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15th Edition of the International Summer School

European Ph.D. on
Social Representations and Communication
At the Multimedia LAB & Research Center, Rome-Italy

Social Representations in Action and Construction
in Media and Society



"Cultural and cross-cultural
approaches to social representations:
The implications of the globalised/localised cultural scenario"

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Key Lectures

European Ph.D

on Social Representations and Communication

International Lab Meeting Series 2009

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Introduction

- A good understanding of the creation and dissemination (be it economic, psychological, technological or social) of culture is closely linked with the SR theory.
- The aim of this lecture is to describe the relationship between:
 - - The SR theory.
 - - The ideologies legitimated by the crowd (what is the consumers' place?);
 - - The productions of industry programs;
 - - The consumption practices (as well as cultural production habits).

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- *First, I will be talking about the relationship between theories of mass and popular culture and social representations.*
- *I will go on to discuss some research topics (contents and objects of representation to explore) and the epistemological issue of this field of research.*
- *Then, I will be describing the process of globalization in symbolic, psychological, anthropological and cultural terms.*
- *And finally, I synthesize a philosophical approach on symbolic consequences of globalization (Dufour, Stiegler) especially and recently defended in France.*

- **Four-points plan:**
- **1. Theories of popular cultures: what links with SR?**
- **2. What is cultural globalisation?**
- **3. “Glocalization” and territorial appropriations**
- **4. Individualism/Neo-tribalism and the main characteristics of liberal cultural Revolution in the global market**

1. Theories of popular cultures: what links with SR?

- Distinction between the “folk” and “pop” or “Local” and “mass” cultures.
- Process of alteration and transformation of the identities and beliefs.
- *Why would one want to question the process of cultural distribution and alteration?* This is a problem which is inseparable from the SR theory...

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- In the popular cultures approach, the main question must address the status of the “crowd” and that of the “masses’ creativity” ...
- One observes that there is a surprising coexistence between apologetic, ambivalent and reactionary issues in numerous analysis and writings.
- ✓ In the post-revolutionary writings (after the French Revolution)..
- ✓ In the genealogy of the current of the British Cultural studies... *The Cultural and English Studies would later generate a whole arborescence of writings and schools, ranging from “Gender Studies”, “Black or African studies”, to “Musical or French studies”.*

- ✓ Among Neo-Marxist theorists of the Frankfurt School...
- ✓ In the symbolic interactionism or in the qualitative approach of the city and ecological behaviour (Chicago School)...
- ✓ The importance of the researches on the symbolism and the imagination in the postmodern societies... (In France: Gilbert Durand, Jung, Lacan, Castoriadis, Bachelard, Maffesoli...)
Two orientations can be detected: Jungian and Freudian in the study of symbolism and imagination.

- How to include these different theoretical approach and field researches in the SR theory?
- ✓ The lack is in the problem of the “methodologism” and “technical” reduction of the interdisciplinary SR approach (dominated by the social psychologists).
- ✓ Another problem is in the methodological weakness of the other approaches.
- ✓ There are many denominations and expressions which refer to the global field of the representations and symbols.

POLYSEMY AND CREATIVITY OF THEORETICAL LEXIC:

- ✓ “The anthropological structures of the imagination” (Durand),
- ✓ “Ideology/utopia” (Mannheim),
- ✓ “Symbolic, digital or trinity system” (Dufour, Lacan),
- ✓ “Episteme, psychotechniques and hypnomnemata” (Foucault, Stiegler),
- ✓ “Social thinking, nexus” (Guimelli, Rouquette),
- ✓ “Myths and mythology, savage thinking » (Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Lévy-Bruhl, Dumézil), “Social discourse” (Geertz)
- ✓ And even notions strongly connected with SR, like “complexity, perdifferentiation (or ‘Ausdifferenzierung’), “organisational

- Nevertheless, there is no connection between the previous theories and the most relevant interrogations of the social psychology....
- Everybody constructs his exploration on his side without attention and integration of the other perspectives or concepts. The worst is when every discipline is taking refuge in techniques of investigation or in methodologies and are not looking outside or elsewhere. Disarticulated social theories and results are the main effects of this.
- Last comment on the “fantasy of spontaneous generation” of “popular cultures”.

