

# The study of Justice within the Social Representations Paradigm

***II° year Research Report***

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# Introductory Remarks: the issue at stake

## Human sense of justice is daily at work (Jasso, 2005)

Everybody **knows** what is just and what is unjust. Everybody shapes his/her conducts in everyday life because he/she **thinks** that it is just or it is unjust to “speak like that” or to “behave like that”

## Justice is a self – evident issue

# Introductory Remarks: the issue at stake

**Human sense of justice is daily at work** (Jasso, 2005)

Everybody **knows** what justice is and what is just but to people it might be arduous to explain what they **know**

**“what do you think justice is?”**

**“do you think that such a situation is just?”**

**“why do you think that such a situation is just?”**

# **I Section**

## **Some theoretical premises to justice analysis**

# The theoretical context to justice analysis

*«It is necessary to make distinctions in the beginning in order to get a better whole account in the end»* (Doise, 1984, p. 288)

## JUSTICE

«Justice Motive» (Lerner, 2003)

«Justice Sense» (Jasso, 2005)

«Common Sense Justice» (Finkel, 1995)

«Psychological Jurisprudence» (Darley, Fulero, Haney, Tyler, 2002)

«Criminal Justice» (Robinson, 2000)

«Lawyering Justice» (Sherwin, 1993)

«Legal Narratives and Legal Culture» (Bruner, 1992)

«Social Justice» and Community Psychology (Fondacaro, Weinberg, 2002)

«Social Justice» and Political Participation (Azzi, Chryssochoou, Klandermans, Simon, 2010)

«Distributive Justice» (Cohn, White and Sanders, 2000)

«Procedural Justice» (Thibaut and Walker, 1981; Tyler, 1989)

«Restorative Justice» (Tyler, 2006)

«Retributive Justice» (Darley, 2002)

# The theoretical context to justice analysis

The importance of justice in people life is to some extent a ***self-evident*** issue, (Lerner, 1975)

***Justice motive***: individual need to believe to live in a world where people get what they deserve (***rules of entitlement***)

...so that...

***Counter normative evaluations***: people reinforce the belief that the world is just by blaming victims of injustice (Doise, 2002)



# The theoretical context to justice analysis

Two different ways of people reacting to justice/injustice, (Lerner, 2003)

- **heuristic-based justice**: evaluation referred to the more intuitive and automatic mode of making-up of the elements of a situation;
- **systematic-based justice**: estimation founded on socially desirable principles and rules describing “thoughtful efforts to do that which is most appropriate” ;

# The theoretical context to justice analysis

## Low – impact situations vs. High – impact situations

(Lerner, 2003)

*“according to this analysis, by employing low impact procedures, investigators inadvertently created the conditions that would produce evidence generally consistent with lay theories of how justice appears in people’s lives, that is, people follow conventional rules [...] when that appears to be the normatively appropriate and the most profitable response” (p. 390).*

# The theoretical context to justice analysis

Two different ways of people reacting to justice/injustice,  
(Lerner, 2003)

- Multiple way of thinking about justice: *normative* and *counter normative*;
- Context framing: justice actual employment;
- Multiple and apparently opponent ways of understanding what is just: justice is *polyphasic*;

***Justice: a “rational theoretical finding”?***

# **The theoretical context to justice analysis**

## **Distributive Justice Model**

The dominant inquiry for distributive justice is which principles or rules orient and shape decisions about the distributive outcomes, they are merit, i.e. deservingness, need, equity, or equality;

