

**EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY THROUGH
DIALOGICAL SELF THEORY:
SUBJECTS' AND *ALTER*'S RELATING WITH SPACE**

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Abstract. This paper aims to express both the static and the dynamic way that Moscovici conceives of the spatial dimension and defines subject (i.e., *representers*, people who represent reality) and *alter* (i.e., person represented by *representers*) in relation to their space. I set the dialogical self theory in a constructive (future-oriented) zone of theoretical innovation to provide some extensions to the social representation theory with respect to Moscovici's work, by focusing particularly on personal anchoring by means of positioning. I illustrate my theoretical avenues by referring to school-family relationship.

Keywords: space, social representation, dialogical self, positioning, anchoring, school-family relationship, *alter*

In this paper, I aim to express both the static and the dynamic way that Moscovici conceives of the spatial dimension and defines subject (i.e., *representers*, people who represent reality) and *alter* (i.e., person represented by *representers*) in relation to their space. I am interested in the three following aspects: the conception of space; the way *representers* relate to space; and the way the *alter* is anchored, which implies the *alter*'s relationship with space.

After presenting the dominant static conception of space described by Moscovici with respect to the *representers*' and *alter*'s way of relating to space, I will identify some of the dynamic avenues that he suggests, but which need further elaboration. I will set the dialogical self theory (DST) in this constructive (future-oriented) zone of theoretical innovation to provide some extensions to the social representation theory (SRT) with respect to Moscovici's work, by focusing particularly on personal anchoring through positioning. Then I will provide illustrations regarding the school-family relationship and conclude by proposing the invisibility of the position's space as a theoretical avenue.

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**The Static Conception of the *Representers'* Relationship With Space
in Moscovici's Theory**

Moscovici (1984) used the environment as a metaphor to capture social representations. The systemic orientation of SRT is well established by referencing some spatial concepts that express the representational process:

By dividing the world in zones where the act of communicating is either free or not, good or bad, we manage to fix and regulate the transition from one group to another, from one reality to another, in short, from one culture to another. [...] The general framework in which the idea of this discipline is entirely grasped contributes not only to establish the functions that we associate with it, but also defines a zone of possible orientations. [...] Now we can look at this reflection more closely by observing how the directions existing within each sector constitute the same number of reference points that can shed light on representation in various ways by organizing around it a network of meaning. This has a structuring effect, because it is an integral part of the act of representing, one's self and one's results (Moscovici, 1961, pp. 199-200; loose translation).¹

In the excerpt, Moscovici defines the anchoring process—situating an object in society in line with usual categories and social spaces (e.g., institutions)—with respect to certain structural zones within the relationship between the individual and the environment.

Although the importance of systemic and structural concepts in Moscovici's (1961; 1984; 1976/2004; 2008) work is undeniable, they are to a large extent anchored (from an epistemological point of view) in a static logic. Concerning the way in which subjects, or more specifically *representers*, relate to their sociocognitive environment, social representations are grounded in what Hermans (founder of DST) calls a *centralized* and (restrictively) *local* view of the Self. This view entails *continuity*, being closed to Others (in particular the people conveying unfamiliarity, that is, *alters*), and stability of a thick *structure* as well as impermeability of different environmental zones, particularly the boundary between the internal and external worlds.

Moscovici (1961) refers explicitly to the elaboration of a *typology* of persons through their *membership* to social categories² (e.g., intellectuals and communists). As a sociocultural way of relating to the environment, this type of membership potentially involves loss of identity (Chaudhary, 2008) and of the freedom to act and think (Adams & Markus, 2001; Valsiner, 2003). Regarding the thinking aspect of membership (i.e., *sharedness*), Chaudhary (2008) shows that when put in a static approach “shared understandings of people are characterized more by monologicality than otherwise”

¹ The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

² Note that when Moscovici refers to the individual, he uses “individual” and “group” as synonyms.

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

(p. 23). Sharedness is not problematic in itself—look for instance at the fact that some sharedness of code is an essential condition of intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1968); a problem occurs when, as in Moscovici’s case, it is largely grounded in a homogeneous environment (Billig, 1988, 2008), at least a static space defined through generic categories. Subjects, defined through their *sameness*—which means that opinions are the same or identical (Valsiner, 2014)—with Others, lose their particularity. This condition implies the removal of the contextual and subjective dimensions (Harré, 1984, 1998; Jahoda, 1988).

Indeed, “now common sense is science made common” (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 29) and in such a perspective, “[r]epresentations are thus a unifying and homogenizing force” (McKinley, Potter, & Wetherell, 1993, p. 135) instead of a personalizing one. With this in mind, what is the meaning Moscovici (1961) refers to about the concepts of concreteness and personalization?

The concepts themselves: consciousness, unconsciousness, and repression are imbued with concrete images [...] As echoes of a customary vision, instances described by psychoanalysis *personify* general categories (p. 33; loose translation).³

While referring, in this excerpt, to the fact that, in his study, the psychoanalytic theory—that the French population receives from the scientific (external) world—makes sense by reflecting the “life” (thus the idea of personalization) of the French population, this “life” is generic and abstract. It seems that concreteness characterizes some general collective reference structures⁴ instead of the particular concrete experience of the specific and concrete subject.

I wonder if the familiar space of the *representers* is really familiar from a subjective and personal (as opposed to impersonal) point of view. So, what does familiarity—a central notion in Moscovici’s theory—mean? Whose space is it?

What I mean is that consensual universes are places where *everybody* wants to feel at home, secure from any risk of friction or strife. All that is said and done there only confirms *acquired beliefs* and interpretations, *corroborates rather than contradicts tradition* (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 24).⁵

³ The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

⁴ While Moscovici (1961) makes a distinction between sociological and psychological categories that he defines as variables, the latter are generic and are not anchored in a contextual and personal space. Here is how he explains the psychological category: “Of course, in this case, age cannot be seen as biological data, but rather as a characteristic of a psychological and social situation of a group belonging to the same *generation*, and that consequently has common attributes. The family’s situation (people living with their parents or who are single), age, and gender define a mode of existence, problems that lead to perceiving psychoanalysis in a field closer to *life*” (p. 42; loose translation). Note that the immediate (notion associated to the concept of concreteness) situation Moscovici refers to in this excerpt is a generic and common space that entails decontextualization and depersonalization.

