban, civilians of different races, age, etc.), and the nested representational systems related to other cultural objects which orient and emotionally shape different tonalities in the semantic space.

From our point of view, for this reason it was interesting not only to look at the change in the emotional activation-deactivation model proposed by Russel & Lemay (2000), but also to project on it the net determined by the most salient emotions evoked via the associative network in response to we have called „Cultural Objects" like : *USA, West, Islam, Peace, War, Terrorism.*

Peace is the unique cultural object which appears almost isolated on the side of happiness, activating positively connotated associations like love, calm, serenity and well being. The last is the unique semantic link with WEST and USA (among the words selected on the threshold of $F < 10$). However while the representation of the West is associated with solidarity, USA is associated with pain and despair and through these with war and terrorism. In the area of the emotional activation towards the unpleasant sphere we find placed the cultural objects *Islam, War* and *Terrorism.* The emotion which dominates the links with *Islam, West, USA, War* and *Terrorism* is *Fear, Anger* and *hate* together *revenge* represent an emotional link between *war* and *terrorism,* leaving space to *despair* and *pain,* when the process of the unpleasant feelings move towards emotional deactivation.

To test our hypothesis about the structuring and re-structuring role of the representational system related to the chosen cultural objects in the face of the emotional impact with the displayed images, for each of the cultural objects we analyzed the correlation matrix which identifies positive and negative correlations using as dependent variables the index of polarity derived from the analysis of associations collected via the associative network technique. The results show that the emotional impact with the displayed images at the exhibition 5 weeks, after September 11 is strongly and positively correlated with the representations the subjects have of *USA, Islam, Terrorism* and *War* and therefore represented in the core of the graph. The last are negatively correlated with peace, which is also negatively linked to Islam. Very interesting is the position of the West, which at least 5 weeks after 9/11 appears almost isolated in the correlational space, except the link to USA and therefore not directly perceived as linked to war, Islam and Terrorism.

Still more interesting is the position of the West if we have a comparative look at the results based obtained over the data series collection via associative networks including as stimulus words the „cultural objects". By comparing the indexes of polarity obtained 5 weeks after the event (October 19, 2001), fifteen months later (December 2002) and the day after the beginning of the Iraq war (March 20, 2003) we find that the highest change concerns the attitude associated the representation of the West, which strongly decreases, in relation to its involvement in the US coalition and the war scenario as reaction to the September 11 (see graph 14 with comparative results derived by the indexes of polarity associated to the cultural objects over the data serie collection).

7. Concluding remarks and perspectives

In order to show the process of social memory construction, it has been interesting to further extend the research plan temporally by considering *if* and *how* the nested representational system would have changed over the time, also in relation to the outcome of the events. For example, from the day of the invasion of Iraq to the military conclusion of the war and the current dramatic post-war political developments.

History never stops and the social accumulation of the traces available for collective appropriation on the part of different groups grows day by day. However no single researcher can run after the events. Empirical research based on multi-method designs and serial data collection is already very weighty and always limited by a lot of procedural constraints. Three years have passed since September 11 and as well as at least one year from our last data collection and we are still thinking and re-thinking the results derived from a very complex set of techniques and data analysis strategies. A lot of data is still currently under analysis, especially that (on the web site and forum discussion) related to the new media as one of the sources in the communication system under consideration.
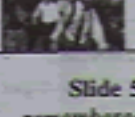
I hope that from this first integrative view of some of the dimensions considered, I was able to show :

- first, how much richer it can be to look at the iconic component of the representational systems (both in the presence or in the absence of displayed images) together with the role of its emotional impact and the related set of ideological representations concerning other cultural objects in the construction of the social memory of a traumatic event ; in particular when the event (as in the case of September 11) has been transmitted by the media as a sort of *shocking mass flashbulb* ;
- second, the importance of taking into account the methodological implications connected to data collection, showing the similarity and differences in the emotional patterns that emerged via the individually administered flashbulb memory questionnaire and via the setting of photo-language in focus groups to elicit socially group negotiated emotions ;
- third, the transversal role of the temporal dimension in reshaping the emotional impact with mental and displayed images constructing the social memory of the event ;
- fourth, the potential interest in looking for explanations derived from a set of apparently incoherent patterns when we do not try to minimize the complexity of the social phenomenon under investigation in 2 X 2 table.