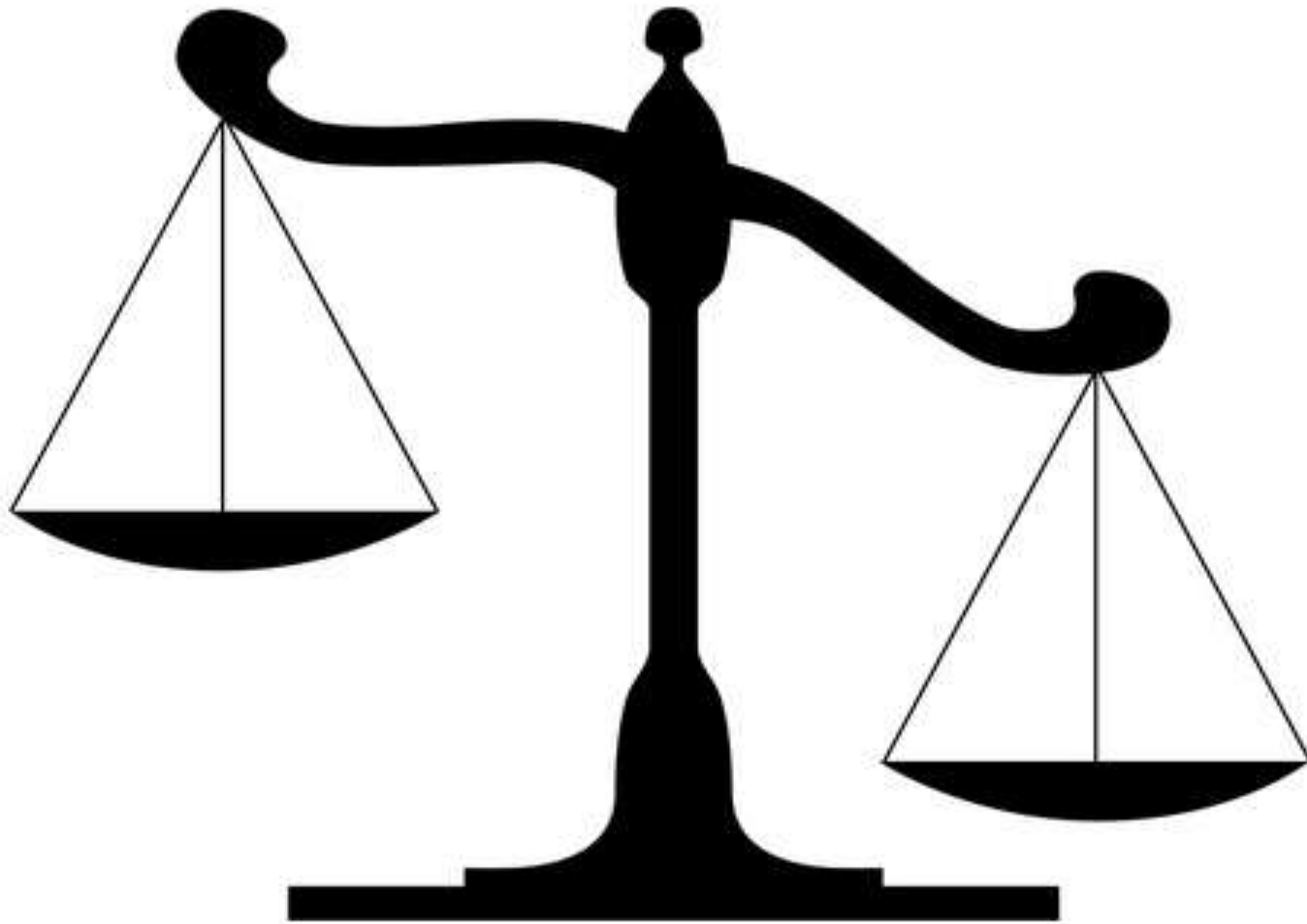
## **Procedural Justice Model**

Procedural Justice can be defined as a form of social justice which pertains the «socio psychological effects of decision making procedures» related to evaluations of decisional processes and interpersonal treatment ;