⁵ The emphasis (italics) is mine.

BOULANGER

The house Moscovici refers to in this excerpt is a *common* house of shared beliefs. This is both the space of *all* (everyone) people situated in it and of *no one* in particular. The dynamic conversational space (i.e., relating socially and building sense), which Moscovici identifies as the house of the French population and the ground for the construction of social representations, is, from the point of view of Simmel (1971),⁶ an impersonal form of sociality. While Moscovici (1961) focuses on the interaction, in particular the conversation that occurs locally between the members of the French population, he does not highlight the ongoing dialogue itself through conversation or discourse analysis. Thus, the space in which the *representers* are situated remains for a large extent static. Referring to such a static conception of the Self, Hermans (1996) asks:

The question can be posed as to how such a crude, undifferentiated structure can mediate the diversity of behaviours to which it is supposedly related. The answer has been to view the self as a multifaceted phenomenon, as a set of schemas, conceptions, images, prototypes, theories, goals, tasks or facets (p. 33).

While Moscovici's reference to the concept of polyphasia (i.e., the co-existence of different modes of thinking and systems of representations) fits with the answer provided by Hermans in this excerpt, this concept is mostly lost in the static space in which it is applied. In fact, although Moscovici (1961) admits that individuals can be members of different groups, he posits a boundary between the zones within the internal world, and between this world and the external world.

This phenomenon supposes that local people (the French population) are closed to unfamiliar zone:

Similarly, if social representation theorists stress anchoring one-sidedly, they will find themselves describing the ways in which individuals anchor themselves to social knowledge: the thinking individual will be perceived as someone who unthinkingly seeks to avoid novelty by automatically categorizing fresh information in terms of familiar schemata. There is a danger that this picture will omit the role of argumentation and the clash between justification and criticism in the maintenance of social knowledge (Billig, 1988, p. 13).

Looking at the fixed spatial position of the generic and abstract subjects who are probably to a large extent *unanchored* in "their own" (common and static) familiar environment, I wonder (relative to Hermans' quote above) if such a structure can entail movement toward unfamiliar zones. In anonymity, the members of the population converse in a local space separated from the external world, that is, in the *local* and

⁶ Simmel (who died in 1918) does not refer to Moscovici's work. I create this dialogue around the way conversational space is defined by both of them.

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

splitting (exclusive separation, see Valsiner, 1987) logic of postmodernism.⁷ The fact that *representers* are closed to the external world challenges their relationship with the *alter*, which is the newcomer (the psychoanalyst in Moscovici's study is the *represented*) located in or coming from this external world and represented by the *representers*—represented as such because it is a stranger.

Relationship With the *alter* in Moscovici's Internal and External Worlds

The other person (the *alter*, that is represented), who comes from the external world, is defined with respect to the same static conception of space. When Moscovici refers to the social representations of the psychoanalyst (a *person*), he focuses on the way that an *object* is defined by the members of the French population. In fact, in his study, these people never meet the psychoanalyst directly. The emphasis is on the relationship *about*, and not *with*, the psychoanalyst, who is considered as an object of discourse instead of a participant in the discursive local zone.

The fact that members of the French population are closed to the unfamiliar is expressed by the static fitting of the stranger with local anchors. Here, the tendency to “personify general categories” (Moscovici, 1961, p. 33; loose translation) makes sense in a certain way since anchoring implies: 1) the stranger's depersonalization; 2) and by way of contrast, the stranger's categorization—that Moscovici associated with the objectivation process in 1961 and the anchoring process in 1984—with respect to *representers'* (and Moscovici's) own categorization systems. The newcomer is placed in a fixed and largely predetermined environment:

[T]hey [social representations] *conventionalize* the objects, persons and events we encounter. They give them a definite form, locate them in a given category and shared by a group of people. All new elements adhere to this model and merge into it. Thus we assert that the earth is round, we associate communism with the colour red, inflation with the decreasing value of money. Even when a person or an object doesn't conform precisely to the model, we constrain it to assume a given form, to enter a given category, in fact to become identical to the others, at the risk of its being neither understood, nor decoded (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 7).⁸

The contrast that I mentioned is expressed in this excerpt by modelling and fitting the *alter* through *our* space and anchors (e.g., categories). The *alter* is categorized (in a typological logic) according to a prototype representing a generic and ideal-type of person and representing the typical characteristics of the category (in an undifferentiated manner) in which each individual is inserted (Moscovici, 1984a; for a critique of this aspect see Harré, 1988). Newcomers lose their particularities and are

⁷ We don't say here that SRT is part of postmodernism (see Raudsepp, this special issue), but we emphasize the presence of localism and a splitting logic that is close to or part of postmodernism.

⁸ The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

potentially rendered *inexpressive* through their monological relationship with the environment as they risk not being understood (see excerpt above). The conventions (anchors) potentially render the *alter* inaccessible.

As ordinary people, without the benefit of scientific instruments, we tend to consider and analyse the world in a very similar way; especially as the world with which we deal is social through and through. Which means that we are never provided with any information which has not been distorted by representations “*superimposed*” on objects and on persons which give them a certain vagueness and make them partially *inaccessible* (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 6).⁹

So, if anchoring makes the invisible (unfamiliar, inaccessible) visible (familiar, accessible), then the static aspect of the anchors also makes the *alter* inaccessible. Not only is the *alter* put in the background and in the shadow of the *representers* (excerpt above), but it is potentially rendered invisible:

The invisibility is not due to any lack of information conveyed to the eyeball, but to a pre-established fragmentation of reality, a classification of the people and things which comprise it, which makes some of them visible and the rest invisible (Moscovici, 1984a, p. 5).