- **2. What is cultural globalisation?**
- First: reminder of the negative aspects of the globalization.
- Second: connection between an open philosophy of interpersonal relationships and the functioning of cultural industries.
- No compromise synthesis between globalists and anti-globalists.

- **What is globalization?** I will be focusing mainly on its symbolic, anthropological and communicational aspects. I will not review or synthesize economic theories, whether critical or not.
- Distinction between “globalization” and “deregulation”, even if...
- Deregulation → recent economic intensification and a social recombination (flexibility, financial management of organizations, legal deregulation: (Fligstein, 1997; Wallerstein, 1995, 2004; Amin, 1997).

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- The global preponderance of this kind of management, ever since the 1980's, has led to the present financial collapse and subsequently to the neo-left protests against ultra-liberalism and then against any liberal system.
- Consequences of the deregulation: increasing of new-leftism and protest movement. How to analyse it? In terms of globalization of politics? In terms of propagation of anger claims? Are ever constructive or source of positive social change?
- Example of the recent protest in the French universities against the reform of the government: the paradoxical effects of the strikes since any years.

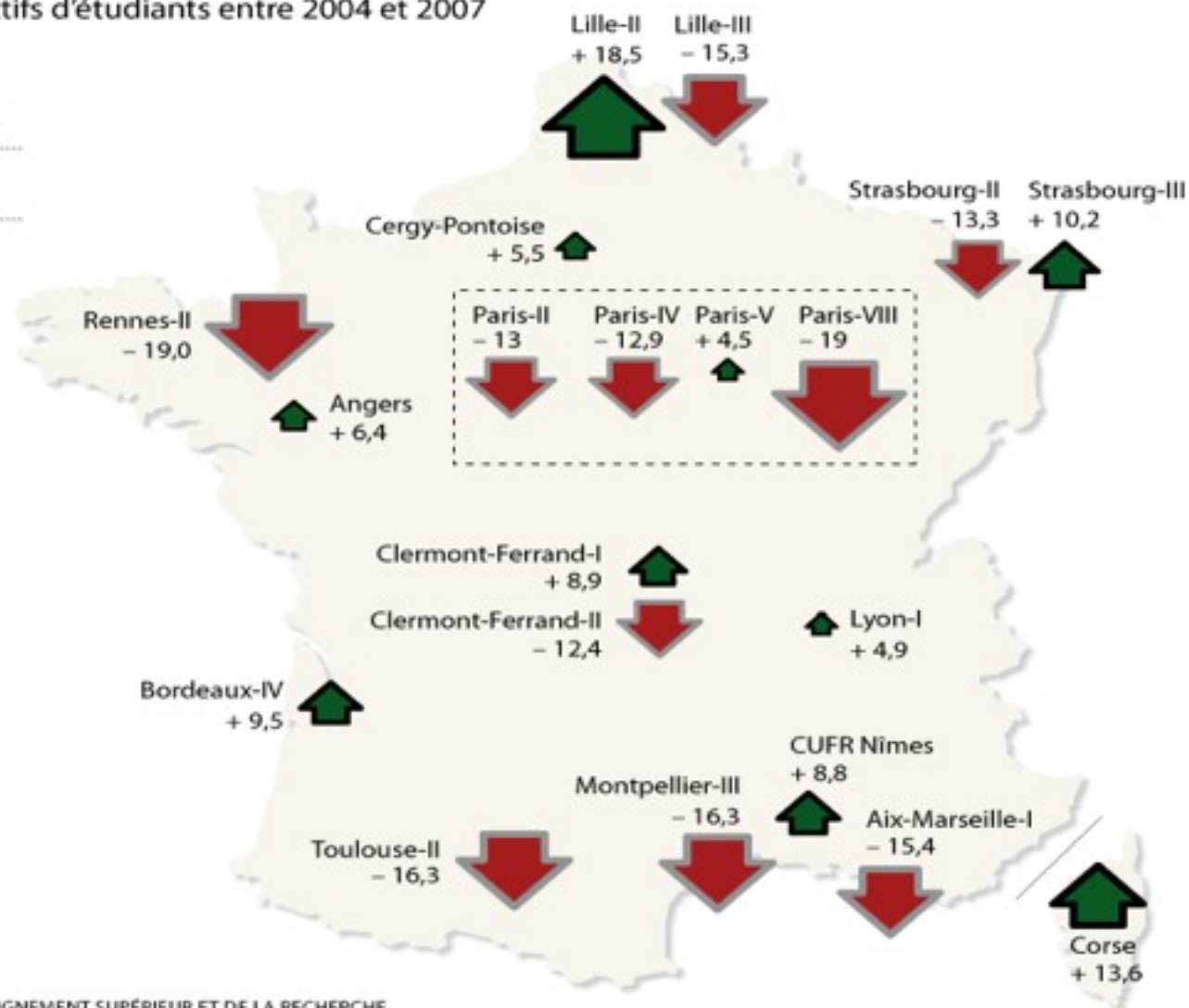
Evolution des effectifs d'étudiants entre 2004 et 2007