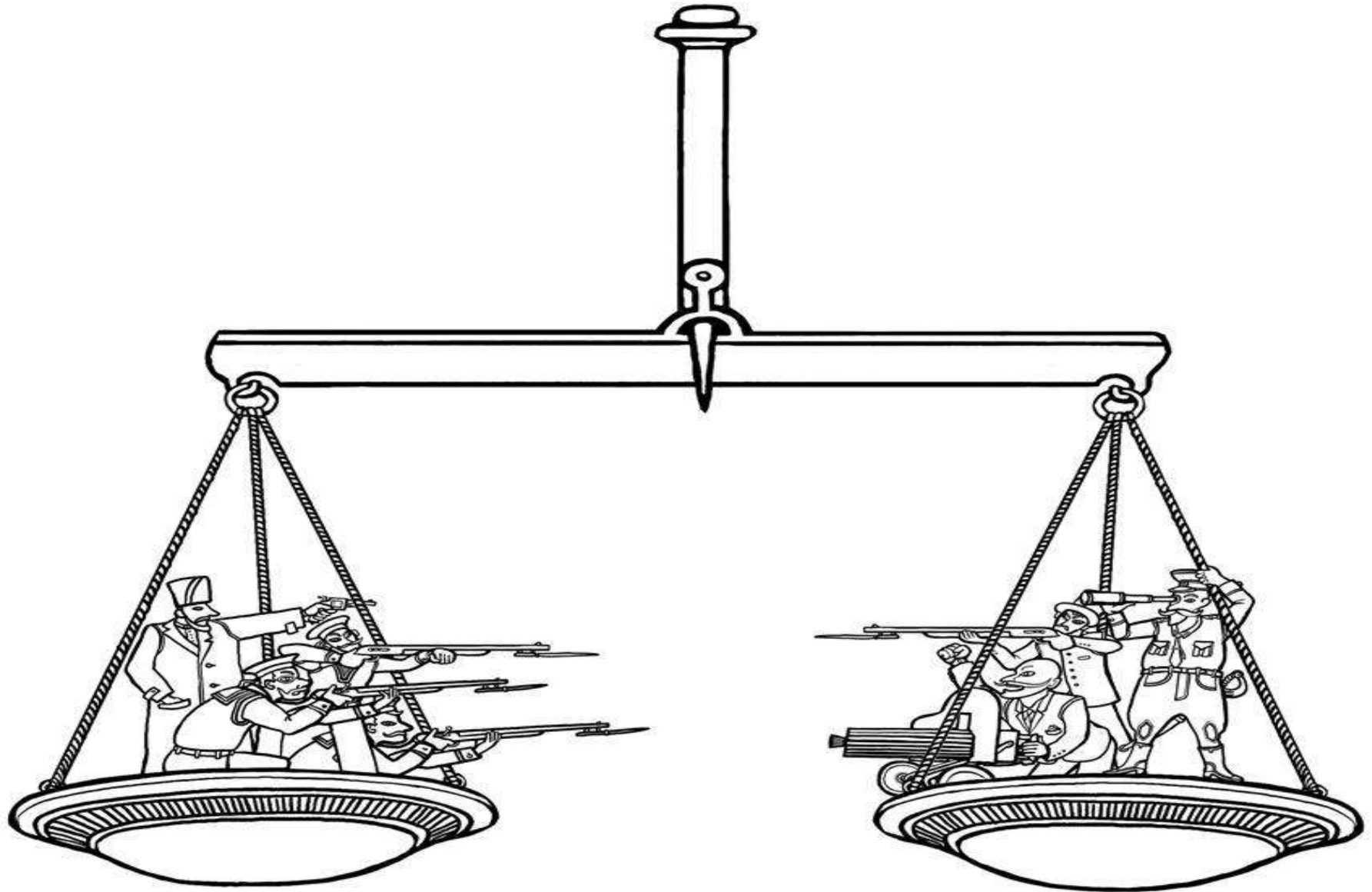
# The theoretical context to justice analysis: a reframing