In this way, the *alter* is not fully seen nor heard as the *representers* see and hear what fits in their house. Paradoxically, while the *alter* can be situated in the *representers*’ environment, it risks being anchored to the point of becoming inexpressive:

Social use has removed any arbitrary element and made it possible to *place* or *locate* psychoanalysis in the world of social categories [...] The statements that have nurtured such a verbal activity [...] have penetrated reality to the extent that they are no longer expressive because their simple presence is sufficient (p. 38; loose translation).¹⁰

So, the very (stable) presence of the *alter* in the environment does not guarantee its expressivity (his voice). If anchoring involves the object’s meaning, and if it is defined as the “active pole of the subject’s choice” (Moscovici, 1976/2004, p. 63; loose translation), how can the *alter* be signified, that is, rendered expressive and used for the (unfamiliar) resource it has to offer?

⁹ The emphasis (italics) is mine.

¹⁰ The emphasis (underlining) is mine. The italics come from the author. Note that the verbalism referred to in this excerpt implies fuzzy structures and boundaries. For this reason, it can sustain creativity (see Boulanger *b*, in this special issue).

Overcoming Moscovici's Static Approach

Synthesis and illustration of limitations.

The limitations that I identified with respect to Moscovici's static approach can be summarized as follows: as a generic category closed to the unfamiliar, the *representers* and the *represented* (*alter*) are situated in restrictive areas of a static environment with permeable boundaries.

This situation is very problematic since globalization implies a dynamic conception of space entailing confrontation with the unfamiliar and crossing boundaries (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010). Social representations should thus focus on openness to Others coming from outside while taking into account the tension associated with boundary crossing.

In the field of SRT, Howarth, Cornish and Gillespie (2015) study the movement of actors crossing boundaries for the purpose of partnership and engagement. To grasp how partnership and engagement—concepts implying tension and confrontation with the unfamiliar (Boulanger, 2018)—translate into Moscovici's framework, I studied parental engagement by analysing the discourse of stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations) who participated in a partnership program implemented in poor areas in Canada (Boulanger, 2016).

As expressed by the scientific literature in the field of school, family and community partnership, my results (presented in Boulanger, 2016) show, on the one hand, that stakeholders (*representers*) generally consider themselves in relation to the program and to the school in an abstract and impersonal way; they thus form an undifferentiated aggregate. On the other hand, parents (the *represented*, the *alter*) are generally represented as strangers posing a potential threat to children's learning. They are rarely considered through their specificity; they are all labelled parents *from* a poor area whose practices are risky for their children.

In this study, whose results are published in Boulanger (2016), I discover the limitations of SRT. First, as (practical) environments (Moscovici, 1984a), social representations are static and imply the depersonalization of the person (both the *representers* and the *represented*) situated in a static space. Second, as a theoretical tool, SRT prevents me from identifying exceptions, that is, particular cases in which the *representers* situate (positioning) themselves more freely in a flexible space and the *alter* (the *represented*) is rendered expressive. While I look for alternative frameworks, in this study I remain critical about SRT limitations and try to understand what remains *invisible* in this theory. As a result, I find some interesting avenues (presented later) both in SRT and elsewhere (we will soon refer to DST).

Based on the fact that social psychology aims to articulate the individual and the social (Moscovici, 1984b), I recognize the need for “bridging the divide between self

and other” (O’Sullivan-Lago, 2011, p. 3.1) at the boundary of a dynamic and flexible space. This supposes that I need to take into account “that in looking at these elements of individual variability in this way, the investigator is not examining something asocial” (Good, 1993, p. 174). The Self dimension is missing in Humanities and Social Sciences (Stetsenko, 2008). This is what Zittoun (2012) clearly mentions:

Social and behavioral sciences have largely analyzed these channeling forces—social representations and beliefs, institutions, interactions with significant Others, as well as one’s personal history. Yet much less attention has been given to how, still, unique persons, a unique subjectivity, can at each emerge out of these streams of determinations (p. 261).

There is a need to display the dynamic aspect of SRT by highlighting the contextual and personal dimensions of the Self.

SRT and DST at the heart of centralization and decentralization.

To understand the concept of social representations in a dynamic perspective, I will first have to consider that SRT is characterized by an approach that is both static and dynamic. The static aspect of SRT, which is salient, renders the dynamic aspect invisible. The fixed and homogenous environment, more particularly with respect to SRT’s boundary zone, decontextualization, and depersonalization are the major obstacles that put in the background this theory’s dynamic side. I need a *decentralized* movement using some external theory—as mediational tools—to reframe some of the principles conveyed by SRT concerning Moscovici’s theoretical work. For the purpose of this article, I will refer to DST. I also need some theoretical anchors from SRT itself; I will thus refer to a *centralized* movement using the dynamic aspect of SRT. To do so, I will have to look at some of the *particular* principles conveyed, but not fully elaborated by Moscovici. Some of these principles contradict his own general approach and form *exceptional* ideas. I will also refer to some of Moscovici’s ideas conveyed after the publication of his principal works in 1961 and 1976.

Sometimes, Moscovici (1961) went back and forth from static to dynamic in a contradictory logic. For example, speaking about the individual’s participation in a globalized and heterogeneous society while, some lines and pages later, expressing the fact that society is unitary and composed of well-delimited groups and thought systems. Often, the same content is simultaneously defined in relation to a static aspect and a dynamic aspect. Yet, beside the contradiction between these two aspects of SRT, the dynamic aspect also entails tension, which is a key to our endeavour.

Open theoretical space and flexibility of DST

In fact, I will create an open theoretical space that will provide arguments for and against SRT fitting with DST. It is through this tension that DST will make sense as

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

an extension tool. The centralized and decentralized theoretical movements that characterize the open theoretical space are interrelated and future-oriented.

This creative and proactive (instead of prospective) space is also possible because DST is an open and flexible theoretical framework that allows conceptual bridging between some dimensions, for instance the spatial aspect that interests me:

Altogether, the concept of positioning, and its variations such as “repositioning,” “I-position,” “meta-position,” “third position,” “coalition of positions,” “composition,” and “depositioning” allow us to stretch the theory into different directions so that phenomena that are usually treated in their separate qualities can be brought together in a more comprehensive theoretical framework. The advantage of such a *bridging framework* is that it brings insights, meanings, and experiences, back and forth, so that the description or analysis of one phenomenon can profit from the other ones (Hermans & Kempen, 1993, p. 11).¹¹

Below, I present some of the principles of DST and associated principles of the SRT by highlighting the way in which the former permits the extension of the latter.