en %

↑ Les dix plus fortes hausses

↓ Les dix plus fortes baisses

Moyenne nationale : - 4,3 %



SOURCE : MINISTÈRE DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

- Globalization can be described as a *process of exportation and intensification of the liberal model and of deregulation. These “exportations” and this intensification have technical, psychological and cultural as well as financial consequences in all the countries (on this planet), from the food industry to the love affairs.*
- It is an *acceleration of the flows of financial capital, human works, products, images and ideas.* It is an intensification of the multiple and complex links and networks activated by the informational and digital revolution.

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- Globalization has consequently unpredictable effects. For example, the relationships between “identity”, “communication” and “culture” are about to form an explosive triangle (Wolton, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-64). They are accompanied by a contagion of egocentric rapport with the surrounding world. This conception is at the very heart of the liberal ethics/ethos.
- I will continue in the following comment with the discussion on this mental regression that becomes a mass phenomenon. The argument of many analysts is that globalization and cultural revolution are the continuation of the modernity and of the capitalism.
- *I will argue in this lecture that the specificity of globalization and Cultural Revolution is that there is a gap between the modernity and postmodernity.* The globalization process is not only the continuity of the modernity.

- The gap will be explained in the other parts of this lecture. This gap is actually translated into a regressive ego-centred behaviour/attitude.
- This type of cognitive and emotional structure could partially explain the internalization and internationalization of psychopathological forms of communication (attention deficit disorders, aggression media-spread, feeding pathologies) and the harmful effects of cultural industry programs.
- Despite my optimism, I have to admit that these are pathological phenomena which strike me.

- **3. “Glocalization” and territorial appropriations**
- There are also relatively positive effects of globalization. They are well-known:
 - ✓ - the multiplication of mixed social relationships;
 - ✓ - the possibility to escape the grip of “tribes” and “communities” which are far from fitting into the images of the “noble savage” and “human warmth”, widely present in Rousseau’s or Voltaire’s naturalism or in utopian ideologies (Lacroix, 1981);
 - ✓ - the generalisation of a sensitivity to minority and human rights (see Doise researches);
 - ✓ - the emergence of “Europeanism” which helped to maintain and extend the EU and in the same time to reduce nationalism (Tapia, 1997);
 - ✓ - the interpenetration of content/communication technologies and private or everyday behaviours

- “Globalisation” entails a process of « glocalization » (Robertson, 1995). Today’s pessimistic vision of globalization has not always predominated. On the contrary! The period of European travels and discoveries from the 15th to the 18th century, emerged both from a “desire for globalization” and “otherness”...
- → Colonialism was also motivated by modern and rational beliefs and values... even if...
- → Globalization as global village (McLuhan, Innis)?
- → Globalization as migration’s and diasporas' experiences (Portes, 1995; Appadurai, 2001)?