Table 1. The multi-method research plan

Dimensions	Levels of analysis	Instruments and techniques
SOCIO EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM	Photographic memory to its "physical" (connotative) knowledge	A. Questionnaire on photographic memory
	Emotional reactions and polarity of the representational field about the emotional impact of images seen during the attacks on "11 September"	B. Associative Network field test and ranges of the images seen during the relation to "11 September"
EMOTIONAL IMPACT	Emotional impact and processing of the emotions: a "hot" degrees on "HOT", some of the cool and warm level (image, theme etc) cool, or repressed	C. Evaluative Questionnaire related to the relation
	"Social" imperialism of emotions element in the relationship and experience images according to orders of representativity and importance	D. Photolanguage by iconographs
	Structure, content and polarity of the representational field associated with "Cultural Objects" related to the event: Terrorism, USA, the Western World, Islam, War, Peace	E. Associative Network selected by Cultural Objects related to the event
	Cognitive/thinking among different cultural objects (e.g. relation to a wider representation system, ex: Human Rights, Asia, the West, Islam, Italy, War, Pakistan, Under development, USA, Terrorism, Peace, Europe, California, Arab world, Christianity)	F. Conceptual "semantic network" among different cultural objects correlated to a wider representational system on
	Significant level and intensity between the subject (I) and the above mentioned cultural objects.	G. Identification scale on the Conceptual Network
ATTITUDES STRUCTURE and SOCIAL MEANINGS	• risk perception and perceived feeling of security in an individual perspective or within service insurance one's own micro Europe, the West, the United States, Italy, the East, the Muslim World, the whole world; • risk perception and perceived feeling of security in a collective perspective within different service...	H. Attitude Scale
COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA	Analysis of messages transmitted via traditional channels (the Press) and new media forms (internet).	I. Framing (frequencies of headlines and centre and end articles appearing for a full year of wide circulation Italian daily "la Repubblica") by new media forms (limits of interest on internet sites on the Repubblica

Table 2. *The time series for data collection via photolangage in 57 focus groups (433 subjects)*

37 FOCUS GROUPS (303 Italian subjects from Rome)

	II	III	IV
OCTOBER 2001	SEPTEMBER 11 2002	DECEMBER 11 2002	MARCH 20 2003
5 WEEKS LATER	1 YEAR LATER	15 MONTHS LATER	13 MONTHS LATER THE DAY AFTER THE ATTACK TO IRAQ
19 FOCUS GROUPS	2 FOCUS GROUPS	11 FOCUS GROUPS	5 FOCUS GROUPS
164 ss	10 ss	97ss	32 ss

20 FOCUS GROUPS (130 subjects from BELGRADE / SARAJEVO)

APRIL 2002	FEBRUARY 2003
7 MONTHS LATER	17 MONTHS LATER
11 FOCUS GROUPS	9 FOCUS GROUPS
78 ss	52 ss

Slide 3. *Comparison between the IMAGES remembered/to forget/chosen via different technique*

Slide 4. *Comparison between the IMAGES remembered/to forget/chosen via different technique*

Slide 5. *Comparison between the IMAGES remembered/to forget/chosen via different technique*

Graph 6. *KEY JUSTIFICATION provided during the photolangage by Focus groups*

Graph 7. *Trend related to the two most chosen images by 57 focus-groups over the time series October 2001-March 2003 : attack and jumping*