- ✓ The *I-set*: ideas, concepts, beliefs, rules and principles corresponding to what people *know* and *think* about justice;
- ✓ The *Object*: given situation or aspect of the people material and social world that they need to *make sense of* in order to orient their choices or to shape their conducts;
- ✓ The *Others*: who take part in daily social exchanges and encounters who contribute to form the *I-set* and to make sense of the *object*;

***“What is justice (injustice)?”***

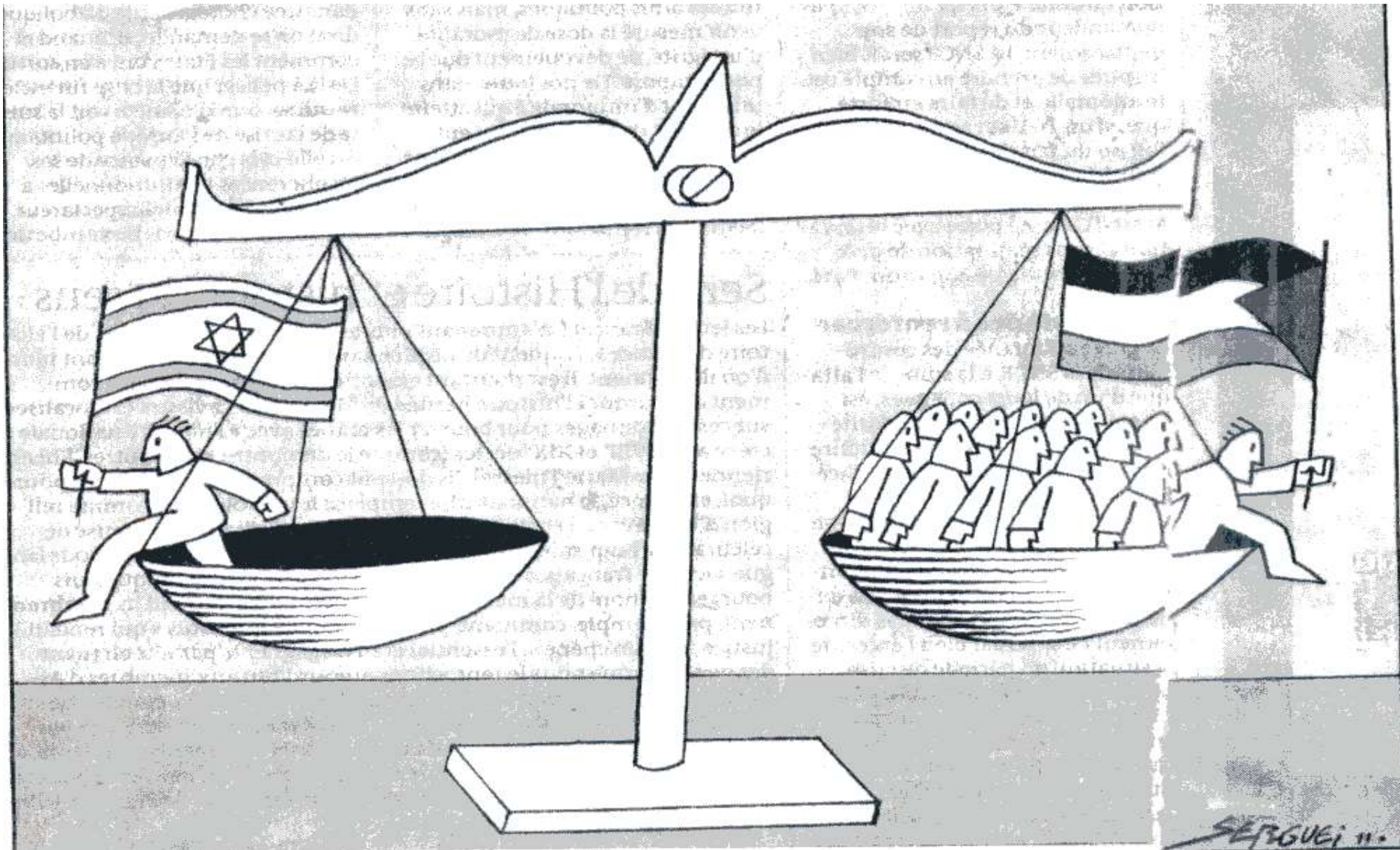


***“Why this situation is just?”***






***“What is justice to people in relation to others?”***







# **II Section**

## **Justice Analysis within Social Representations Paradigm**

# Social Representation Paradigm

*At the end of the first year of doctorate course...*

*Three Phase Model and Dialogical Model*

Should justice be considered a *THEMA* and so a social representations source instead of a social representation *itself*?

Could the two theoretical models *simultaneously* provide two way to theorize justice by considering Justice within social representations paradigm?

# Socio-dynamic approach: the METASYSTEM

«organizing principles of symbolic relationships between individuals and groups»

the study of SR concerns the analysis of the social regulations of the metasytem which intervenes in individual cognitive functioning

*“a kind of metasytem which re-works the material produced by the first [n.d.r. operative]”* (Moscovici 1976, quoted from: Làszlò)

Social or normative metasytem orients and selects the information people need to cope with everyday life challenges in order to preserve the **stability** and the order of what is **already taken for granted** and to **not challenge what they believe**

# Socio-dynamic approach: the METASYSTEM

Lay thinking about justice (Clémence and Doise, 1995)

Individuals who share common knowledge about justice can employ different principles in organizing such a knowledge with regards to specific objects of understanding

People actualize justice meanings in the specific context of daily life so that abstract and general set of rules are anchored in common sense and produce social representations that are accustomed to the specific demands of the social situations

“lay people modulate their evaluations depending on the context and on the others”

# Dialogical approach: THEMATA

Themata can be defined as taxonomies of oppositional nature that are dialogical in themselves