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- → Ambivalence, hybridity, heterogeneity of globalization (Warnier Jean-Pierre, 2004, *La Mondialisation de la culture*, Paris, La Découverte, 1^{re} éd. : 1999)?
- Consequently, there is no absolute negative diagnosis in the evaluation of cultural globalization. In general, the different points of view put forward a nuanced evaluation.
- Glocalization teach us about the very sense of the globalization process. Globalization is then: “*the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away, and vice versa*” (Anthony Giddens, 1999, *The Third Way*, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 64)

- By the term “glocalization” we understand an alteration of each regional culture by impregnation of more or less distant local cultures.
- → Inter-minorities influences..
- → Mental transformation of the local attitudes and political philosophy...
- → Contagion of the “bad side” of other human beings.
- This process of "glocalization" functions as a device with multiple influences originating from both “minority”, “deviant” sources and economically structured majority groups.

- Nevertheless, utopian hopes and socialist writings and expectations have not been realized after two centuries of fights and wars.
- In a certain sense, the liberal globalization realized for a limited parts of the humanity, these dreams and hope of abundance.

- **4. Individualism/Neo-tribalism and the main characteristics of liberal Cultural Revolution in the global market**
- According to Dany-Robert Dufour (2007, *Le Divin marché. La révolution culturelle libérale*) and Bernard Stiegler (2008b, *Économie de l'hypermatériel et psychopouvoir*, 2008a, *Prendre soin de la jeunesse et des générations*, Paris, Flammarion.), postmodern societies are divided by two specific fracture lines:
 - →rationalistic and conflicting individualization...
 - →regressive individuation...

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- Dufour characterizes what he calls “liberal cultural revolution” by a process of intensification and extension of the structural characteristics of the market economy and of the whole representation system that it carries along.
- This intensification/generalization is presumably recent. It actually dates from the 1970’s and reached its climax with the hegemony of the financial capitalism and the flexible conception of the industrial production modes.
- It was applied to cultural forms and communication systems. In France, Armand Mattelart describes this process in terms of deregulation of the media and cultural industries (*L’internationale publicitaire*). Pierre-Michel Menger theorizes the same tendency towards professions and modes of art production. Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello pin down a more general critical synthesis of what they call “the new spirit of capitalism” (see bibliography for all these authors).

- What are then the ten psychocultural characteristics of liberal deregulation, according to Dufour?
- 4.1. *The modification of the relationship to one's self*
- 4.2. *The radical transformation of the relationship to the other*
- 4.3. *The transformation of the relationship to the Other (with capital O) : the Market as a new God*
- 4.4. *The dying of the transcendental vision of relationships.*

- 4.5. *The relationship to « the political » replaced by the corporate governance*
- 4.6. *The devaluation of the relationship to knowledge*
- 4.7. *The alteration of the relationship to language*
- 4.8. *The relationship to law: bargaining the rules and the impunity*
- 4.9. *The relationship to art: The lost of the expert techniques and the predominance of speculation*
- 4.10. *The relationship to the unconscious: the logic of urge or impulse at the expense of the desire one.*

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- When going through Dufour’s philosophico-political Decalogue describing the essential properties of neo-liberalism at a cultural level, we get the feeling of living in hell.
- The origin of this poisonous atmosphere comes from the negative impact of an anomy consubstantial with the foundation of capitalism (of which one of the forgotten theorists could be Bernard de Mandeville, French “Huguenot” established in London in 1691)...
- Mandeville Bernard (de), 1714, *La Fable des abeilles ou les fripons devenus honnêtes gens* (deux tomes), Paris, Vrin (éd. 1998 et 2003) (http://books.google.fr/books?id=7EYX_UezM7QC&pg=PA1&dq=La+Fable+des+abeilles) or (http://classiques.uqac.ca/contemporains/boulad_ajoub_josiane/grandes_figures_monde_moderne/grandes_figures_PDF_originaux/Ch20.pdf) or in English : http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Fperson=3870&Itemid=28) .

How to fight these version of globalization and cultural revolution?

- The critical approach is promoted in the name of an elitistic and intellectualist position. It presupposes a demanding culture based on liberating mental effort, an expertise associated with a reasoning encyclopedism. The goal is to transcend the state of nature and animality. This political philosophy is reminiscent of a rationalistic Kantian vision.
- Needless to say that this tendency is linked with the position of giving lessons, i.e. the position of the “teacher”.
- Bernard Stiegler propose to reread Immanuel Kant writings and to adapt them to our postmodern and globalized societies...
- Final comments.