Toward a dynamic conception of space: Extension of SRT using DST.

The spatial aspect is central to DST, as expressed by the emphasis on the concept of position. DST focuses on the spatial dialogue of the Self with Other (*alter*) within the internal and external worlds through permeable boundaries, by means of a dynamic positioning interplay. “*I as knower*” interprets reality subjectively; this position is characterized by continuity (intra stability through time), volition (appropriation and rejection of thoughts), and distinctiveness (inter-individual variation). “*I as known*”—which is to say *Me*—is the empirical Self extended toward one’s environment and comprises all that is *Mine*. *Me* is the object of the discourse and reflective activity of *I-as-Knower*. DST articulates personal and social positions:

The distinction between individual and collective corresponds to the distinction between two kinds of positions in which people may find themselves located: social and personal positions (see also Harré & Vangenhove, 1991, for a comparable distinction). Social positions are governed and organized by societal definitions, expectations and prescriptions, whereas personal positions receive their form from the particular ways in which individual people organize their own lives, sometimes in opposition to or protest against the expectations implied by societal expectations (Hermans, 2001, p. 263).

Collective voices constrain the Self, but it can to some extent reconstruct itself in an innovative way (see the concept of dependent-independence in Valsiner, 1987) by means of positioning dynamics (in particular counter-positioning). The Self’s zone of

¹¹ The emphasis (italics) is mine.

action is more or less free in society. The Self is composed of internal and external positions as illustrated by Hermans (2001):

In this example we see at least two external positions in the self of the mother: her daughter's friend and her brother, who are experienced in similar ways. At the same time, there are two internal positions involved: the mother as a critic and the mother as vulnerable (p. 225).

The different positions interact in a dynamic way as they are endowed with voices. They thus enter into a dialogue: "On the basis of this distinction, the storyteller can be considered the *I*, whereas the story or narrative figures as *Me*" (Hermans, 1996, p. 38). This emphasis on the voice differentiates the concept of dialogical self (DS) from others such as schemata that are considered voiceless entities like social representation (more on this later). In this line of thought, DS is more dynamic than schemata and social representation, which are core and self-contained concepts.

The complex of society of the mind involves recognizing the plasticity of space. Moscovici (1984a) partly recognizes the plasticity of the environment and its boundaries:

[R]epresentations, in his [Durkheim] theory, are like a thickening of the fog, or else they act as stabilisers for many words or ideas - like layers or stagnant air in a society's atmosphere, of which it is said that one could cut them with a knife. Whilst this is not entirely false, what is most striking to the contemporary observer is their mobile and circulating character; in short their plasticity. We see them, more, as dynamic structures, operating on an assembly of relations and of behaviours which appear, and disappear, together with the representations (p. 18).¹²

While the static view of social representations that Moscovici refers to is "not entirely false" (p. 18), it is still fundamental to their conventional nature. However, recognizing the plasticity and the dynamic structures of social representations is useful to me.

And yet, DST is much clearer about such a dynamic conception of structures. Concerning the notion of unity in diversity, Valsiner and Han (2008) clearly describe the structure tackled in DST:

Van Meijl (2008) provides a look at the DS theory from the angle of contemporary anthropology. He takes an issue with the globalization effect on uncertainty on self—self is a *unity but it is not unitary*. Uncertainty is one of myriad reaction in the cultural contact zone. The self is disunited and dialogue is essential to maintain a balance between multicultural selves. [...] What happens in the relationships of I-positions is the negotiation of functional unity of the self—different parts of the self

¹² The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

are loosely and temporarily connected with one another, which leads to tension in some of these relations (but not others) and is the basis for *adaptation to all the new encounters* that social reality—globalization—might bring (Tsuda, 2000). The dialogical interaction among I-positions is to establish unity—but this process is *never-ending as instead of unity of structures* (“the core self”) we arrive at steady states of *unity of loosely structured* but focally functioning cores of human beings. Uncertainty of living guarantees the functional nature of such solution (p. 5).

The decentralized conception of the Self and its dynamic way of relating to a globalized environment implies constant tensions and dialogues between positions endowed with voices. But Moscovici (1984a) barely discusses voice:

In the consensual universe, society is a visible, continuous creation, permeated with meaning and purpose, possessing a human *voice*, in accord with human existence and both acting and reacting like a human being. In other words, man is, here, the measure of all things (p. 20).¹³

In keeping with what we mentioned earlier about Moscovici’s static view of the self, I ask the same question as Jahoda (1988): “since social representations are not uniform but said to vary across different social groups, what is the relationship between them and *this* voice?” (p. 198).¹⁴ In other words, how is this voice plural? I am dealing here with the issue of conciliating a homogeneous perspective of social representations with a dynamic conception (e.g., in accordance with the concept of polyphasia). The issue at stake also concerns the owner of the voices. Is it a collective or a personal voice? In the excerpt below, Moscovici (1984a) uses two pronouns to distinguish a consensual from a reified world:

Even our use of the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘they’ can express this contrast, where ‘we’ stands for the groups of individuals to whom we relate and ‘they’- the French, scholars, State systems, etc.- to a different group, to which we do not, but may be forced to, belong. The distance between the first and the third person plural expresses the distance which separated the first and the third person plural expresses *a social place* where we fell included from a given, indeterminate or, at any rate, *impersonal place*. This lack of identity, which is at the root of modern man’s psychic distress, is a symptom of this necessity to see oneself in terms of ‘we’ and ‘they’; to oppose ‘we’ to ‘they’; and thus of one’s *inability to connect* the one with the other. *Groups and individuals* try to overcome this necessity either by identifying with ‘we’, and this enclosing themselves in a world apart, or by identifying with ‘they’, and become robots of bureaucracy and the administration (p. 20).¹⁵