Antinomies are essential to human thinking and that they constitute the basis of common sense

Antinomies become themata: according to specific circumstances, social problems occur and generate social conflicts.

*“Then, they [n.d.r. themata] start generating social representations with respect to the phenomenon in question”* (Markovà, 2003, p. 184)

# Dialogical approach: THEMATA

## Justice as a «thema»?

(Markovà, 2003)

Dialogical Antinomies are typical of any culture

Dialogical Antinomies vary in their contents from a culture to another one

Dialogical Antinomies are symbolic

Justice/Injustice is a basic thema which pertains the fundamental relation between self and others

# **Social Representation Paradigm**

## **The theoretical Status of Justice within SR Paradigm**

Justice might be intended as a thema which generates social representations in the context of social debate deriving from social problems;

Justice might be intended as a social metasystem which provides for normative schemas of social relations that intervenes as well in regulating individual cognitive functioning in the context of symbolic or actual social exchanges;

# Social Representation Paradigm

## The theoretical status of Justice within SR Paradigm

***Common Sense Justice “objects, relations and predictable experiences which makes daily life someway regular and regulated”***

(Markovà, 2009, p. 272, my translation)

Justice meanings are *meaningful* to the extent to which they enable individuals and groups to master their material and social world and to communicate in a not ambiguous or inexplicable way



# **III Section**

## **Justice in «action»**

# The Study: *Rationale*

## ***Justice: thème and metasytem “in action”***

This study aims at pursuing the overall goal to deepen the understanding of the regulative function of common sense justice exploring *how it intervenes in providing for order and in making sense* of those relevant social phenomena which take place in daily life and that might disrupt its ordinary flowing

# The Study: *Research questions*

Which are the principles, norms, values and beliefs that concur in describing and illustrating common sense justice flowing in a given social context?

How the multiple and diverse contents of common sense justice are employed by people to make sense of the divergent aspects of a social phenomenon that occurs in their daily life?