Graph 8. *Trend related to the two most chosen images by 57 focus-groups over the time series October 2001-March 2003 : attack and woman in red*
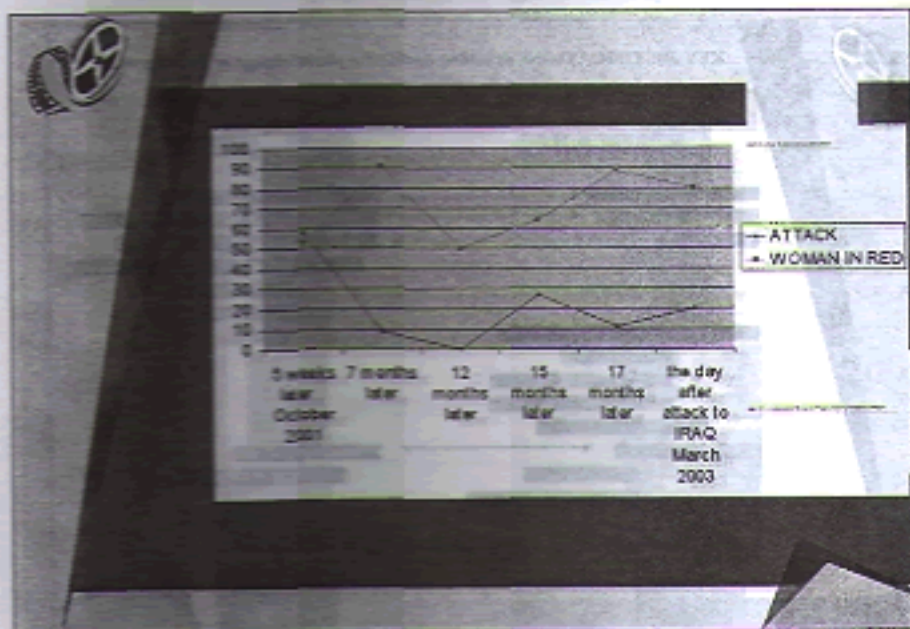
Graph 9. *TRANSVERSAL LECTURE of the role of EMOTIONS throughout all instruments*
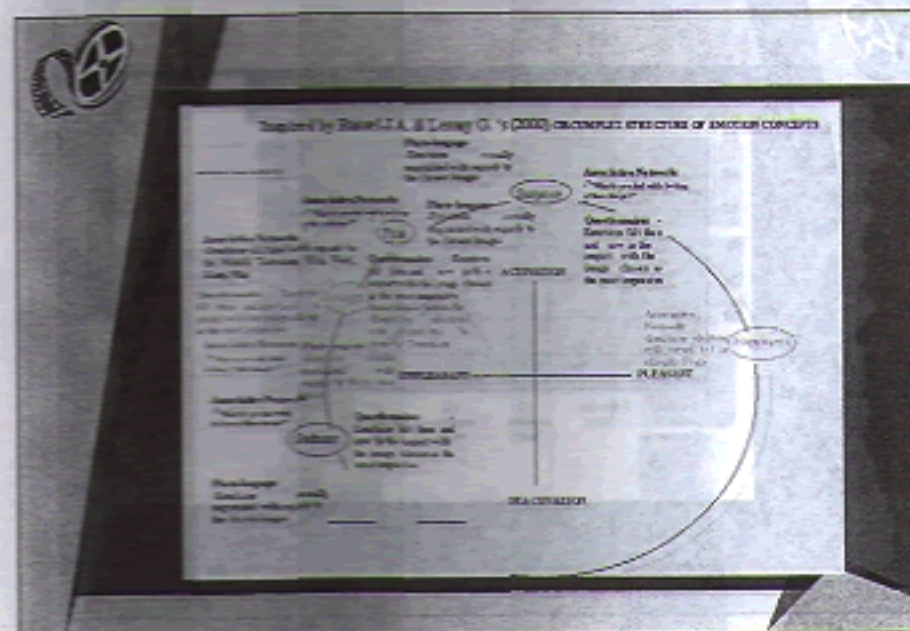
Graph 10. *Individually evoked EMOTIONS (associative network) in order of APPEARANCE vs order of IMPORTANCE*
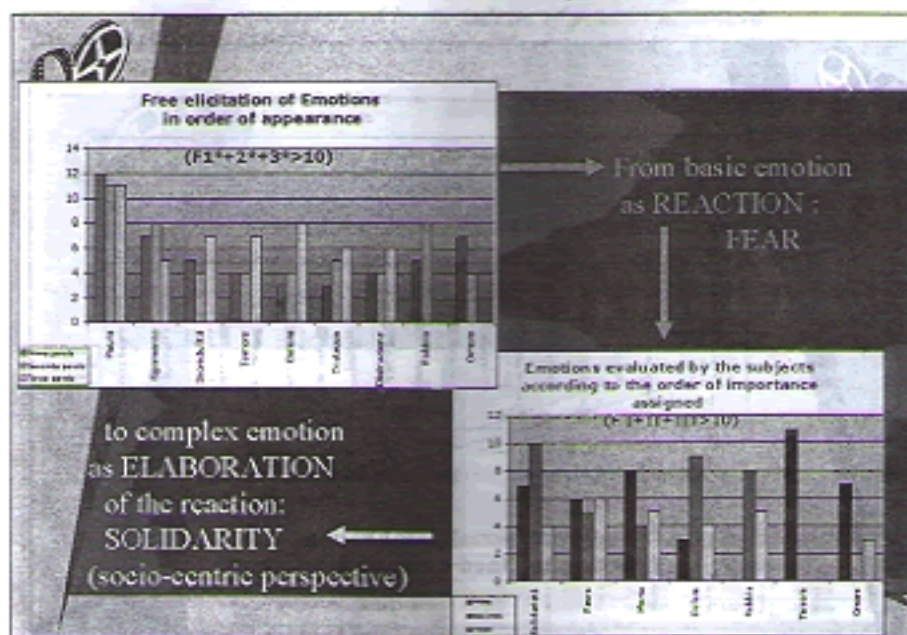
Graph 11. *Results obtained by analyzing via SPAD-T the free associations provoked by the impact with the displayed photographs related to September 11*