¹³ The emphasis (italics) is mine.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

How is it possible for *We* and *They* to connect if, in a typical postmodernist logic, the *alter* (*They*) standing outside is defined in a contrasted (splitting) way as impersonal and bureaucratic (grand-narrative)? Is *We* the pronoun of a group or of the individual? Moscovici refers to the pronouns *We* and *They* in reductionist (either/or) logic without recognizing the personal and specific characteristics of the subject (*I* and *Me*). These conditions undermine Moscovici's efforts, in another paper published the same year (1984*b*), to display the dialogic aspect of social psychology by referring to the triad *ego-alter-object*. Although useful for the purpose of my reflection, this triad may be rooted in a static perspective if the subjects are abstract and impersonal. In the same logic, I have shown that using the concept of polyphasia—which is an important aspect of the *ego-alter-object* triad—does not make SRT part of a dynamic approach when the systems interacting are static and if they are separated by permeable boundaries.

One of the keys to improving my understanding of a dynamic approach is the concept of globalization. Moscovici partially recognizes this concept, but contradicts it by insisting on the homogeneous and anthropocentric aspects of social representations. DST allows a more dynamic articulation of the global and local dimensions by conceiving the Self as a space in which tension exists between the *movements* of globalization and localization in the “society of the mind”:

[T]he landscape of the mind as a “society of mind” is never a self-contained unity, but is constantly subjected to the opposing forces of globalization and localization. The corresponding movements, centering and decentering, impel in opposite directions. When the decentering movements dominate over the centering one, the self becomes discontinuous, fleeting, and fragmented; when the centering movements dominate over the decentering ones, the self becomes stabilized, with the risk of closing itself off from innovative impulses (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 62).

The internal and external worlds are linked by a constant tension between global (decentralizing) and local (centralizing) movements. Through tensions, the Self is thus constantly moving at the boundary of and coming into dynamic interaction with different zones (Hermans & Kempen, 1993). The Self actively addresses and responds to the Other (*alter*); they are in constant dialogue—sometimes monological in nature—within these worlds. This dialogical conception of the Self and of the *alter* is made possible by the dynamic (dialogical) conception of space. Thanks to the flexible extension of the environment in the landscape of the Self, the focus is on the Self's situation in an immediate *context* and on the Self's *personal* space, which includes Others in the form of an audience (more on this later).

Let's see the cues that Moscovici provides to situate SRT at the contextual and personal levels of the self. Moscovici (1961) mentions that representational systems can

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

be more or less organized and structured. Sometimes, it contains a stable core that organizes—in a centralizing movement—the different semantic elements, but sometimes these are linked in a fuzzier logic (decentralizing movement) while also having a structural component. This structure can occur around collective aspects like ideologies or around more personal aspects like attitudes. Although, in Moscovici's logic, the specific subject is lost in a generic and abstract system of attitudes (common to individuals), this focus on personal aspects in a more decentralized structure provides a key to connect SRT with DST. Moscovici even specifies that the lack of organization in some structures prevents him from “extricating a *typology* from respondents” (1961, p. 53; loose translation).

Moscovici (1984a) proposes three types of social representations: hegemonic (Durkheimian logic), emancipated (each group has its social representations), and polemical (based in conflict and antagonism between the members of a group). The polemical type is an open door to considering, potentially through inter-individual differences, the subject in immediate interaction with Others (the other *representers* and the *alter*). The collective voices that Hermans mentions seem to fit polemical structures. In accordance with Hermans' recognition of cultural patterns, collective voices also fit emancipated structures. Nevertheless, as Chaudhary (2008) and Adams (2000) note, DST needs a more structured conception of the Self grounded in patterns and traditions. If this is true, the core structural conception of SRT associated with hegemonic and emancipated structures could complete DST. While I insist more on a flexible and fluid conception of structure in this paper, I also recognize that there is a stabilized aspect.

DST allows an extension of the polemical structure's dynamism and makes it possible to situate SRT more clearly at the personal and contextual levels, that is, in the latter case, the layer of interaction in an immediate situation. Moscovici shifts from a static to a dynamic approach. While on one hand, he insists more on the level of analysis of the group and society, on the other hand, his idea of conversation as a dynamic field of encounters is highlighted:

Without forcing the data, it is not an error to highlight that accepting or rejecting a psychoanalytical action is understood as part of an interpersonal, intersubjective, and complete framework when it is positive, but objective and partial when it is negative. [...] Despite the importance of this interpersonal framework, the specific psychological situation in which the whole representation appears emphasizes this or that aspect (p. 123; loose translation).

The *representers' own spatial situation* (first section of this paper) *provides orientation for the way that the alter (the represented) is anchored* (second section of this paper). If I consider the *object* of representation as a *person*, this excerpt provides a key to thinking about the way that an *alter* is contrastingly anchored in two zones: a generic and abstract space or, on the contrary, a particular and specific space.

About the latter, Moscovici (1961) shows how the process of anchoring occurs when there is a contradiction between the external (from the psychoanalytic theoretical framework) and the internal (local population) conception of the Self:

Complete refusal may follow as well as an attempt to *mediate*: people handle by *themselves* the information acquired on the structure and dynamics of their own behaviour. [...] [I]f they wish it, they can overcome their difficulties without outside intervention, in one way or another (pp. 46-47; loose translation).

Moscovici (1961) completes by mentioning that “[s]ubjects who have a favourable attitude toward psychoanalysis find in this *weakly structured* image a *free space* in which to imagine the analytical situation as they wish” (p. 60; loose translation).¹⁶ Sometimes, the space in which *representers* anchor the *alter* is flexible and contains permeable boundaries. This enables them to anchor the *alter* in a contextual and more personal way. The author also mentions, in reference to Stern, that an external object is not simply interiorized but actively structured.