# The Study: *Main Objectives*

Describe (in - depth understanding): common sense justice emphasizing the commonalities between individuals who live in the same social context;

Describe (in - depth understanding): specific and organized views that parallel the particular systems of values, beliefs and norms hold by different groups;

Understand in depth (explain): group mobilization of diverse references that form common sense justice to make sense of specific social objects;

# The Study: *Method*

## **Two different data sets**

Focus Group and Narrative Individual Interview

FG: to explore how people join the meaning making process concerning relevant issues, how they shape and mold their opinions and beliefs, as well how they are presented and re-presented within the context of debate and discussion involving other persons (Wibeck, Adelswärd, and Linell, 2004)

# **The Study: *Method***

## ***Focus Group***

Explore and describe the set of values, principles, norms, beliefs, ideas and conceptions that form common sense justice;

Make relevance of the group positioning within the shared representational field with regard to the specific way different groups employ justice meanings to make sense of the relevant social object under consideration;

# The Study: *Method*

## **The high-impact situation** **The european economic crisis**

Economic crisis is not the matter of investigation of the present study, but it is rather considered as a challenging issue that people are requested to face with and that has ruptured the ordinary flowing of daily life

# The Study: *Method*

## ***FG Participants recruitment***

*“how do we specify appropriate social segments for the study of SR?”*

*(Bauer and Gaskell, 1999, p.176)*

- Purposive Sampling Criteria: no technical expertise
- Judgment Sampling Criteria: the pragmatic context of each groupings (associations, organizations, etc.);

## **Snowballing Recruitment Schema**

1. Call for stakeholders and ask for contacts;
2. Achieve contacts and ask stakeholders to participate;
3. Look at other individuals to include in the participation program;
4. Carry on the snowballing with contacts;



# The Study: *Method*



Contact with participants was made via a private organism which puts together some associations and organizations which operate in the no profit sector at local level in a geographical area of the south of Italy

Group size: from 6 to 8 persons for each group

- to ensure a varied and plural set of opinions and beliefs.
- to ensure that any member may get a reasonable share of participation and may express his/her point of view,

# The Study: *Method*

## ***FG Grid***

1. Word Association Task (justice)
2. Justice Definition
3. Economic Crisis Stimuli: is it just?

Agencies of rating



Outsourcing in work



Indignates



# The Study: *Method*

## **Two different data sets**

Focus Group and Narrative Individual Interview

NII: to leave “the field completely open to the interviewee, by simply asking subjects to tell the story of the event being studied” (Jovchelovitch, 1999,p.8);

NII: the heuristic values of narrative interviews is linked to the conceptual significance of story-telling that parallels one of “the most fundamental forms of human communication” (Barthes, 1988)

# **The Study: *Method***

## **Individual Narrative Interview**

- to explore in greater depth justice topics raised in the focus groups interviews;
- to explore in depth the set of principles, rules, values, norms, and beliefs that form common sense justice;
- to deepen how social actors employ justice meanings to make sense of various experiences;
- to afford auxiliary and background data to correlate with the focus group ones;

# **The Study: *Method***

## ***NII Participants recruitment***

Purposive Sampling Criteria: FG participants

## ***NII Grid***

Generative questions mostly based on narratives accounting and story-telling about justice experiences

*“Could you tell me an experience of justice which is important to you and that you lived in first person? You can start by telling me whatever you want and you think is important. Please, tell it to me from your own point of view as you would do with someone who don’t know anything about that and who is really interested”*

# The Study: *Method*



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## *Administration of FG and NII*

The period comprised between March and June 2012

16 focus groups (106 participants )