Graph 12. *EMOTIONS in a double temporal perspective Then-Now.*
Questionnaire FBM

Individually evoked emotions refering to the image
chosen as the most involving
(then now)

Surprise effect drop   Increase of Emotion -Con cept s
with minor activation

emotional deactivation
referring to "then compared with now"
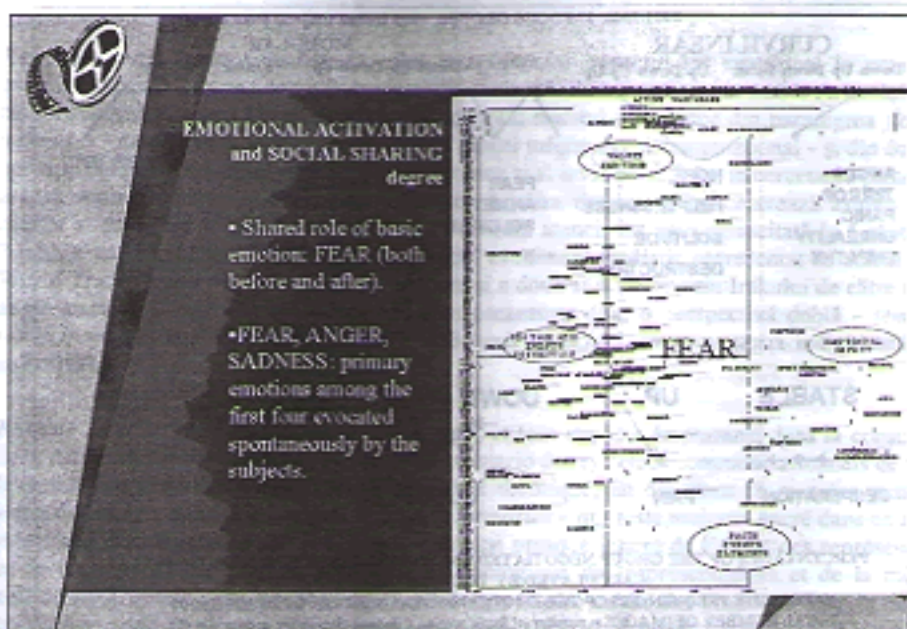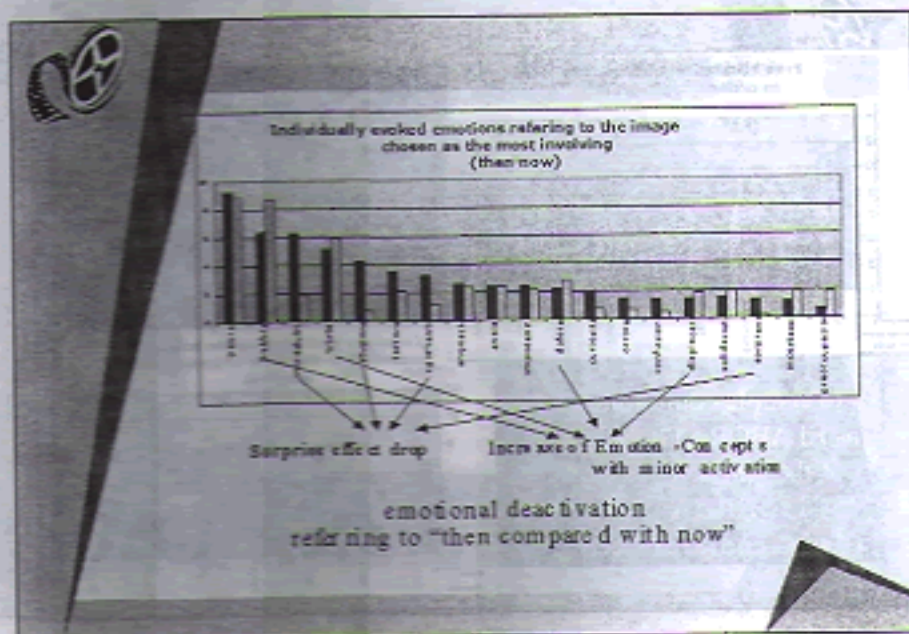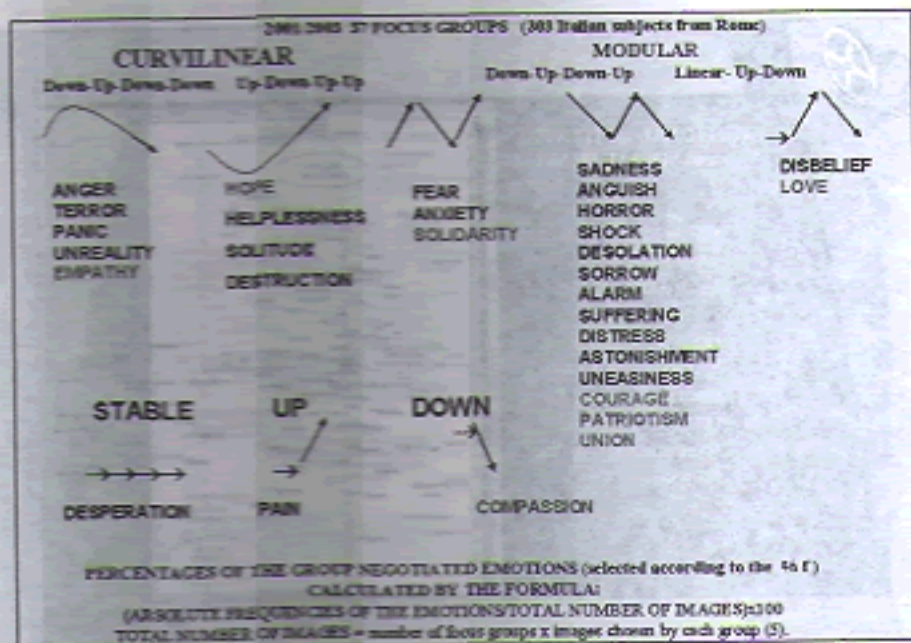
Graph 13. *Group negotiated emotional patterns evaluated over the four time series :*
2001-2003. 37 Focus-groups (303 Italian subjects from Rome)