In 1961, Moscovici also admitted, albeit briefly, that the Self is endowed with an audience, a generalized Other. In 1984, his approach became even more in line with DST since he suggested that the Self is populated with characters:

In addition, we have the right to observe that in each individual resides a society: a group of imaginary or real characters, heroes who are admired, friends and *enemies*, brothers and parents, who nurture the individual’s ongoing internal dialogue. And who even manage to have relationships with the individual *without him or her being aware of it* (p. 5; loose translation).¹⁷

Instead of saying that the Self relates to Others *without their knowledge*, Hermans emphasizes the fact that this kind of relationship is *central* to the Self’s interaction with the world. Hermans and Hermans-Konopka (2010) develop this aspect much more than Moscovici by placing the Other (voice) in an extended landscape of the Self. In DST, the Other is not excluded but included in the landscape of the Self, and the interaction with Others happens within the internal and external worlds through flexible boundaries.

Although barely mentioned, the representational aspect (of the object and the *alter*) is not absent from DST:

Morris (1994) has emphasized that the self is not an entity but a process that orchestrates an individual’s personal experience as a result of which he or she becomes self-aware and self-reflective about her or his place in the surrounding world. The concept of self may accordingly be defined as an individual’s mental *representation* of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

her or his own person, as a self-representation, while the concept of other refers to the mental representation of other persons (Van Meijl, 2008, p. 177).¹⁸

Looking at the social and dialogical nature of the Self and at its *anchoring* in an immediate context, I should, in this excerpt, replace “mental” representation with “social” representation as the space of the society of the Self. This implies a more contextual, dialogical, and personal (Self) understanding of the concept of social representation than what Moscovici achieves. I examine this aspect more closely by referring to the “repertory of the self” (DST) (Figure 1).

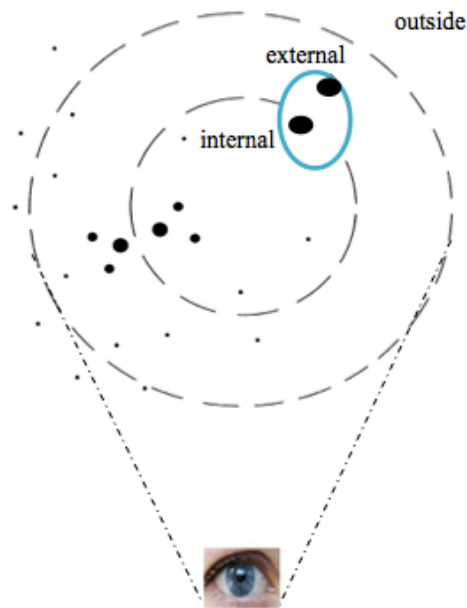


Figure 1. Representational Space¹⁹

This extensive zone (the “society of the Self”) contains many positions situated more or less at the centre of the Self or on its periphery. These positions are related in some zones (the blue one). The quantity of positions, their texture (size), and their spatial situation express the inter-variability—and possibly the intra-variability, if I take into account the time dimension of a position that is moving—of the representational zone. Relating to the constructivist orientation that Moscovici partly refers to, I focus here (the eye) on the idea that the “repertory of the Self” contains everything that the Self presents to itself in its own way (the reference to the syllable “re” in representation), that is, what the Self *represents*.

¹⁸ The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

¹⁹ Adaptation of Hermans (2001, p. 252).

BOULANGER

From the perspective of DST, and in line with Moscovici's constructivist orientation, objects are not mere copies of the Self; they are endowed with a voice, associated with the particular intonation of the Self. The *alter* is in this way innovatively created and humanized! As a particular subject in an authentic relationship with Others—as expressed by addressivity and responsivity (Bakhtin, 1929/1970)—the Self is defined as a process happening in an immediate context²⁰ (hence the focus on topology instead of typology).

In these conditions, anchoring occurs in a contextual and personal space and entails dialogue with the Other as a human. Anchoring could therefore be conceived of as an open space for dialogue that sustains the reciprocal expressivity of the *representer* and the *alter* (the *represented*) through their movement of positioning within the internal and external worlds.

Openness to unfamiliarity is important. DST promotes confronting strangeness and uncertainty, as well as dialogical meeting in a contextual and personal situation that is collaborative and participative in nature. Moscovici (1961) partially supports this reasoning:

Opposition to making psychoanalysis accessible to the layperson is fuelled by other apprehensions. People worry about the *anonymous* force—that applies a subtle restrictive action through the press, the radio, and fashion—because it results from a category of people whose skills we cannot assess and who embody this “*on généralisé*.” Feeling like one is not *participating* in spreading a system of concepts provokes resistance to any content that may be conveyed. Preventing *this kind of exchange* is usually accompanied by a derogatory judgment regarding the quality of the message (p. 189; loose translation).²¹

Thus, subjects resist anonymous forms of sociality (Simmel, 1971), and would rather participate or be included. They don't want to receive abstract and anonymous definitions of themselves and their way of relating to the environment. They want to be *engaged* in this process of definition. This perspective opens the door to dialogical and collaborative forms of exchange in a contextual and personal space, in a flexible environment that allows their active participation and dynamic construction of the *alter's* position (in a collaborative logic). This is necessary since, from the point of view of DST, globalization requires an “investigation of the ways in which severe conflicting positions can be reconciled so that they are no longer experienced as competitive or mutually exclusive, but as *cooperating* and mutually complementing” (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 70).²² This perspective expresses the importance for participants to be “able to construct a common dialogical space in which they permit

²⁰ Hermans (1996) grounds DST in contextualism.

²¹ The emphasis (underlining) is mine.

²² Ibid.

themselves to be influenced by the parties involved” (ibid., p. 47). Such common dialogical spaces involve openness to Others and their perspective, and thus expressivity.

In the next section, I will present some illustrations of the dynamic conception of anchoring that I have just identified. To do so, I will rely quickly and broadly tackle—without identifying excerpts (for more details read Boulanger, 2016)—the school-family relationship (implying *partnership* and *engagement*) mentioned earlier. I will focus on the three central aspects of the paper: 1) the conception of space, 2) the *representers’* relationship with space, 3) and the way the *alter* is anchored.

Brief Application to School-Family Relationship in a Partnership Program

Representational space.