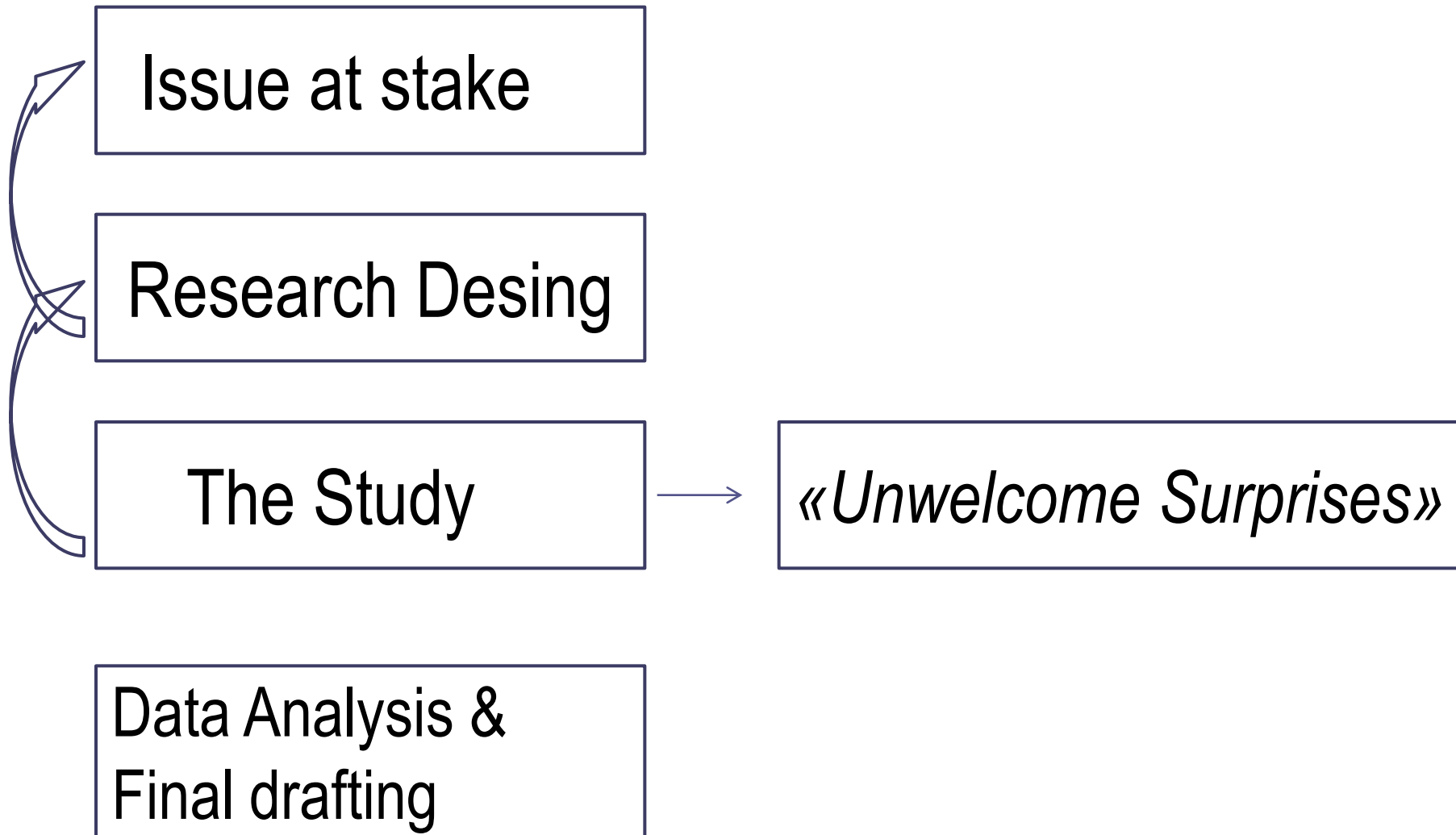
Focus group lasted about one hour and half and conform an informal open discussion format

The minimum group size was 4 and the maximum size was 9.