2001-2003 37 FOCUS GROUPS (303 Italian subjects from Rome)

CURVILINEAR   **MODULAR**

Down-Up-Down-Down   Up-Down-Up-Up   Down-Up-Down-Up   Linear- Up-Down

				DISBELIEF
ANGER	HOPE	FEAR	SADNESS	LOVE
TERROR		ANXIETY	ANGUISH	
PANIC	HELPLESSNESS	SOLIDARITY	HORROR	
UNREALITY	SOLITUDE		SHOCK	
EMPATHY			DESOLATION	
	DESTRUCTION		SORROW	
			ALARM	
			SUFFERING	
			DISTRESS	
			ASTONISHMENT	
			UNEASINESS	
STABLE	**UP**	**DOWN**	COURAGE	
			PATRIOTISM	
			UNION	

DESPERATION   PAIN   COMPASSION

PERCENTAGES OF THE GROUP NEGOTIATED EMOTIONS (selected according to the % f)
CALCULATED BY THE FORMULA:
(ABSOLUTE FREQUENCIES OF THE EMOTIONS/TOTAL NUMBER OF IMAGES)×100
TOTAL NUMBER OF IMAGES = number of focus groups x images chosen by each group (5).

Graph 14. *Attitudes structure and social meanings. Comparative results derived by the indexes of polarity associated to the Cultural Objects over the data serie collection via „Associative network"*
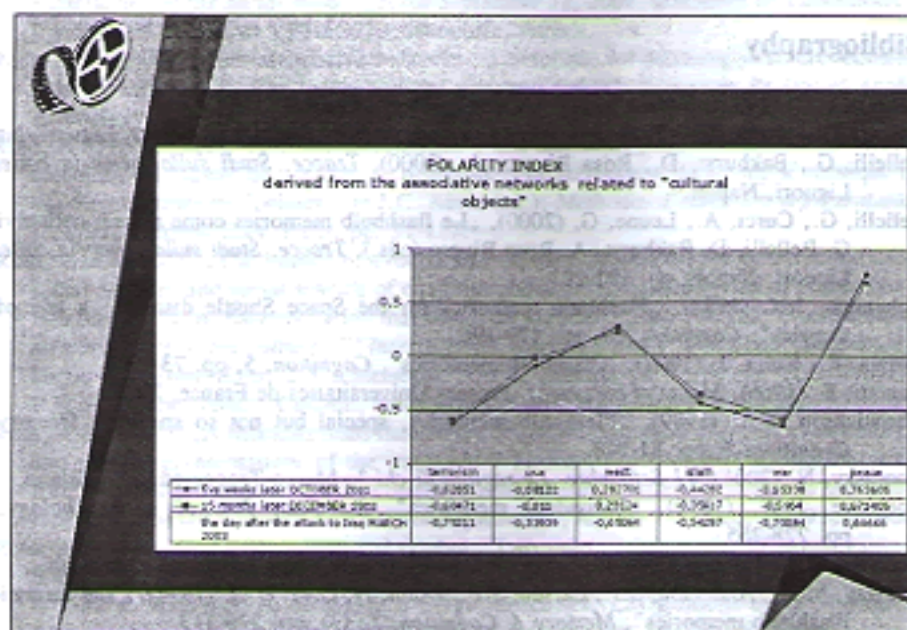
Rezumat: Acest articol analizează rolul imaginilor şi impactul lor emoţional în construirea memoriei sociale mediate de noile scenarii din sistemele de comunicare în masă. Articolul începe cu consideraţii de natură teoretică, analizând critic statutul imaginilor din paradigma *flashbulb memories* – care rămâne încă ancorată într-un model informativ şi computaţional – şi din domeniul aproape ignorat al studiului reprezentărilor iconice şi al invizibilităţii lor în cercetarea psihologică asupra reprezentărilor şi memoriei colective. Analiza datelor se concentrează asupra rolului mediat al emoţiilor în amintirea colectivă: realizată atunci, iar apoi resuscitată la 5 săptămâni, 7 luni, 1 an, 15, 17 şi 18 luni după traumaticul eveniment mediatic reprezentat de atacul asupra World Trade Center din Statele Unite, precum şi a doua zi după invazia Irakului de către coaliţia anglo-americano-australiană. Rezultatele sunt prezentate dintr-o perspectivă dublă – *temporală* (*atunci/acum* şi într-un cadru temporal de 18 luni) şi *socială* (între memoria individuală şi cea colectivă).