In my study (Boulanger, 2016), I perform a textual data analysis of discourse of stakeholders grounded in a qualitative approach (Py, 2012) to take into account the inter-individual variability.

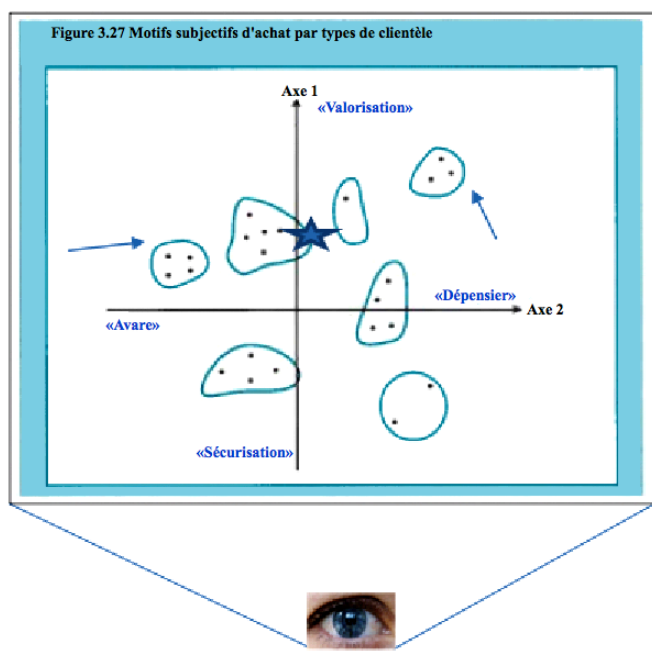


Figure 2. Distribution of Discourse Elements²³

The large square at the top of Figure 2 is an illustration of the graphical distribution of discourse elements I obtained during the first phase of the analysis. The “keywords” used by the stakeholders are distributed in the *representational space* (and

²³ Adaptation of Py (2012), p. 95.

linked to the subjects). I do not insist on what is common to all the stakeholders (professionals from the school and other community organizations)—the elements of discourse situated in the middle (star)—but on what is both peripheral (“decentralized”) and “shared” by some subjects, in particular what is far from the centre (the zone the arrows point to).

I perform an in-depth qualitative analysis of these zones. I focus on “similarity” rather than “sameness” because the former presupposes sufficient closeness (Marková, 2004) for subjects to share contextually, to “*coordinate* themselves” without necessarily being vectors of a relationship that is identical to the objet (Valsiner, 2014). Similarity implies inter-individual difference as well as dynamic convergence. This may be the case of individuals who are doing a coordinated activity together, sharing a common goal, but differing in their approach (Branco & Valsiner, 1997). Not only do two “groups” (I don’t insist here on membership), but so do the subjects (blue circle in Figure 1 and zones or constellations in Figure 2). This is exactly what I identify. While the different zones are interrelated and their subjects share some objects, there are discord—the representational space is polemical—and many particularities.

The interesting observation I make is that what is *particular is not asocial* and not marginal with respect to the population’s anchors. The particular aspects are not outside the representational space that is an extended zone. Sometimes, in *one* subject’s discourse, I notice the presence of *all* the categories commonly used by this subject and the other subjects in that zone (*all* of the participants in a constellation or zone). This is a sign that society is in the mind! A good metaphor is the intergenerational home viewed as a common space that is occupied differently by each generation (zone) and by each participant. The school can also be divided in different zones.

The specific subject sharing some objects of discourse with Others also has his or her own specific orientations towards the environment. These specificities are largely rendered invisible by Moscovici’s approach, but are made visible by the approach I am developing here. To further develop the metaphor of the school, I expand the schema (Figure 1) of representational space.

In the Figure 3 (see top next page), I add to Hermans’ original schema two systems (green squares)—for example, school and family or different rooms (zones) in the school—linked by a road (or corridor) where the movement of the Self (representer) and *alter* (*represented*) occurs. The subjects (stakeholders as *representers*) position themselves and the parents (*alter*) within the school environment. This anchoring implies that the *representers* are in control of positioning the *alter* in this space.

In general, my analysis show that parents are rendered inexpressive through such positioning. For example, they are positioned in very restricted zones: they can be

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

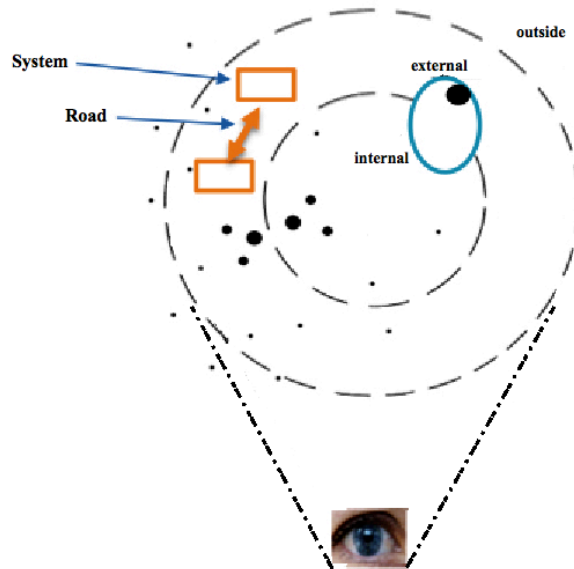


Figure 3. Distribution of Discourse Elements in Representational Space

present for report cards, which is a formal activity, but can't express themselves too much, and they can't go into the classroom often, at least at the beginning of the program. Moreover, they can't move freely in space because their movements are controlled by the stakeholders. For instance, parents can't wander in the entrance and corridors of the school.

As mentioned earlier, this static anchoring occurs when the stakeholders are themselves spatially situated in a static way (instead of flexible), when they can't adapt, contextualize, and personalize the conventions and move freely. In this situation, they generally refer to themselves as *We* and *Us* and to the parents as *They*, albeit using the pronoun *We* sometimes implies flexible space. To get beyond the splitting logic generally adopted by Moscovici, I need to consider cases in which space is dynamic.