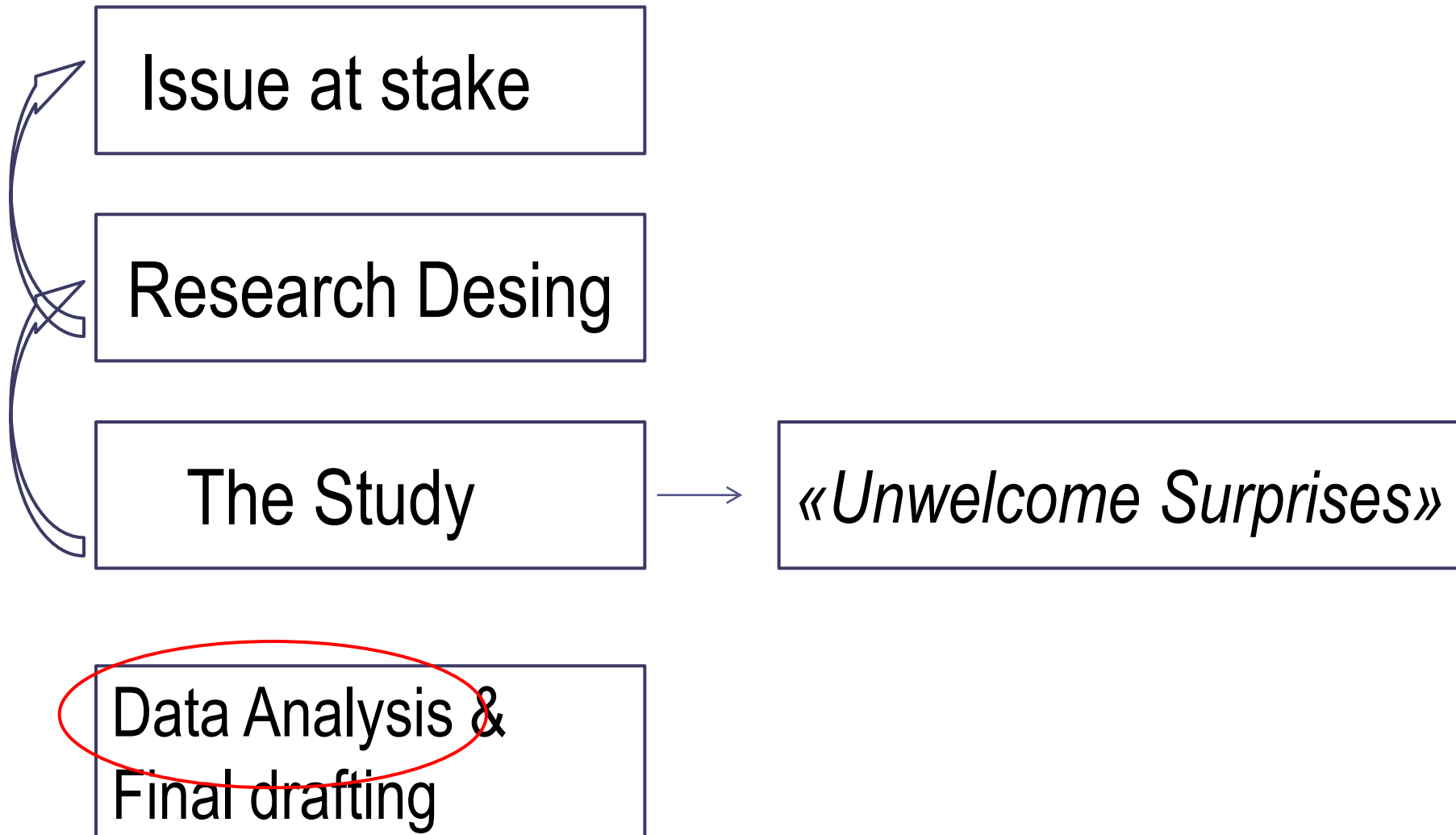
28 narrative individual interviews

Each NII lasted between 30 and 45 minutes

# The Study: *Unwelcome Surprise*



# The Study: *further development*





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