Résumé: Cet article regarde le rôle des images et leur impacte émotionnel dans la construction de la mémoire sociale médiée par le nouveau scénario des systèmes communicationnels de masse. Il commence avec des considérations de nature théorique, en discutant de manière critique le statut des images dans le paradigme *flashbulb memories* – qui reste toujours ancré dans un modèle informatif et computationnel – et dans le domaine presque ignoré de l'étude des représentations et de leur invisibilité dans la recherche psychologique des représentations et de la mémoire collective. L'analyse des données est focalisée sur le rôle médié des émotions dans la mémoire collective: réalisée alors et puis resuscitée après 5 semaines, 7 mois, 1 année, 15, 17 et 18 mois du traumatique événement médiatique représenté par l'attaque du World Trade Center, dans les

Etats Unis, et le jour suivant à l'invasion de l'Irak par la coalition anglo-américaino-australienne. Les résultats sont présentés d'une double perspective : *temporelle* (*alors/maintenant* et dans un cadre temporel de 18 mois) et *sociale* (entre la mémoire individuelle et celle collective).

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 - J. Pennebaker, M. Mehl – „The Social Dynamics of a Cultural Upheaval" ;
 - B. Rimé – „Terrorist attacks of September 11th : The cognitive and social impact of a collective trauma" ;
 - G. Bellelli, A. Curci, G. Leone – „Cognitive, emotional and social determinants of collective memories" ;
 - J. Laszlo, B. Ehmann, O. Vincze – „Changes in the historical memory after the WTC attack : the case of the Afganisthan war" ;
 - S. de Rosa, S. Bigazzi, E. Bocci – „Forget – Never forget : emotional impact, iconic representational systems and social memory, in the reconstruction of the day who dramatically changed the personal and global risk perception" ;
 - Curci (Italia) – „Flashbulb memories for the terroristic attack to WTC".

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 - J. Jesuino, in colaborare cu A. de Rosa & P. Verges – „Symbolic generalised media in a critical transitory phase : the change to the European currency system" ;
 - A. Allansdottir – „Imaginary and scientific discourse about Dolly the sheep" ;

- B. Orfali – „La tempête de 1999 : représentations sociale d'un événement extraordinaire" ;
- P. Lalli – „Media and war events : the influence of media information on Kosovo war" ;
- de Rosa, S. Bigazzi, E. Bocci – „Iconic representations, emotional impact and construction of the social memory about September 11, 2001".

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