Personal anchoring: Personalizing my space and the zone of *alter*.

Sometimes the space is represented as flexible when *many* stakeholders position themselves using the pronouns *I* and *Me* and when they adopt a "*My* parent" position instead of an "*Our* parent" position. In the latter case (referring to "*Our* parent") they focus on the collective nature of action with parents and on the global and undifferentiated aspects of the scholar environment. In the former case, they refer to particular activities occurring in proximal relationship with parents in school or in other formal community institutions. However, while the stakeholders (representers)

generally move freely in the space—from one system to another (Figure 3) by participating in many activities and moving from one room to another as they want—, they fix the parents in a restricted area. The stakeholders (particularly teachers) would permit parents to enter classrooms, but parents could only sit there quietly (rendering them inexpressive). The stakeholders would also focus on the institutional and formal aspects of parental engagement. The stakeholders do not spatially situate themselves in the same way they position the parents. *They don't put themselves in the same restricted areas attributed to the parents.*

While I focus here on the common positions (common personal house as anchor) shared by *many* subjects, the *personalization of space* occurs “in” and “out” of the house of *a* specific subject. In this condition, the focus is not on the sharedness of *I*-position by many stakeholders, but on how a *specific subject* is endowed with them. In Figures 1, 2 and 3, the eye is not collective but personal. In my study, on more than 200 participants (stakeholders), only a few experienced what I call **personal anchoring** implying the personalization of **both** the Self's space and the *alter's* positioning in the environment.

Thus the stakeholders participate—resisting an anonymous form of sociality—in the definition of, and positioning in, the space they adapt in their own way. Not only are the objects (*alters*) represented—presenting an object in their own way—but so are the *stakeholders' own positions* in a flexible space. Not only do they move in school or in formal community institutions, but, to my surprise, they left such formal spaces, moving **outside** and **crossing the boundary** to meet the parent in *his or her own house*. The “*My parent*” position is *personalized*, which means that the *alter* is specific and particular and that it is endowed with voices! And yet, these voices are heard, thus made expressive, because they are taken as resources for the stakeholders who agree to confront unfamiliarity (DST) and to grow from it. Moreover, the focus is placed on *informal* meetings with parents (e.g., the teachers met parents in the corridors of the school and the parents moved from one room to another). In this way, the corridor becomes a road and an informal meeting space between parents and stakeholders (teachers). However, the community's road is not represented (particularly in the discourse of teachers), at least I did not note it during the discourse analysis! I come to the conclusion that a representational zone does not include all of the environmental elements.

Conclusion: Toward Invisibility of the Position's Space

Using DST to extend SRT's concept of anchoring—both with respect to the spatial situation of the representers and of the *alter*—enables me to display some theoretical zones that are present but invisible in Moscovici's theory. In effect, the dynamic aspect of this theory is “there”—as I was able to find—and yet it is “not there” in that it is rendered invisible (remaining in the dark) by the static aspect of this theory.

EXTENDING SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

The former aspect needed to be found. For this reason, I feel like a sea explorer venturing into a storm, in which DST is my lighthouse. It sheds light on the fog (dark) and makes the iceberg (static entity concepts) visible so that I can “walk” around it and move into the strong current and the flow (concepts related to environmental flexibility and dynamism).

It seems that many researchers step onto (anchoring) the iceberg, trying to quickly find a home. They become so anchored in this (static) territory that they lose perspective: their ground is invisible (not there)—either because it is too close to them or because it is hard to see what is right under their feet—and the sea is near (there) but its flow is inaccessible (not there; if they stay on the land). So, they need a boat to venture in the flow (sea/ocean), accepting the uncertainty that comes with the experience of travelling. This experience could be applied when moving from a disciplinary approach to an interdisciplinary approach (going in-between).

In this paper, I sail between SRT and DST using the latter as a boat to venture in SRT’s territory. But I also expand the latter by referring to DST’s territory. Here, by navigating the sea (situating myself between the theories), I do not only find an island, I also created one through expansion (theoretical extension). Since I am now on my feet, let’s take a more pragmatic narrative approach: DST helps me make sense of SRT’s dynamic aspect around the subject’s and the *alter*’s relationship with space, place it at the forefront and extend it. From a dialogical stance, both from a methodological (Figure 3) and theoretical perspective, I shed light on the interdependency between the subject’s relationship with space and the way it anchors the *alter* in the environment. Personal anchoring occurs when the stakeholders personalize the environment that is composed of flexible zones and venture outside of their familiar house and zone. Here the unfamiliar space is constructive and allows for subject and *alter* expressivity.

While I have discovered and generally built new territory, the horizon is still far, and as mentioned at the end of the last section, certain zones remain invisible. So I am left with a question: Why don’t I observe the stakeholders using either the parents’ house or informal community spaces (e.g., roads, sidewalks or the kindergarten parking lot where parents and stakeholders meet) as anchors? This question suggests that the relationship between the subject and the *alter* is not fully dialogical.

It seems that anchoring (SRT) and positioning (DST) remain partly grounded in a static logic. I can think that anchors and positions are thick points of reference—associated with an entity conception of space—as expressed in the “repertory of the Self” that does not contain holes. While this zone is extensive, there is a clear demarcation and distribution of positions, and no exploitation of the white and empty background (Figure 1), which is their environment. Maybe the community’s road and the kindergarten parking lot are absent from the researchers’ map identifying the repertory of the subjects’ Self.

BOULANGER

To change my anchors and positions in a way to adopt those of the *alter* would probably imply not only their redistribution—by means of movement—in space, but also the reframing of this very environment by exploiting both the visible and the invisible. In this way, not only would I (and my position) have to move outside to meet the *alter* in his or her house, but also would my space *expand* (through the invisible space between school and family) to “include” this house. If not, everything risks remaining the same when I return to *my* house. But, if my space expands, does the *alter* necessarily have to welcome me? The invisible zones we identify in this conclusion in addition to this article, suggest the need to expand my theoretical avenues to include topics such as invisibility, space expansion, intersubjectivity, and resistance (the *alter* resisting to my presence).

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